RESTORING, PROTECTING, AND PROMOTING HUMAN DIGNITY THROUGH INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The current global problems that humanity is facing urge academics to rethink modern organizations and explore strategies that generate better outcomes for society. One alternative management approach that has actively sought this purpose is humanist management. This approach has the potential to remedy social injustices and dignity-violations as organizations adapt different humanistic practices and strategies towards these ends. Simultaneously, indigenous entrepreneurship is a growing area of interest for scholars because it has the potential to address urgent social issues (e.g. poverty, marginalization, exclusion, etc.) from a different managerial perspective and set of values. One of the outcomes that makes this possible is how these communities respect and protect human dignity through their enterprises. This article explores how indigenous entrepreneurship contributes to restore, protect, and promote human dignity from a humanistic management approach. Based on evidence from three cases located in Latin America, the results suggest different strategies that indigenous enterprises create and implement depending on the dignity threshold they need to address.

The findings contribute to unveil the mechanisms and strategies that can revalue humanism and human dignity from an entrepreneurial and managerial perspective. As these indigenous enterprises are distant from traditional entrepreneurial principles and values, they represent a valuable new perspective that could shed light on how to improve current theories and strategies to generate better outcomes for society. This work also contributes to indigenous entrepreneurship literature by exploring how different indigenous communities naturally create humanistic-oriented enterprises to address dignity violations and generate wellbeing.

Keywords: Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Dignity, Humanistic Management, Human Rights, Latin America.

INTRODUCTION

People are currently facing dehumanizing, alienating experiences that global modernity has provoked in different societies (Kozlarek, 2011). The world today is facing rising inequalities, enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth, power and gender, unemployment, global health threats, climate change, conflict, and terrorism; as consequence, billions of people continue to live in poverty and are denied a life in dignity (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). This is especially notorious in Indigenous communities in Latin America, which constitute 8% of the population (42 million), 14% of the poor and 17% of the extremely poor (World Bank, 2017a). Nearly half of Latin America's indigenous people now live in cities as a result of migration

processes due to poor access to education, decent job opportunities, health, and basic services in their rural communities; they have also suffered constant pressure on their lands due to expanding agriculture frontiers and extractive industries (World Bank, 2017b). The economic growth experienced by the region in the XXI century has not benefited indigenous groups as much as other groups (World Bank, 2017a). In rural or urban context, they still face many disadvantages (World Bank, 2017b).

As the survival of many societies' economic, socio-cultural and environmental dynamics is at risk, different disciplines should encourage research focused on protecting human dignity and finding alternative development models that generate better outcomes for communities. In this sense, humanistic management has emerged as a field with the potential to remedy social injustices and dignity-violations as organizations adapt different humanistic practices and strategies towards these ends (Pirson, 2017a). One fundamental challenge is still to translate humanistic ideas and values into everyday practices that can restore and protect human dignity and generate prosperity and wellbeing (Kozlarek, 2011). Thus, the objective of this paper is to explore how indigenous entrepreneurship contributes to restore, protect, and promote human dignity from a humanistic management approach. The findings of this work will also contribute to unveil the mechanisms and strategies that can revalue humanism from an entrepreneurial and managerial perspective.

The paper begins with a discussion of the concept and characteristics of indigenous entrepreneurship, humanistic management, and the concept of dignity. The next section describes the method, including how the cases were selected, followed by the results of the study. The results analyze each case, its context, and the strategies that they followed to restore, protect, or promote human dignity. The last section summarizes the main findings, conclusions, limitations of the study and implications for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Indigenous Entrepreneurship

Indigenous peoples are so-called because they "practice unique traditions, they retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live… they are the descendants of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means" (United Nations, n.d., p.1). As those cultural values are mostly distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live, they are often incompatible with the assumptions of mainstream entrepreneurial theories (Dana and Anderson, 2006) and with contemporary western economic paradigms of development and entrepreneurship (Curry et al., 2016).

Indigenous entrepreneurship has become an area of interest for scholars as it reveals distinguishable elements that differentiate it from other forms of entrepreneurship (Peredo & Anderson, 2006). As Indigenous communities are often located in remote and marginalized areas, with limited access to decent job opportunities, they rely on entrepreneurship to generate an income and promote wellbeing (Peredo et al., 2014; Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005; Vazquez-Maguirre, 2018). Indigenous entrepreneurship often relies on traditional knowledge (Berkes &

Adhikari, 2005), which includes the entrepreneurial behavior to start a venture (Igwe et al., 2018). Regarding the entrepreneurial ventures indigenous people often prefer, they tend to work collectively, in social or community-based enterprises (Vázquez-Maguirre & Portales, 2018), or in families or communes oriented to cooperation rather than competition (Dana & Anderson, 2007). These vehicles are useful to gain self-determination and self-managed development (Giovannini, 2012).

Indigenous entrepreneurship often does not place much emphasis on wealth generation (Morris, 2004), but it may be an instrument for maintaining cultural values (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006), improving chronically disadvantage segments (Peredo & Anderson, 2006), achieving sustainable development (Vázquez-Maguirre et al., 2018), community-based development (Berkes & Adhikari, 2005), and promoting ecological balance, solidarity, social and economic equity (Curry et al., 2016). Thus, traditional performance measures may not be adequate to assess the relative success of indigenous enterprises (Toledo-López et al., 2012). Besides the social orientation of indigenous entrepreneurship towards the common good and sustainable community development, it also seems to naturally incorporate humanistic principles aimed at protecting each individual's dignity and promoting human wellbeing (Vázquez-Maguirre & García, 2014). This characteristic connects indigenous entrepreneurship studies with humanistic management literature.

Humanistic Management and the Concept of Dignity

The current economic paradigm privileges business profits and financial indicators. People usually become a resource that serves this purpose; the indirect outcome for society has been enormous disparities, menial work and unemployment, poverty, and climate change, among others. This has left a void in how human dignity is protected and recognized by organizations, how ethical development encouraged, and how to further address issues related to social justice and social welfare (Sen, 2001; Pirson, 2017a). Humanistic management represents a different approach to how organizations are managed; it focuses on upholding the unconditional human dignity of every individual as the ultimate goal of any organization (Spitzeck, 2011). Therefore, it assumes that dignity protection and dignity recognition is a necessary condition for wellbeing (Pirson, 2017a).

Humanistic management has its foundational principles in humanism: a system centered on the human being, her integrity, her development, her dignity, and her liberty (Fromm, 1961). Caton (2016) suggests that humanism adds an axiological claim where actions result in moral obligations whose consequences should be understood in order to promote wellbeing and progress as a society. Nowadays, humanism is a necessary approach that provides a framework for our common thoughts and reflections on how to address current global issues (Bokova, 2011). It creates a climate of empathy and understanding that fosters the idea of progress with respect to human rights and driven by ethical principles (UNESCO, 2011). At the core of humanism is a deep respect for cultural diversity (Bokova, 2011) since it assumes that universal ideas and humanist values are already present in all different cultures (Kozlarek, 2011). The dialogue between different civilizations and moral perspectives should produce the modern moral intuitions of

humanism (Seth, 2011). This dialogue is particularly necessary in contexts of cultural injustice and marginalization such as those that affect indigenous groups in Latin America (World Bank, 2017b).

The concept of dignity is central to humanistic management, and also fundamental to every effort towards solving societies' more urgent issues. The resolution adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly on September of 2015 highlights the concept of dignity as central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: "We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment". Kant emphasizes that dignity relies on the capacity to be autonomous (i.e., self-legislation); this quality (autonomy) endows dignity to the human being (Schönecker & Schmidt, 2018).

Pirson (2017a) argues that the prevailing economic approach to management has affected the dignity of particular groups; therefore, one of the commons goals for humanity should be reaching those people left behind from inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). To this end, Pirson (2017a) suggests specific dignity thresholds that need to be addressed to improve the human condition. They constitute dignity-based approaches that should be part of every organization that seeks to generate and better designed the transformative strategies and practices for social change (Pirson et al., 2019).

The first of these thresholds is dignity restoration, which refers to remedying violations to people's unconditional worth, identity, freedom, autonomy, and self-determination. Dignity requires recognizing that people are entitled to have their own feeling, beliefs, attitudes, and have the capacity to make choices; denial of the capacity of a person to assert claims to these elements is an affront to her dignity (Schachter, 1983). The second threshold is dignity protection. It has its conceptual basis in human rights and refers to safeguarding individuals' intrinsic worth and identity. The protection of human dignity has become a priority in the domain of global labor and economic development. The International Labour Conference (2019) associate basic income security and social security access with life in dignity throughout the life cycle. Dignity protection is also associated with a "world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality, and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity" (United Nations General Assembly, 2015)

The last threshold is dignity promotion, which is geared toward wellbeing creation and human flourishing (Pirson, 2017b); it seeks to reaffirm the inherent value of humans, the human condition, and the ecological wellbeing on which humanity depends (Pirson et al., 2019). The promotion of dignity can become a central objective of organizations once dignity has been protected; building human capabilities is central to this outcome (Nussbaum, 2011; Pirson, 2017b). In indigenous contexts, it is related to the recognition of indigenous communities by revaluing their cultural heritage at a local, national and international level (Camargo et al., 2020). In order to further explore how dignity-based approaches may allow an organization to reach these dignity thresholds, three cases were documented in Latin America.

METHODOLOGY

This research followed a qualitative method and an interpretative approach for three factors. First, indigenous enterprises embedded in rural communities are phenomena that demand a deep understanding of the context, cultural patterns, values, and dynamics among different stakeholders. Second, indigenous entrepreneurship is an area in exploratory stage, which suggests a qualitative method; there are still questions about the strategies these entities design to empower their members and the community. Third, the intersection between indigenous entrepreneurship, humanistic management, and the concept of dignity is still largely unexplored and might also require a qualitative method.

The research strategy was case study. The three cases were selected by purposeful sampling based on performance, visibility, and the willingness to accept the fieldwork required to document the cases. Cultural patterns and differences among stakeholders and individuals suggested that data collection could be better managed through in-depth semi-structured interviews and observation. Interviews were carried in an informal, conversational manner, in the workplace or the community. The conversations evaluated social, economic and environmental aspects of the indigenous enterprise and life in the community. Employees, managers, and people from the community were interviewed until theoretical saturation was reached. Reflections from these activities were noted in a field diary. Also, data were obtained from secondary sources to substantiate the primary data, mainly from official websites and news about the indigenous enterprise. The data were manually coded and organized into categories that emerged from the analysis. The second stage of analysis included framing the resulting strategies into Pirson's (2017a) dignity thresholds.

RESULTS

Dignity Restoration: The Case of Wakami in Guatemala

Guatemala is a country where almost half the population lives in poverty, with indigenous peoples and rural communities continuing to be particularly disadvantaged; the country has been struggling to address the increasing inequality between urban and rural communities, and ladino and indigenous groups (Worldbank, 2019). Some of the country's current challenges have their origin in a 36-years civil war that ended in 1996 which forced thousands of people out of the communities they have lived in for generations. The particular context of indigenous women in rural areas presents dignity violations such as lack of basic education and job opportunities, scarce political empowerment, and domestic or community violence. As a response, Wakami was founded with the mission of empowering indigenous women in Guatemala.

Wakami is a fashion company that employs groups of women that are constituted as indigenous micro-enterprises and manufacture fashion accessories that are later exported worldwide. The methodology employed by Wakami guarantees that after one year these micro-enterprises will be producing enough quality products to generate the necessary income to start improving the wellbeing of women and their families. Women usually join Wakami because they dream about having a decent house, a peaceful environment, and enough income to feed their children and send them to school. Wakami also provides technical managerial training,

entrepreneurial skills, talks about women empowerment, nutrition, healthy cooking, organic gardens, family planning, among others. Besides, Wakami partly finances homes built with environmentally-friendly materials and equipment such as ecological water filters and stoves, and solar panels.

As women become part of Wakami, they start to break down cultural barriers that stigmatize women who work and are not at home or make decisions about their family. The results are often so encouraging that husbands had left their informal employment to join their wives in manufacturing accessories to increase production. Wakami also monitors the health and nutrition of children, and grants them scholarships. These practices especially benefit girls since they are usually forced to drop out of school more often. An important dignity-restoring practice is promoting self-management; women that form indigenous micro-enterprises appoint their own leaders, created internal policies and decide workloads, budgets, and if they want to exploit other business opportunities so that they do not rely on Wakami as their only source of income.

Wakami has restored the dignity of over 500 indigenous women and their families. The average income in these households has increased 85%, and 88% of children between 6 and 18 years old go to school; only 50% of children among these ages go to school in Guatemala (Mejia, 2018). Wakami has enabled women to overcome marginalization, lack of opportunities, and discrimination inherent to the experience of being an indigenous woman in a male-dominated culture, which has affected their basic human rights. As a result, these women are in a stronger position to defend themselves, their family, their community and surrounding environment, and their right to self-determination and a decent life.

Dignity Protection: The Case of Granja Porcón in Peru

Granja Porcón is a community that consists mainly of descendants of the Canari-Cajamarca ethnic group; it is located in the Peruvian department of Cajamarca, at 2,700 meters above sea level in the Andes Mountain Range. Cajamarca and Huancavelica are the poorest departments of Peru, with poverty rates fluctuating between 43.8% and 50.9% (INEI, 2017). Cajamarca has received large investments to exploit gold and silver; however, mining is one of the most difficult industries to regulate in Latin America and local communities have experienced constant human rights abuses, as well as continuous fatal accidents and irreversible pollution of some of the ecosystems of the region. For example, in 2000, a spill of mercury poisoned more than a thousand farmers that suffered permanent consequences on their health (Arana-Zegarra, 2009). Given this scenario, Granja Porcón created a community-based enterprise with the mission to generate decent jobs as means to protect the dignity of every citizen; these jobs would not pose a permanent risk to the employees' health and the environment, like those of the mining industry. Hence, Granja Porcón initially forested large meadows through unpaid community work and aid from international organizations. The objective was to generate a forestry industry in the region that could employ more people with higher salaries than previous activities. Granja Porcón has nowadays diversified into tourism activities (eco-cabins, restaurants and a zoo), dairy products, trout farms, vicuña breeding, handmade textile manufacturing, and agriculture.

From the beginning, Granja Porcon incorporated indigenous values and governance structure that emphasize democratic decision making, flat structure (equality), accountability,

environmental awareness, constant commitment with the local community, autonomy and self-determination, women participation in the workplace (uncommon in these communities), and education and training. This enterprise, which currently generates 200 direct and 200 indirect jobs (with access to social security), has also become an important counterweight for mining companies that seek to hire cheap labor and operate under minimum security and environmental conditions. One of these mining companies is Yanacocha, with whom Granja Porcón generated an alliance aim to safeguard natural resources and the construction of tourism infrastructure in the community in exchange for the usufruct of land for mining purposes (which is closely monitored by people from the community). Hence, the enterprise protects the community from potential asymmetrical negotiations. Besides, it has also engaged in alliances with multinationals like Nestlé to gain the expertise to produce a variety of dairy products and also being part of its supply chain. Also, Granja Porcón helps local artisans finding more profitable markets for their handicrafts, increasing the bargaining power of local producers and protecting them from potential abuses. Finally, the enterprise helps families to build a decent home (providing free timber and expertise) and supports the local school so children can continue their education.

Granja Porcón safeguards individuals' intrinsic worth, freedom, autonomy, and identity. This enterprise successfully protects human dignity through the strategies it has implemented to empower its employees and the community. Once individuals' dignity has been protected, Indigenous enterprises may start designing strategies to promote human dignity.

Dignity Promotion: The Case of Capulálpam Toys in Mexico

Capulálpam is a community of Zapotec origin located in a forest region in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, one of the poorest of the country. This community has formed successful community-based enterprises centered on forestry and ecotourism activities. These enterprises have managed to protect the dignity of the inhabitants of Calpulálpan through the creation of jobs and the construction of public infrastructure. Besides, they have increased levels of wellbeing in the community, which has also generated more entrepreneurial activity. In this context, a group of women from the community formed Capulálpam Toys, an indigenous enterprise that aims to generate decent jobs for local women and to promote the traditions and cultural heritage of the community. The enterprise produces wooden toys with wood that the local sawmill discards from its operations. In a short period of time, the women employees have learned new skills and forms of organizing to increase the quality of the toys and gain access to art fairs in nearby cities. Besides, they have a store in the community where they usually sell their products to tourists and local people.

Calpulálpan Toys seek to promote the values, traditions, and myths of the community and its Zapotec ethnicity. For example, wooden toys represent an attempt to preserve children's traditional forms of play in the community. Playing with wooden toys was once popular before cell phones and other digital instruments reconfigured the form children interact and learn. In addition to rescuing this tradition, wooden toy figures are designed to represent community jobs, mystical beings, or sacred animals that can be found in nearby forests. When local families and tourists buy a toy, they are told about the history it carries: the culture, beliefs, and values shared by the community. For example, a figure that represents the baker of the community was designed

carrying the traditional mestizo bread (a square bread of two colors) made with wheat flour and cornmeal. Other toys represent a local healer, a midwife, and the Mingo: a person who goes into the forest every day in search of firewood and has the strength of two men despite his old age. The most popular animals represented by the women employees are owls, deers, bats, vipers, and ladybugs. Also, they have built toys collections that represent mythical beings that are part of local stories such as forest goblins, a beautiful woman who seduces men (known as Matlazihua), and a devil who lives in a haunted shop that is only open on June 24. Legend has it that whoever gets in the shop that day may find a lot of gold and wealth.

Calpulálpan Toys seeks to promote the local cultural heritage and to strengthen the sense of belonging to the community; therefore, it is an enterprise focused on promoting the dignity of community members by revaluing their cultural elements. Similarly, another group of women from Calpulálpan has started a traditional medicine clinic that seeks to recover ancestral methods of healing, pain relief, and herbal medicine made from local flora. Women from both enterprises have partially relied on the oldest people from the community to rescue and promote ancient knowledge and traditions, ultimately strengthening the sense of belonging to this indigenous community and further connecting people with their place and culture.

Table 1 resumes the strategies associated with each dignity threshold based on the evidence from each case. Dignity restoration implies three strategies that Indigenous enterprises can implement to repair dignity violations. First, these ventures usually have a social business model aimed to create decent job opportunities for their direct beneficiaries. Through these job opportunities, the beneficiaries can access expertise, tools, and resources to build a secure environment, which is related to having a decent house built with quality materials, access to basic services and eco-friendly equipment (stove, refrigerator, water heater, water filter, etc.). A third strategy is to provide training and facilitate children's education. Training will increase the quality of the enterprise's products or services, efficiency through better managerial skills, improved decision-making and more productive employees. Children's education is usually one of the main objectives of a household since parents want their children to have more opportunities than they did. These three strategies contribute to generate the economic, political, cultural and environmental empowerment that allows individuals to remedy affronts to their dignity (Table 1).

TABLE 1		
STRATEGIES ASSOCIATED WITH EACH DIGNITY THRESHOLD		
Dignity restoration	Dignity protection	Dignity promotion
(Objective: Empowerment)	(Objective: Protection of human rights)	(Objective: Recognition)
Decent job opportunities	Basic income security	Promoting cultural heritage
Secure/peaceful environment (including decent home)	Social security protection	Strengthening a sense of belonging to a community
Access to training and education	Access to markets	(Re)connecting people with their place and culture
	Increasing the bargaining power of local producers	Rescuing/revaluing ancient knowledge

Dignity protection implies four strategies that aim to protect individual's human rights. First, basic income security, which is usually possible through job stability and access to microcredits. Some indigenous enterprises in Latin America have a no-layoff policy and access to emergency or productive loans (Vázquez-Maguirre & García, 2014). Job stability should be complemented with social security protection, social benefits mandatory by law (which are unusual in these contexts), and other benefits that may help employees (e.g. interest-free loans to start a venture or buy assets). Another strategy is to allow small local producers to sell their products in larger markets. Since these communities are usually in remote areas, indigenous enterprises become a strategic vehicle to obtain access to new markets. Finally, increasing the bargaining power of local producers will prevent potential asymmetrical negotiations or exploitative schemes that are sometimes present in some value chains.

Dignity promotion has four strategies that aim to achieve an individual's recognition of her intrinsic value and autonomy. First, promoting the cultural heritage of the community may grant recognition to the uniqueness of each individual's ethnicity, tradition, customs, abilities, and art. As some indigenous communities face marginalization, barriers to development, and even despair and an exodus of inhabitants, rescuing ancient knowledge may revalue cultural elements that can bring a sense of pride to individuals. In order to develop a stronger sense of belonging to the community and the surrounding environment, indigenous enterprises may incorporate cultural traits to the products and services it provides, as Calpulálpan Toys did with the wooden products. The last strategy is to connect people with their place and culture by documenting the stories and myths of the community and sharing them with tourists and local families.

These cases represent successful examples of indigenous enterprises that have created strategies to restore, protect and promote human dignity and increase individual's wellbeing. However, they represent the exception rather than the rule in these contexts of marginalization and exclusion. Most of these communities lack the capacity to form functional enterprises that could provide the necessary income to implement the strategies described above; they often have limited economic resources, lack of knowledge, and poor negotiation skills that prevent the success of indigenous ventures (Mendoza-Ramos & Prideaux, 2014). In this sense, the documentation of successful cases may also provide valuable information about how they have overturned obstacles and structural barriers until they found a viable product, access to attractive markets, and legitimacy to operate.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article aimed to explore how indigenous entrepreneurship contributes to restore, protect, and promote human dignity from a humanistic management approach. Based on evidence from three cases located in Latin America, the results suggest that indigenous enterprises follow three strategies to restore human dignity: creating decent job opportunities, providing access to training and education, and securing a peaceful environment for their stakeholders. Also, these

entities protect human dignity by ensuring basic income security, social security protection, and by increasing access to markets and the bargaining power of local producers. After the protection of human dignity is guaranteed, indigenous enterprises use four strategies to promote human dignity: strengthening people's sense of belonging to a community, connecting people with their place and culture, promoting their cultural heritage, and revaluing the ancient knowledge of the community.

These findings contribute to unveil the mechanisms and strategies that can revalue humanism and human dignity from an entrepreneurial and managerial perspective. Also, the cases described in this paper contribute to a multicultural conversation that enriches the humanistic perspective since two of its main elements include respect for cultural diversity (Bokova, 2011) and modern institutions based on a dialogue between different civilizations and moral perspectives (Seth, 2011). As these indigenous enterprises are distant from traditional entrepreneurial principles and values, they represent a valuable new perspective that could shed light on how to improve current theories and strategies to generate better outcomes for society.

This work also contributes to indigenous entrepreneurship literature by exploring how different indigenous communities naturally create humanistic-centered enterprises to address dignity violations and generate wellbeing. Particularly, how these enterprises address and empower minorities that have been marginalized from the labor market and the decision-making process in their communities. Also, this work suggests there are different strategies to address dignity-related affronts, depending on the level of vulnerability faced by the individual or community. It is especially important that the cases of this study are located in Latin America since many indigenous communities in this region have historically been subject to cultural injustice and structural barriers that have prevented the development of the capabilities that may allow them to remedy dignity violations.

There are some limitations in this study that suggest caution in the interpretation of the results; evidence responds to a particular cultural and ethnic context that influences the processes within indigenous enterprises. The nature of indigenous entrepreneurship in Latin America also invites to be cautious and avoid extrapolating the results to other regions. Also, the exploratory nature of this study invites scholars not to consider the results as definitive; but as part of a dialogue that draws on new empirical evidence to build a better understanding of the phenomena. In this sense, future research may examine how the strategies designed by indigenous enterprises translate into day to day practices, routines, and policies that contribute to protect and promote human dignity. Also, how these strategies impact different stakeholders in their quest to improve their wellbeing. Finally, the set of values, strategies, and practices of indigenous enterprises may represent an alternative, humanistic-centered managerial model of organizing that needs further examination.

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