

Advancing Automotive Technologies

The 19th IEEE Vehicle Power and Propulsion Conference (IEEE VPPC 2023) took place in Milan, Italy, from 24 to 27 October 2023. The conference was organized by a very motivated team from the Politecnico di Milano (Italy), led by Prof. Giambattista Gruosso.

IEEE VPPC 2023

IEEE VPPC 2023 provided a platform for practicing engineers, researchers, and professionals to engage in interactive, multidisciplinary discussions on electrified vehicle (EV)

Digital Object Identifier 10.1109/MVT.2023.3347908 Date of current version 19 March 2024 power, propulsion, and related technologies. The overarching goal was to establish a global network for green e-motion. The conference featured eight regular tracks and seven special sessions, delving into the latest advancements in energy storage and production systems, power electronics, motor drives, power supply systems, vehicle electronics, intelligent transport systems, energy control and management, modeling and analysis, charging systems and infrastructure, hydrogen systems, and electric railways.

A total of 165 papers were presented orally, with an additional 36 presented virtually, out of 249 submissions from 33 countries. Italy led with 37 papers, followed by China (34 papers), France (31 papers), Germany (20 papers), Canada (13 papers), South Korea (13 papers), Belgium (12 papers), and the United States (11 papers). The award committee recognized three papers for their scientific excellence. Pictures from the Award Ceremony are presented in Figure 1. Dr. Clément Mayet, University of Lille (France) was the Technical Program Committee chair.

Notably, a special session organized by the IEEE Vehicular Technology Society (VTS) Motor Vehicle Challenges focused on controlling and optimizing the energy consumption



FIGURE 1 2023 IEEE VPPC Award Ceremony. (Source: IEEE VTS.)

and battery degradation of an EV equipped with three electric motors and two energy storage devices (a fuel cell and a battery). Participants were encouraged to submit papers presenting their solutions.

The conference featured six prestigious keynotes, two technical exhibitions, two tutorials, and three technical tours, attracting 216 attendees from 25 different countries. The success of the conference was made possible by the dedicated efforts of numerous volunteers at all levels, including those involved in the review process, track chairs responsible for paper selection (including special sessions and tutorials), and guest speakers. Their commitment played a pivotal role in ensuring the success of this event.

VPPC, as one of the VTS flagship conferences, is annually organized in a rotation-basis among America, Asia-Pacific, and Europe-Africa. The VPPC 2024 will be held in Washington D.C., USA, where Prof. Minh Ta Cao, University of Sherbrooke, QC, Canada, serves as general chair and is responsible for its organization. The conference program will include, together with technical sessions, interesting tutorial sessions, some industrial forums, and an exhibition. The program is under preparation and information can be consulted at https://events.vtsociety.org/vppc 2024/. This year, VPPC 2024 will be held concurrently with VTC 2024 Fall to celebrate the 100th edition of the IEEE VTS Conferences.

Automotive Sector Developments

In recent years, the automotive sector has undergone a rapid and transformative evolution, fueled by an unprecedented surge in technological innovation. Traditionally focused on mechanical engineering, the industry has seamlessly integrated cutting-edge technologies, giving rise to a new era of smart, connected, and sustainable vehicles. The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI), advanced sensor systems, and

data-driven analytics has propelled the automotive landscape into unexplored combinations, where cars are no longer mere modes of transportation but sophisticated digital platforms on wheels [1]. Emerging technologies play a pivotal role in shaping this dynamic shift, promising to redefine not only how we drive but also how we perceive and interact with vehicles. From the advent of autonomous driving, which promises unparalleled safety and convenience, to the proliferation of electric and alternative propulsion systems, these technological advancements are laying the foundation for a future where vehicles are not just means of conveyance but integral components of a seamlessly connected, intelligent transportation ecosystem. The role of emerging technologies in the automotive sector extends beyond individual vehicles, influencing urban planning, environmental sustainability, and the framework of our daily mobility experiences. As we stand at the crossroads of innovation, the integration of these technologies stands prepared to revolutionize the way we move, commute, and interact with our vehicles.

The adoption of EVs is on the rise, constituting 18% of global vehicle sales in 2023. With the entry of new competitors offering more cost-effective choices and enhanced performance features, the EV market is evolving and maturing, meeting the growing demand as customers increasingly explore electric alternatives.

Tesla's Model Y maintains a substantial lead in the EV market, having sold 772,364 units, more than double the sales of the second topselling vehicle, that is Tesla's Model 3, with 364,403 units. The noteworthy trend is the increasing prominence of Chinese EVs. The next five bestselling EVs are Chinese, including three models from BYD. The Atto 3 (or Yuan Plus, depending on the market) from BYD is gaining traction in various countries, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, and India. Another Chinese automaker, GAC Group, has two models from its Aion EV brand in the rankings, with the Aion S having sold 160,693 units to the end of the first semester 2023. The influence of regional markets is evident, with Volkswagen's ID.4 model (120,154 units sold) seeing most sales in Europe and China [2].

As cost efficiencies improve and consumer behavior shifts, global EV sales are expected to constitute half of new car sales worldwide by 2035, according to forecasts from Goldman Sachs [3].

For example, last year, Green and Smart Mobility Joint Stock Company (GSM) launched Vietnam's first pure electric taxi service: Green SM Taxi. This marks a significant milestone, introducing a new era of transportation characterized by intelligence, zero pollutants and noise, and environmental sustainability [4].

Green SM Taxi is set to debut on the streets of Hanoi, Vietnam, largely crowded, with plans for a nationwide expansion to at least five provinces and cities and other countries in south Asia, aligning with the company's strategic vision. Figure 2 presents the taxi electric fleet in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Ensuring convenience and variety, Green SM Taxi offers two service options: GreenCar, a standard taxi service, and LuxuryCar, providing a premium taxi experience. The GreenCar fleet will feature the VinFast VFe34 in the company's distinctive cyan blue color, while LuxuryCar will showcase the VinFast VF8 in their original luxurious colors. Initial operations in Hanoi were started with 500 VFe34s and 100 VF8s. The GreenCar fleet will soon incorporate the VinFast VF 5 Plus model based on customer demand adjustments.

Green SM Taxi, as Vietnam's pioneer in pure electric taxis, operates exclusively with VinFast EVs, ensuring noiseless, carbon-free transportation that enhances public health and environmental well being. The vehicles are equipped with intelligent entertainment features, offering passengers an enjoyable experience on every journey. With a team of highly trained drivers and dedicated service, Green SM Taxi is dedicated to delivering five-star service quality to its customers.

The expansion of Green SM Taxi to Ho Chi Minh City started in the second trimester last year.

The Road to Self-Driving Cars

The realm of autonomous driving has progressed significantly, marking a transformative phase in the automotive landscape. As of today, various vehicles are equipped with

advanced driver-assistance systems, showcasing capabilities, such as adaptive cruise control, lane-keeping assistance, and automated parking. Companies at the forefront of this technology, such as Tesla, have implemented semiautonomous features that allow for hands-free driving under certain conditions. Simultaneously, ride-hailing services like Waymo One have initiated autonomous taxi operations in specific regions, providing a glimpse into the tangible integration of selfdriving technology into everyday transportation. An example of a Waymo taxi is presented in Figure 3.



FIGURE 2 Vinfast's electric taxi. (Source: Vingroup, used with permission.)



FIGURE 3 Waymo taxi. (Source: https://waymo.com/media-resources/, used with permission.)

Recent breakthroughs in AI and machine learning have been pivotal in advancing autonomous driving capabilities. Deep learning algorithms enable vehicles to recognize and respond to complex traffic scenarios, pedestrians, and various environmental conditions. Additionally, the integration of state-of-theart sensor technologies—including lidar, radar, and high-definition cameras-enhances a vehicle's perception and decision-making capabilities [5]. Companies like NVIDIA and Mobileye are actively contributing to the development of powerful AI hardware and software solutions tailored for autonomous vehicles.

The potential impact of autonomous driving on safety, transportation efficiency, and urban planning is profound. With AI-driven systems continuously monitoring the surroundings, autonomous vehicles have the potential to significantly reduce the number of accidents caused by human error. Moreover, the optimization of traffic flow and the reduction of congestion through efficient route planning can lead to improved transportation efficiency. Urban planning may undergo a paradigm shift, with the need for extensive parking spaces decreasing as autonomous vehicles engage in constant motion, responding dynamically to transportation demands.

Examples of industry progress are:

- Waymo: Waymo, a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc. (Google's parent company), has been a trailblazer in autonomous driving. Their selfdriving taxis in Phoenix, AZ, have been operational for several years, showcasing the practical application of autonomous technology in ride-hailing services (https://waymo.com/waymo -one-phoenix/).
- Tesla Autopilot: Tesla's Autopilot feature, utilizing a combination of cameras, radar, and ultrasonic sensors, allows for semiautonomous driving. With over-the-air updates, Tesla continually enhances the

capabilities of its vehicles, inching closer to full autonomy (https:// www.tesla.com/).

Mobileye: An Intel company, Mobileye specializes in visionbased advanced driver-assistance systems. Their innovative approach involves the use of cameras for environmental perception, playing a crucial role in the development of autonomous driving technology (https://www. mobileye.com/). Figure 4 presents an example of Mobileye enhanced computer vision for moreadvanced driver assistance.

As autonomous driving technology matures, it not only holds the promise of reshaping the driving experience but also stands as a catalyst for broader societal and infrastructural transformations.

Beyond Traditional Fuels and Traditional Propulsion Systems

In response to growing environmental concerns and the need for sustainable transportation, EVs have emerged as a transformative force in the automotive industry. Major carmakers, including Tesla, Nissan, and BMW, have made significant strides in the production of electric cars, contributing to a global shift away from traditional internal combustion engines. Advances in battery technology play a pivotal role in this transition, with lithium-ion batteries leading the charge. Ongoing research focuses on improving battery energy density, charging speeds, and overall life span, addressing key challenges in mainstream EV adoption.

Beyond electric power, hydrogen fuel cells present a promising alternative propulsion method. Companies like Toyota and Hyundai have invested in fuel cell technology, producing vehicles like the Toyota Mirai and Hyundai Nexo. These fuel cell vehicles convert hydrogen into electricity, emitting only water vapor as a byproduct. While infrastructure challenges, such as the limited availability of hydrogen refueling stations, persist, the potential for longer ranges and quicker refueling times positions hydrogen fuel cells as a viable option in the pursuit of cleaner transportation.

The shift toward alternative propulsion methods carries significant environmental and economic implications. EVs, powered by renewable energy sources, contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and dependence on fossil fuels. The reduction of air pollutants and the potential for decreased reliance on nonrenewable resources contribute to a more sustainable transportation ecosystem. Economically, the transition stimulates innovation and job creation in the renewable energy and EV sectors, while also potentially reducing the geopolitical complexities associated with oil dependency.

Some examples of industry progress are:

- Tesla Model 3: Tesla's Model 3 has played a pivotal role in popularizing EVs, offering a compelling combination of performance, range, and affordability. Its success has influenced other automakers to accelerate their EV development.
- Toyota Mirai: The Toyota Mirai exemplifies the pursuit of hydrogen

fuel cell technology. As one of the first commercially available fuel cell vehicles, it showcases the potential for hydrogen as a clean energy carrier in the automotive industry.

Rivian R1T and R1S: Rivian's R1T electric pickup truck and R1S electric SUV represent the advancement of EV technology in traditionally fuel-intensive segments. With robust battery systems, these vehicles target both performance and off-road capabilities. The Rivian's dual-motor system is presented in Figure 5.

The transition to alternative propulsion methods marks a crucial phase in the automotive industry's evolution, driven by a collective commitment to environmental sustainability. As these technologies mature and gain broader acceptance, they have the potential to redefine the future of transportation, contributing to a cleaner, greener, and more resilient global mobility landscape.

The evolution of automotive powertrains extends beyond fuel sources to encompass advanced components, modular systems, and cutting-edge technologies. As the



FIGURE 4 Mobileye enhanced computer vision for more-advanced driver assistance. (Source: https://www.mobileye.com/, used with permission.)

industry pioneers a shift toward sustainability and efficiency, the integration of electric powertrains, advanced semiconductors, and modular energy solutions is shaping the future of mobility.

Tesla's electric powertrains have become synonymous with innovation and efficiency. The company's use of high-performance electric motors, characterized by their power density and torque delivery, sets a benchmark for the industry. The Tesla Model S, for instance, exemplifies the marriage of powerful electric motors with a sleek design, redefining the performance expectations of EVs (https://www.tesla.com/).

The integration of silicon carbide (SiC) and gallium nitride (GaN) semiconductors represents a significant leap in power electronics. SiC and GaN technologies offer higher efficiency, faster switching speeds, and reduced energy losses in EVs [6]. Companies like Toyota are exploring SiC technology in power control units, aiming to enhance the efficiency of electric powertrains (https://media.toyota.co.uk/).

NIO, a Chinese EV manufacturer, is pioneering a modular approach to batteries. Rather than lengthy charging times, NIO's battery swapping stations allow drivers to replace depleted batteries with fully charged ones swiftly. This modularity not only addresses range anxiety but also contributes to the scalability and adaptability of EVs. Figure 6 presents a NIO swap station concept (https://www.nio.com/nio-power).



FIGURE 5 Rivian's dual-motor system. (Source: https://www.mobileye.com/, used with permission.)

Hyundai's NEXO exemplifies advancements in fuel cell technology, featuring a highly modular fuel cell stack. The modularity allows for flexible integration into various vehicle platforms, providing manufacturers with the adaptability to incorporate fuel cell technology across different vehicle types, from sedans to SUVs (https://www.hyundai.news).

Bosch, a global technology company, is at the forefront of developing smart inverters and power electronics for EVs. These components play a crucial role in managing energy flow, maximizing efficiency, and optimizing the performance of electric powertrains. The integration of intelligent power electronics enhances the overall driving experience while contributing to energy efficiency (https://www.bosch-mobility.com/). The latest Bosch inverter generation represents a significant technological leap in EV powertrains. Utilizing SiC semiconductor technology enhances the efficiency of our fourthgeneration inverters, extending the range of vehicles. With increased power density, reduced losses, and a compact design, it emerges as a compelling choice for EV applications (Figure 7).

Panasonic, a key player in battery technology, is actively involved in developing advanced battery management systems. These systems monitor and control various aspects of battery



FIGURE 6 NIO boosting its EV battery lease business with swap station expansion. (Source: https://www.nio.com/, used with permission).



FIGURE 7 Bosch eAxle systems can be used in a variety of electric or hybrid vehicles. (Source: https://www.bosch-mobility. com/, used with permission.)

performance, ensuring optimal charging and discharging cycles. This precision contributes to the longevity and safety of EV batteries (https:// industrial.panasonic.com/).

As the automotive industry forges ahead, the convergence of these elements paints a picture of powertrains that are not only efficient and sustainable but also highly adaptable. The integration of advanced semiconductors, modular energy solutions, and innovative powertrains signifies a transformative era where vehicles are not just modes of transportation but intricately connected, intelligent platforms on wheels. This holistic approach to alternative propulsion is propelling the automotive industry into a future defined by sustainability, efficiency, and technological excellence.

Connected Vehicles: The Internet of Things

In an era dominated by digital connectivity, vehicles are becoming integral components of the Internet of Things (IoT). The integration of vehicles into this expansive network represents a paradigm shift in the automotive industry. Connected vehicles leverage a sophisticated web of sensors, communication systems, and data analytics to create a dynamic ecosystem where cars communicate not only with each other but also with the surrounding infrastructure. This connectivity facilitates real-time data exchange, transforming vehicles into intelligent entities capable of adapting to changing conditions and providing a myriad of services beyond traditional transportation.

The advent of connected vehicles brings forth a host of benefits, with safety, navigation and the overall driving experience taking center stage. Vehicle-to-vehicle communication enables cars to share critical information, such as traffic conditions and potential hazards, contributing to a safer driving environment. Integrated navigation systems use real-time data to offer dynamic route optimization, avoiding congestion and road closures. Moreover, the driving experience is enriched through connected features, like predictive maintenance alerts, personalized infotainment, and seamless integration with smart-home devices, creating a cohesive and userfriendly automotive ecosystem.

However, as vehicles become more connected, the industry faces challenges that demand careful consideration. The increased complexity of connected systems introduces vulnerabilities that could be exploited by malicious actors. Ensuring the cybersecurity of connected vehicles is paramount to protect against unauthorized access, data breaches, and potential safety risks. Striking the right balance between connectivity and security requires collaboration among automotive manufacturers, cybersecurity experts, and regulatory bodies to establish robust standards and protocols that safeguard both the privacy and safety of vehicle occupants [7].

Recent examples of connected vehicle integration are:

Tesla full self-driving: Tesla's full self-driving package exemplifies the integration of connected features, constantly receiving over-the-air updates to enhance vehicle capabilities. Tesla vehicles utilize real-time data from their extensive fleet to improve autonomous driving algorithms, showcasing the power of connected systems in advancing driving technologies (https://www.tesla.com/).

- Audi traffic light information: Audi's traffic light information system connects to smart city infrastructure, allowing compatible vehicles to receive real-time data about traffic signal timings. This integration enhances fuel efficiency by advising drivers on the optimal speed to catch green lights, showcasing the potential of vehicle-to-infrastructure connectivity (https://media.audiusa. com/). The Audi networks concept with traffic lights is presented in Figure 8.
- General Motors' OnStar: General Motors' OnStar system has been a pioneer in connected vehicle services, offering features such as emergency assistance, navigation support, and remote vehicle diagnostics. This early example laid the foundation for the connected vehicle services that are now commonplace in the industry (https://www.onstar.com/).



FIGURE 8 Audi networks with traffic lights in Europe. (Source: https://media.audiusa.com/, used with permission.)

The integration of vehicles into the IoT heralds a new era in transportation, where connectivity not only improves safety and efficiency but also transforms the driving experience. While the benefits are vast, addressing the challenges of cybersecurity is crucial to ensure that the future of connected vehicles is both innovative and secure.

Smart Infrastructures

In the relentless pursuit of a connected future, smart infrastructure emerges as a linchpin, seamlessly intertwining with cutting-edge vehicle technology. The marriage of smart roads and traffic management systems not only complements but actively enhances the capabilities of modern vehicles.

Smart infrastructure, exemplified by projects such as Singapore's Smart Nation initiative, introduces a dynamic synergy with vehicle technology to alleviate traffic bottlenecks [8].

Intelligent traffic lights, synchronized with real-time traffic data, optimize signal timings, smoothing the flow of vehicles through intersections. This synchronization, demonstrated in cities like Barcelona, leads to reduced stop-and-go traffic, minimizing congestion and enhancing overall traffic efficiency [9].

Vehicle-to-infrastructure communication heralds a new era of safety on our roads. Audi's traffic light information system, operational in select cities like Las Vegas (https://media. audiusa.com/), allows vehicles to receive real-time data from connected traffic lights. This information, transmitted through vehicle-to-infrastructure communication, empowers drivers with insights into upcoming signal changes, promoting smoother stops and starts. The potential reduction in sudden stops contributes significantly to overall road safety, creating a more synchronized and secure traffic environment.

Smart infrastructure extends beyond individual traffic lights to

encompass comprehensive traffic management systems. The Los Angeles Express Park initiative employs real-time data to adjust parking prices dynamically, influencing driver behavior and distributing traffic across the city. By intelligently managing parking availability, this system reduces the time spent circling for parking spaces, subsequently decreasing overall traffic congestion and emissions.

In the realm of predictive analytics, IBM's intelligent transportation system stands out (https://www. ibm.com/). By analyzing historical and real-time traffic data, this system forecasts traffic patterns and congestion points. As a result, authorities can proactively implement measures to mitigate potential traffic issues. This predictive approach, evident in projects in cities like Stockholm, fosters a more preemptive and responsive traffic management strategy.

The integration of smart infrastructure with vehicle technology marks a pivotal moment in the evolution of transportation systems. These industrial examples showcase the tangible benefits of a harmonious relationship between smart infrastructure and vehicles, promising improved traffic flow, reduced congestion, and heightened safety. As we navigate toward a connected future, the fusion of intelligent roads with advanced vehicles is set to redefine the landscape of transportation.

Challenges and Considerations

As the automotive industry hurtles toward a future defined by autonomous driving, it is essential to acknowledge and navigate through a myriad of challenges that could shape the trajectory of this transformative journey. Regulatory hurdles stand as a formidable obstacle, with varying standards and policies across different regions posing a complex landscape for the deployment of autonomous vehicles. Public acceptance, influenced by concerns about safety, privacy, and the relinquishing of control, remains a critical factor in determining the success and widespread adoption of autonomous driving technology. Furthermore, the readiness of infrastructure, encompassing not only physical roads but also communication networks and charging stations, must align with the sophisticated demands of autonomous systems.

In response to these challenges, the automotive industry is engaged in robust research and development endeavors aimed at overcoming regulatory, public, and infrastructural barriers. Collaborations among industry leaders, government bodies, and research institutions are actively shaping the future of autonomous driving.

Examples of some ongoing efforts are:

- Waymo's continued testing and collaboration: Waymo, a pioneer in autonomous driving, continues to invest in extensive testing programs to enhance the safety and reliability of its self-driving technology. The company collaborates with various stakeholders, including regulators, to establish best practices and contribute to the development of standardized regulations for autonomous vehicles (https://waymo.com/).
- Global harmonization of standards: International organizations, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), are working toward harmonizing global regulations for autonomous vehicles. The UNECE's World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (https://unece. org/) aims to create a unified framework that facilitates the global deployment of autonomous driving technologies while ensuring a high level of safety.
- Infrastructure investments by governments: Governments worldwide are recognizing the need for infrastructure upgrades to accommodate autonomous vehicles.

Initiatives involving the development of smart roads, dedicated lanes for connected and autonomous vehicles, and the deployment of 5G or 6G communication networks are underway.

Educational and awareness campaigns: Addressing public concerns and building trust are crucial components of the path forward. Companies like Cruise, in collaboration with academic institutions and advocacy groups, are engaging in educational campaigns to increase public awareness about autonomous technology. These efforts aim to demystify the technology and foster a better understanding of its potential benefits and safety features [10].

The challenges on the road to autonomous driving are complex, but ongoing efforts in research, development, and collaboration signal a commitment to overcoming these obstacles. As innovations continue to unfold and regulatory frameworks mature, the industry is poised to address the concerns and pave the way for a future where autonomous driving becomes a safe and widely accepted reality.

Driving Into the Future

In the fast-paced realm of automotive technology, the evolution witnessed in future vehicles is nothing short of revolutionary. From the imminent arrival of autonomous driving to the rise of alternative propulsion methods and the seamless integration into the IoT, the landscape of transportation is undergoing a profound transformation. These emerging technologies not only promise heightened efficiency, safety, and sustainability but also herald a paradigm shift in how we conceive and engage with our vehicles.

The exploration into the future of vehicles has illuminated the remarkable strides made in diverse technological domains. The road ahead includes a transition toward autonomous driving, where vehicles evolve from mere modes of transportation into intelligent entities capable of navigating the complexities of the modern world. Alternative propulsion methods, notably the surge of EVs and the potential of hydrogen fuel cells, mark a departure from traditional fuels, signaling a commitment to environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the connectivity woven into the fabric of vehicles, turning them into nodes on the IoT, holds the promise of safer, more efficient, and seamlessly integrated transportation systems.

As we stand on the cusp of this transformative era, it becomes evident that these emerging technologies are not just incremental advancements but catalysts for a complete reimagining of our transportation landscape. Autonomous vehicles have the potential to redefine mobility, making it safer, more accessible, and tailored to individual preferences. Electric- and hydrogen-powered vehicles are not merely alternatives but the vanguard of a sustainable transportation future, offering cleaner alternatives that echo a global commitment to environmental stewardship. The connectivity of vehicles to the digital grid presents a vision of a highly orchestrated, data-driven mobility ecosystem, where vehicles seamlessly communicate with each other and the infrastructure, fundamentally changing the way we move.

In conclusion, the advent of these transformative technologies is not just about changing how we move from point A to B; it is about redefining our very perceptions of transportation. The vehicle is no longer a static possession but a dynamic and intelligent companion, navigating the intricacies of our lives with safety, efficiency, and environmental consciousness at its core. The future promises a transportation experience that transcends the conventional, weaving together innovation, sustainability, and connectivity into a tapestry that reshapes our daily lives.

As we drive into this future, the fusion of autonomy, alternative propulsion, and connectivity paints a picture of transportation that is not just a means to an end but an integral part of a smarter, more harmonized world. The journey is not without its challenges, but the vision is compelling: A future where vehicles are not just tools but partners, navigating us into a new era of transportation excellence.

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