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Privacy-Preserving Data Analysis: Implications of Clean Rooms

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Abstract

The paper explores the technical efficacy of data clean rooms in facilitating privacy-preserving data analysis, mitigating the risk of re-identification, and ensuring compliance with stringent data protection regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA). Moreover, it delves into the legal and regulatory implications of data clean rooms, addressing international data transfer considerations, conducting Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), fulfilling data breach notification requirements, and navigating legal challenges and precedents. Beyond their technical and legal dimensions, the paper elucidates the societal impact and ethical considerations surrounding data clean rooms. It highlights their role in fostering trust, transparency, and accountability, promoting data equity and inclusion, ensuring the ethical use of data, shaping public perception and acceptance, and balancing innovation with privacy concerns. In conclusion, the paper underscores the transformative potential of data clean rooms in navigating the complexities of the data landscape. By promoting responsible data stewardship and ethical data practices, data clean rooms stand as a beacon of innovation and resilience, epitomizing the imperative to safeguard individual privacy rights while harnessing the transformative potential of data-driven insights.

Keywords: data privacy, data security, data clean room

Introduction:

Data clean rooms have emerged as a pivotal tool in the contemporary landscape of data privacy and security, offering a controlled environment for sensitive data analysis while preserving individual privacy rights and ensuring regulatory compliance. This introduction serves to delineate the profound impact of data clean rooms within the context of data privacy and security, elucidating their significance, mechanisms, and implications.

In recent years, the proliferation of data-driven technologies and the digitization of myriad aspects of human existence have engendered a concomitant increase in concerns pertaining to data privacy and security. As individuals and organizations generate and amass vast troves of data, ranging from personal information to proprietary business insights, the imperative to safeguard these data assets against unauthorized access, misuse, and breaches has assumed paramount importance. Concurrently, regulatory frameworks such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) have heightened the onus on entities to uphold stringent standards of data protection and privacy.

Amidst this backdrop, data clean rooms have emerged as a pioneering solution that reconciles the imperatives of data analysis with the imperatives of data privacy. A data clean room, often conceptualized as a secure enclave or virtual environment, facilitates collaborative data analysis while obviating the need for direct access to raw, personally identifiable information (PII). By employing a suite of cryptographic and anonymization techniques, data clean rooms anonymize and aggregate individual-level data, thereby mitigating the risk of re-identification and unauthorized disclosure. Furthermore, data clean rooms incorporate robust access controls and audit trails, ensuring traceability and accountability throughout the data analysis process.

The impact of data clean rooms reverberates across multiple dimensions, encompassing technical, legal, and societal facets. From a technical standpoint, data clean rooms afford researchers and analysts the opportunity to harness the latent value embedded within vast datasets without compromising individual privacy. By facilitating controlled access to sanitized data subsets, clean rooms foster innovation and insights while mitigating the risk of privacy violations. Moreover, the adoption of data clean rooms augments organizational resilience against regulatory scrutiny and punitive measures by demonstrating a proactive commitment to data privacy and security.

Beyond their technical efficacy, data clean rooms wield profound implications for legal and regulatory compliance. In an era characterized by an increasingly stringent regulatory landscape, entities must navigate a labyrinthine array of data protection mandates and privacy regulations. Data clean rooms offer a pragmatic pathway towards compliance, enabling organizations to conduct data analysis in a manner that aligns with the principles of data minimization, purpose limitation, and privacy by design. By decoupling data analysis from raw data repositories, clean rooms circumvent the need for wholesale data transfers, thereby minimizing exposure to regulatory liabilities and fines.

Societally, the advent of data clean rooms signifies a paradigm shift in the dynamics of data governance and stewardship. As stakeholders grapple with the ethical imperatives of data utilization, clean rooms emerge as a salient embodiment of responsible data practices. By prioritizing privacy-preserving data analysis methodologies, clean rooms engender trust and confidence among individuals, engendering a virtuous cycle of data sharing and collaboration. Moreover, by fostering a culture of transparency and accountability, clean rooms catalyze broader conversations surrounding data ethics and governance, thereby fostering a more robust and equitable data ecosystem.

In summation, the advent of data clean rooms heralds a transformative epoch in the realm of data privacy and security. By reconciling the imperatives of data analysis with the imperatives of privacy protection, clean rooms offer a principled and pragmatic framework for navigating the complexities of the data landscape. As organizations and policymakers grapple with the exigencies of the digital age, data clean rooms stand as a beacon of innovation and resilience, epitomizing the imperative to safeguard individual privacy rights while harnessing the transformative potential of data-driven insights.

Understanding Data Clean Rooms

Definition and Conceptual Framework

Data clean rooms represent a controlled environment designed to facilitate collaborative data analysis while preserving individual privacy and ensuring regulatory compliance. The concept draws inspiration from the clean room methodology employed in semiconductor manufacturing, wherein stringent protocols are implemented to prevent contamination and ensure product integrity. Similarly, in the context of data analysis, clean rooms serve as a secure enclave where researchers and analysts can access and analyze sensitive datasets without direct exposure to raw, personally identifiable information (PII).

At its core, a data clean room embodies the principles of privacy by design and data minimization, striving to strike a delicate balance between the imperatives of data utility and the imperatives of privacy protection. By implementing a suite of cryptographic and anonymization techniques, clean rooms sanitize individual-level data, thereby mitigating the risk of re-identification and unauthorized disclosure. Additionally, clean rooms incorporate robust access controls and audit trails, ensuring traceability and accountability throughout the data analysis process (Acar et al, 2018).

Mechanisms and Components

The operational mechanics of a data clean room are underpinned by a constellation of technical and procedural safeguards aimed at safeguarding data privacy and security. Central to this framework is the concept of differential privacy, wherein noise is intentionally injected into aggregated datasets to obscure individual-level information while preserving statistical validity. Differential privacy serves as the bedrock upon which clean rooms are built, enabling researchers to extract meaningful insights from sanitized datasets without compromising privacy. Key components of a data clean room include:

- Secure Enclave: A physically or virtually isolated environment where data analysis takes place, shielded from external threats and unauthorized access.
- Anonymization Techniques: Cryptographic algorithms, such as homomorphic encryption and secure multiparty computation, are employed to anonymize individual-level data while preserving its utility for analysis.
- Access Controls: Role-based access controls (RBAC) and multi-factor authentication (MFA) mechanisms restrict access to authorized personnel, thereby minimizing the risk of data breaches.
- Audit Trails: Comprehensive audit trails track user interactions and data accesses within the clean room environment, facilitating forensic analysis and ensuring accountability.

Types of Data Clean Rooms

Data clean rooms manifest in various forms, each tailored to specific use cases and organizational requirements. Common types of data clean rooms include:

- On-Premises Clean Rooms: Physical facilities maintained by organizations to facilitate internal data analysis while maintaining full control over data access and security.
- Cloud-Based Clean Rooms: Virtual environments hosted on cloud infrastructure, offering scalability and flexibility for collaborative data analysis across geographically dispersed teams.
- Third-Party Clean Rooms: Managed services provided by specialized vendors, offering expertise in data anonymization, security, and regulatory compliance.

Historical Development and Evolution

The genesis of data clean rooms can be traced to the seminal work of statisticians and cryptographers grappling with the challenges of privacy-preserving data analysis. Pioneering initiatives such as the U.S. Census Bureau’s OnTheMap project and Microsoft’s Private AI Collaborative Research Institute laid the groundwork for modern clean room methodologies, showcasing the feasibility and efficacy of privacy-preserving data analysis at scale.

Over time, the proliferation of data-driven technologies and the maturation of cryptographic techniques have catalyzed the widespread adoption of data clean rooms across industries ranging from healthcare and finance to telecommunications and government. Today, data clean rooms stand as a testament to the iterative evolution of privacy-enhancing technologies, embodying the imperative to harness the transformative potential of data while safeguarding individual privacy rights.

Key Stakeholders and Participants

The ecosystem of data clean rooms encompasses a diverse array of stakeholders, each playing a pivotal role in shaping their design, implementation, and governance. Key stakeholders include:

- Data Owners: Organizations and entities responsible for curating and stewarding sensitive datasets, including government agencies, healthcare providers, and financial institutions.
- Data Analysts: Researchers, data scientists, and analysts tasked with deriving insights and value from sanitized datasets within the clean room environment.
- Regulators: Government agencies and regulatory bodies tasked with overseeing data privacy and security compliance, ensuring adherence to legal frameworks such as the GDPR, CCPA, and HIPAA.
- Technology Providers: Software vendors, cloud service providers, and cybersecurity firms offering solutions tailored to the unique requirements of data clean rooms, including encryption, anonymization, and access control technologies.

In summary, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of data clean rooms, delineating their conceptual framework, operational mechanisms, historical development, and key stakeholders. By elucidating the multifaceted nature of clean room environments, this chapter sets the stage for a deeper exploration of their impact on data privacy and security in subsequent chapters.

The Role of Data Clean Rooms in Data Privacy and Security

Privacy-Preserving Data Analysis

Privacy-preserving data analysis lies at the heart of data clean rooms, enabling researchers and analysts to derive meaningful insights from sensitive datasets without compromising individual privacy. Central to this endeavor is the principle of differential privacy, which seeks to maximize the utility of aggregated data while minimizing the risk of privacy breaches. By injecting controlled noise into aggregated datasets, differential privacy obscures individual-level information, thereby safeguarding against re-identification attacks and unauthorized disclosures.

Within the context of data clean rooms, privacy-preserving techniques such as secure multiparty computation (SMPC), federated learning, and homomorphic encryption enable collaborative data analysis without necessitating the disclosure of raw, personally identifiable information (PII). SMPC allows multiple parties to compute aggregate statistics over distributed datasets without sharing raw data, thereby preserving data privacy. Federated learning leverages decentralized training algorithms to iteratively improve machine learning models while keeping data localized on user devices, mitigating privacy risks associated with centralized data repositories. Homomorphic encryption enables computation on encrypted data, allowing analysts to perform operations such as addition and multiplication on encrypted inputs without decrypting them, thus preserving data privacy throughout the analysis process (Dwork, 2006).

Mitigating the Risk of Re-identification

A core challenge in data analysis is the risk of re-identification, wherein anonymized data can be linked back to specific individuals through auxiliary information or data linkage techniques. Data clean rooms employ a variety of strategies to mitigate this risk and uphold the anonymity of individuals within sanitized datasets. Differential privacy mechanisms introduce randomness into aggregated datasets, making it computationally infeasible to isolate individual contributions. Additionally, k-anonymity and l-diversity techniques ensure that each record in the dataset is indistinguishable from at least k other records with respect to a set of attributes, thereby thwarting re-identification attempts.

Moreover, clean rooms implement strict access controls and audit trails to monitor and restrict data access, ensuring that only authorized personnel can interact with sanitized datasets. Role-based access controls (RBAC) limit data access to individuals with specific roles or permissions, while comprehensive audit trails track user interactions and data accesses within the clean room environment, facilitating forensic analysis and ensuring accountability(Narayanan and Shmatikov, 2008).

Regulatory Compliance and Governance

Data clean rooms play a pivotal role in enabling organizations to achieve regulatory compliance with a myriad of data protection mandates and privacy regulations. By decoupling data analysis from raw data repositories and implementing robust privacy-preserving methodologies, clean rooms offer a pragmatic pathway towards compliance with regulations such as the GDPR, CCPA, and HIPAA.

The GDPR, for instance, mandates stringent requirements for the processing of personal data, including the implementation of privacy-enhancing technologies and measures to ensure data security and confidentiality. Data clean rooms enable organizations to conduct data analysis in a manner that aligns with the principles of data minimization, purpose limitation, and privacy by design, thereby mitigating the risk of non-compliance and regulatory penalties.

Similarly, the CCPA imposes obligations on organizations to implement reasonable security measures to safeguard personal information and provide consumers with transparency and control over their data. Data clean rooms facilitate compliance with the CCPA by enabling organizations to conduct data analysis in a privacy-preserving manner while minimizing exposure to regulatory liabilities and fines.

Data Security Best Practices

In addition to preserving data privacy, data clean rooms adhere to stringent data security best practices to safeguard against unauthorized access, data breaches, and malicious attacks. These best practices encompass a range of technical and procedural safeguards, including:

- Encryption: Data-at-rest and data-in-transit encryption mechanisms protect sensitive data from unauthorized access and interception.
- Authentication and Access Controls: Multi-factor authentication (MFA) and role-based access controls (RBAC) restrict access to authorized personnel, ensuring that only authenticated users can interact with sanitized datasets.

- Data Masking and Pseudonymization: Masking sensitive attributes and replacing them with pseudonyms further obfuscates individual-level information, reducing the risk of unauthorized disclosure.
- Regular Audits and Monitoring: Continuous monitoring and auditing of user interactions and data accesses within the clean room environment detect and mitigate potential security threats in real-time.

By implementing these security best practices, data clean rooms bolster organizational resilience against cyber threats and ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of sensitive datasets throughout the data analysis lifecycle.

Case Studies and Examples

To illustrate the practical efficacy and impact of data clean rooms, this section presents case studies and examples showcasing their application across various industries and use cases. Examples may include:

- Healthcare: Utilizing data clean rooms to analyze electronic health records (EHRs) while preserving patient privacy and complying with regulatory requirements such as HIPAA.
- Financial Services: Leveraging clean room environments to perform fraud detection and risk analysis on transactional data while safeguarding customer confidentiality and regulatory compliance.
- Government and Public Sector: Employing data clean rooms to aggregate and analyze census data, socioeconomic indicators, and public health statistics for policy formulation and decision-making.

Through these case studies and examples, readers gain insights into the diverse applications and benefits of data clean rooms in safeguarding data privacy, ensuring regulatory compliance, and unlocking actionable insights from sensitive datasets.

In conclusion, Chapter elucidates the pivotal role of data clean rooms in upholding data privacy and security within the context of contemporary data analysis. By employing privacy-preserving techniques, mitigating the risk of reidentification, ensuring regulatory compliance, adhering to data security best practices, and showcasing real-world case studies, this chapter underscores the transformative potential of clean room environments in reconciling the imperatives of data utility with the imperatives of privacy protection.

Legal and Regulatory Implications of Data Clean Rooms

GDPR and CCPA Compliance

Data clean rooms play a crucial role in facilitating compliance with stringent data protection regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)0e6 (2024) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA)873 (2018). Under the GDPR, organizations are required to implement technical and organizational measures to ensure the protection of personal data and uphold the rights of data subjects. Data clean rooms provide a mechanism for organizations to conduct data analysis in a privacy-preserving manner, thereby minimizing the risk of non-compliance with GDPR requirements.

Key provisions of the GDPR relevant to data clean rooms include:

- Lawful Basis for Processing: Organizations must establish a lawful basis for processing personal data, such as consent, contractual necessity, or legitimate interests. Data clean rooms enable organizations to analyze personal data for specified purposes while preserving individual privacy rights and complying with lawful processing requirements.

- Data Minimization and Purpose Limitation: The GDPR mandates that organizations collect and process only the minimum amount of personal data necessary for a specific purpose. Data clean rooms adhere to the principles of data minimization and purpose limitation by anonymizing and aggregating individual-level data, thereby reducing the risk of unauthorized disclosure and ensuring compliance with GDPR requirements.
- Security of Processing: Organizations must implement appropriate technical and organizational measures to ensure the security of personal data. Data clean rooms employ encryption, access controls, and audit trails to safeguard against unauthorized access, data breaches, and malicious attacks, thereby enhancing the security of data processing operations and facilitating GDPR compliance.

Similarly, the CCPA imposes obligations on organizations to provide consumers with transparency and control over their personal information and implement reasonable security measures to safeguard personal data. Data clean rooms enable organizations to conduct data analysis in a privacy-preserving manner while complying with CCPA requirements, thereby mitigating the risk of non-compliance and regulatory penalties.

International Data Transfer Considerations

Data clean rooms also address the challenges associated with international data transfers, particularly considering the GDPR’s restrictions on the transfer of personal data outside the European Economic Area (EEA) to countries that do not provide an adequate level of data protection. By anonymizing and aggregating individual-level data within the clean room environment, organizations can minimize the need for cross-border data transfers while still deriving actionable insights from sensitive datasets.

Moreover, data clean rooms offer a mechanism for organizations to implement appropriate safeguards for international data transfers, such as standard contractual clauses (SCCs) or binding corporate rules (BCRs), by ensuring that data processing operations are conducted in accordance with the principles of data protection and privacy preservation.

Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs)

Under the GDPR, organizations are required to conduct Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) for high-risk data processing activities that are likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of data subjects. Data clean rooms provide a framework for organizations to assess the potential privacy risks associated with data analysis activities and implement appropriate mitigating measures to safeguard against such risks (Rothstein, 2010).

DPIAs conducted in the context of data clean rooms typically include an assessment of the types of personal data involved, the purposes of data processing, the potential impact on data subjects, and the measures implemented to mitigate privacy risks. By conducting DPIAs, organizations can demonstrate accountability and transparency in their data processing activities and ensure compliance with GDPR requirements. In the event of a breach, organizations can leverage the comprehensive audit trails maintained within the clean room environment to conduct forensic analysis and ascertain the scope and impact of the breach, thereby facilitating timely notification and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Data Breach Notification Requirements

Data clean rooms also address the data breach notification requirements imposed by the GDPR and other data protection regulations. In the event of a data breach involving personal data processed within the clean room environment, organizations are required to notify the relevant supervisory authorities and affected data subjects without undue delay.

Data clean rooms mitigate the risk of data breaches by implementing robust security measures, such as encryption, access controls, and audit trails, to safeguard against unauthorized access and malicious attacks.

Legal Challenges and Precedents

Despite their efficacy in facilitating regulatory compliance and privacy protection, data clean rooms may encounter legal challenges and precedents that shape their operational frameworks and governance structures. Legal challenges may arise in areas such as data sovereignty, jurisdictional conflicts, and the interpretation of regulatory requirements in the context of data clean rooms.

Precedents set by regulatory authorities, courts, and legal scholars play a crucial role in defining the boundaries and standards for data clean room operations. Landmark cases and rulings may establish precedents regarding the permissible uses of data clean rooms, the applicability of data protection regulations, and the rights and obligations of organizations and data subjects in the context of data analysis activities.

In summary, Chapter delves into the legal and regulatory implications of data clean rooms, elucidating their role in facilitating compliance with data protection regulations such as the GDPR and CCPA, addressing international data transfer considerations, conducting Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), fulfilling data breach notification requirements, and navigating legal challenges and precedents. By providing clarity and guidance on the legal landscape surrounding data clean rooms, this chapter empowers organizations to leverage clean room environments effectively while ensuring regulatory compliance and privacy protection.

Societal Impact and Ethical Considerations

Trust, Transparency, and Accountability

Data clean rooms have significant implications for fostering trust, transparency, and accountability in the realm of data governance. By prioritizing privacy-preserving data analysis methodologies, clean rooms engender trust among individuals and organizations, thereby fostering a culture of responsible data stewardship. Transparency in the operation of clean room environments, including clear documentation of data processing activities and adherence to ethical guidelines, enhances trust and confidence in the data analysis process(Howe, 2008).

Furthermore, accountability mechanisms within data clean rooms, such as comprehensive audit trails and access controls, ensure that data processing activities are conducted in a responsible and accountable manner. By promoting transparency and accountability, clean rooms facilitate greater trust *Privacy-Preserving Data Analysis: Implications of Clean Rooms* between data owners, data analysts, and data subjects, thereby fostering a more robust and ethical data ecosystem.

Data Equity and Inclusion

Data clean rooms play a pivotal role in promoting data equity and inclusion by democratizing access to data-driven insights and fostering collaboration across diverse stakeholder groups. By anonymizing and aggregating individual-level data within the clean room environment, organizations can mitigate privacy concerns and facilitate broader data sharing initiatives.

Moreover, clean rooms offer a level playing field for data analysis, enabling researchers and analysts from diverse backgrounds to access and analyze sanitized datasets without bias or discrimination. By promoting data equity and inclusion, clean rooms empower marginalized communities and underrepresented groups to participate in data-driven innovation and decision-making processes, thereby fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

Ethical Use of Data

Ethical considerations are paramount in the operation of data clean rooms, as they entail the responsible use of sensitive data to derive insights and make informed decisions. Clean rooms adhere to ethical principles such as privacy by design, data minimization, and purpose limitation, ensuring that data analysis activities are conducted in a manner that respects individual privacy rights and upholds ethical standards(boyd and Crawford, 2012).

Furthermore, clean rooms promote ethical data practices by implementing safeguards to prevent data misuse, unauthorized access, and unintended consequences. By prioritizing ethical considerations in data analysis activities, clean rooms serve as a model for responsible data stewardship and promote a culture of ethical use of data within organizations and across industries.

Public Perception and Acceptance

The public perception and acceptance of data clean rooms play a crucial role in shaping their adoption and impact on society. Clear communication and transparency regarding the operation and governance of clean room environments are essential for building public trust and confidence in the data analysis process.

Moreover, education and awareness initiatives that highlight the benefits and safeguards of data clean rooms can help alleviate concerns and misconceptions surrounding data privacy and security. By engaging with stakeholders and soliciting feedback from the public, organizations can ensure that clean room environments are aligned with societal values and expectations, thereby fostering greater acceptance and adoption of privacy-preserving data analysis methodologies.

Balancing Innovation with Privacy Concerns

Data clean rooms strike a delicate balance between fostering innovation and addressing privacy concerns, enabling organizations to derive insights from sensitive datasets while safeguarding individual privacy rights. By implementing privacy-preserving techniques such as anonymization, encryption, and access controls, clean rooms enable researchers and analysts to harness the transformative potential of data while mitigating the risk of privacy violations.

Furthermore, clean rooms facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing across diverse stakeholder groups, fostering innovation and creativity in data analysis endeavors. By striking a balance between innovation and privacy concerns, clean rooms pave the way for responsible and ethical data-driven innovation that benefits society.

In summary, Chapter explores the societal impact and ethical considerations surrounding data clean rooms, highlighting their role in fostering trust, transparency, and accountability, promoting data equity and inclusion, ensuring the ethical use of data, shaping public perception and acceptance, and balancing innovation with privacy concerns. By addressing these societal and ethical dimensions, clean rooms contribute to the development of a more ethical, equitable, and responsible data ecosystem.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this comprehensive examination of data clean rooms illuminates their pivotal role in navigating the complex landscape of data privacy, security, and ethical data stewardship. From their conceptual inception to their practical implementation, data clean rooms epitomize the imperative to reconcile the imperatives of data utility with the imperatives of privacy protection.

Throughout this paper, we have delineated the multifaceted dimensions of data clean rooms, elucidating their mechanisms, implications, and societal impact. We have explored their capacity to enable privacy-preserving data analysis, mitigate the risk of re-identification, facilitate regulatory compliance, and foster a culture of trust, transparency, and accountability.

Furthermore, we have examined the legal and regulatory implications of data clean rooms, navigating the intricacies of GDPR and CCPA compliance, addressing international data transfer considerations, conducting Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), fulfilling data breach notification requirements, and navigating legal challenges and precedents.

Moreover, we have delved into the societal impact and ethical considerations surrounding data clean rooms, highlighting their role in promoting data equity and inclusion, ensuring the ethical use of data, shaping public perception and acceptance, and balancing innovation with privacy concerns.

In essence, data clean rooms represent a paradigm shift in the dynamics of data governance and stewardship, offering a principled and pragmatic framework for reconciling the imperatives of data utility with the imperatives of *Privacy-Preserving Data Analysis: Implications of Clean Rooms*

privacy protection. As organizations and policymakers grapple with the exigencies of the digital age, data clean rooms stand as a beacon of innovation and resilience, epitomizing the imperative to safeguard individual privacy rights while harnessing the transformative potential of data-driven insights.

As we look to the future, it is imperative that we continue to uphold the principles of privacy, security, and ethical data use in the design and operation of clean room environments. By fostering collaboration, transparency, and accountability, clean rooms pave the way for a more ethical, equitable, and responsible data ecosystem—one that empowers individuals, fosters innovation, and serves the collective interests of society.

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