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Negotiations on Place and Heritage: Public Participation as Social Drama

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Abstract: In his work on political performances and their symbolic features, Victor Turner probes how social actions, resulting from the flouting of social norms of behavior and conduct in social communities by certain actors, acquire form through a four-step ritualized movement. This paper suggests that the same four phases may occur in democratic efforts to increase the public's participation in social planning. Drawing on the case studies in three cities, this paper investigates how individuals became mobilized in negotiations regarding specific sites. Through focusing on the meanings, intentions and aspirations of the concerned actors, the paper analyzes the particular circumstances in which the actors involved in a participatory process in these cities operate. The cities are Helsingborg and Barsebäck in Sweden and Cape Town in South Africa. It will be demonstrated that in such engagement processes, participatory practice is situated in a certain historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to these procedures. Further, this participatory process manifests a complex situation where cultural identity, diverse interests, expediency and morality are indivisible.

Keywords: Public Participation, Social Drama, Place, Heritage

Introduction

Public bodies are now collaborating with a wide range of actors in networks to facilitate communication between government, interest groups and business regarding the making of specific decisions in societal planning (Newman et al. 2004). Research into this field has provided insights into different underlying motivations for public participation; they may build on nation-states' desire to pursue democratic ideals of legitimacy, transparency and accountability or derive from nation-states' desire to achieve popular support for potentially unpopular decisions (Hendry 2004). Public participatory measures may also be undertaken to make more effective the implementation of political decisions through the integration of local knowledge and experience (Farrington 1998). Participatory endeavors may also be motivated by the belief that public participation techniques might foster social capital (Demediuk et al. 2012; Fishkin 1995) and even result in the transformation of the communities involved and supporting the building of environmental awareness (Lawrence 2006). However, investigations of efforts to increase local participation and inspire collaboration across various levels and scales have highlighted that measures involving an array of actors and organizations may prove difficult to realize (Tapela et al. 2007) due to such measures being employed in order to serve the interests of dominant actors (Martin 2007). From this perspective, citizenry inclusion in planning can be considered a social form expressing and even reinforcing social structures and power relations (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cox 2010; van Eeten 1999).

In this article, we explore the motivations for engaging in political activity of this kind by focusing on the social, cultural and organizational conditions that create and sustain participatory practices and their outcomes. In this, we draw on anthropologist Victor Turner's theory on symbolic action in human society, which he developed after his ethnographic work among the Ndembu in Northwest Zambia in the late 1960s. This theoretical approach, referred by Turner as the social drama theory, is employed in the exploration of three cases of participatory processes in South Africa and Sweden. It will be demonstrated how anthropological practice-based and symbolic approaches are useful in the investigation of the attempts by local and national authorities to incorporate residents in the planning of new futures. Measures to increase inter-organizational communication and coordination in decision making are constituted and accomplished "by means of [their] contextual and often implicit framing in terms of selections, attributions of meaning, and normativity" (Boholm et al. 2013, 108). This means that when such measures, intended to result in the development of efficient and lasting decisions, incorporate a great range of diverse knowledge and values into the planning process, this is likely to mobilize issues revolving around cultural identity, diverse interests, expediency and morality (Bailey 2001; Paley 2002; Vincent 1978). These, as will be demonstrated, are indivisible, particularly when the inclusive process is staged in response to some form of conflict. The article will highlight how local and organizational contextual dynamics concerning

the nature of the issues and stakeholders' relationships with the issues in question affect and may even inhibit efficient and lasting outcomes of decisions, and transition from "current states to desired ones" (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011, 4). It will thus be highlighted how frameworks of how to understand and embrace the world, and act accordingly, are likely to underpin and structure participatory measures (Healy 2003). We thus explore the cultural embedding of interaction in participatory processes.

Theoretical Framework

Politically based planning initiatives and practices may be perceived as illegitimate from a local point of view, and hence neither be fully supported nor complied with (Sjölander-Lindqvist 2008). Even though such decisions have been made democratically in representative election systems, tensions may arise regarding the cited and addressed benefits of planning proposals. Thus, residents may find the decision-making rationale inadequate and far from local desires and concerns. Eventually, this may lead to struggles to maintain social and cultural values and practices, and the wishes of political leadership will be defeated (Hornborg 1994; Mairal Buil 2004; Sjölander-Lindqvist 2004; 2008; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al. 2010, 2013). In seeking to resolve these struggles, public involvement procedures may be introduced. According to literature, this may assist governments at different levels in their efforts to respond to the wishes of interest groups and sub-governmental interests (Buček and Smith 2000), and to avoid unforeseen and unwanted consequences, reduce opposition and halt conflict development (van Eeten 1999).

In this article, we suggest that Victor Turner's theoretical framework can help us provide tools for analyzing how structure and meaning are created in the practical implementation of participatory measures, since, within such efforts, the integration of the perspectives and clashing interests of all concerned parties is the goal that one hopes will result in reconciliation and consensus-based decisions. Turner's work on political performances and their symbolic features probed how social actions, resulting from the flouting of social norms of behavior and conduct in social communities by certain actors, acquired form through ritualized movement. These social processes or 'social dramas' as he terms them, result from the circumstances of disharmony between people, groups of people, and societal levels or segments that occur in conflict situations (Turner 1974). According to Turner, such disharmonic units are organized according to the logic of means and goals, involving the four phases of *breach*, *crisis*, *redressive actions* and *reintegration* (in that order).

A social drama does not occur unless societal norms of behavior have been flouted by certain agents; i.e. giving rise to a conflict situation where norms have been deviated from, or a 'breach' has occurred. If the controversy following the breaking of norms for social relations or the negligence of matters of high principle for certain social groups (cf. Rappaport 1996), is not addressed rather quickly, Turner suggests that the breach may widen into an unavoidable state of affairs that may have affect upon social equilibrium, that is, a 'crisis' being established (Turner 1974). The third sequence is when certain adjustive, or 'redressive,' actions are taken to limit the spread of the crisis, that is, influential actors try to regulate or solve the crisis by the implementation of various measures. 'Reintegration', the fourth sequence or phase, is when the schism between contesting parties has been solved, and the conflicting parties are reintegrated into society, or alternatively, society is coming to the conclusion that the conflict is not possible to resolve.

This article suggest that we may find the four phases mentioned above in situations where planning has led to conflicts or tensions because of decision makers' tendency to value detached and standardized knowledge over practical, situated knowledge and concerns in particular places in their strive for rationality, order and development (cf. Weszkalnys 2010; Scott 1998). In the social drama, the deviating individual or party sees themselves as the representative of a common sake or good. A common planning approach in such a situation is to implement public participation measures to pursue the democratic ideals of legitimacy, transparency and accountability, and to enhance implementation through the integration of local knowledge, experiences and concerns. Since participatory democracy, in any form it may take, involves the structuring of multilayered experiences, meanings, values and ends, people's

reasons for engagement, or non-engagement, will become constitutive parts of the process. These socially and culturally informed understandings are rooted in the life experiences of those involved and they inform how people perceive the surrounding world, their roles and their positions within social and political processes (Ingold 1993; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). In such situations, divergent perceptions of the local environment, that is where people live, work and recreate, are imbued with the experience, knowledge and memories of its actors (Ingold 1993).

Measures building on participatory democracy thus offer the opportunity to investigate these as arenas where participants share and communicate overt, verbalized and intentional messages of the world and on how the world ought to be. Incorporated into the process are not only people's understandings of how the future ought to be, but also reflections concerning the past and the present. Besides that economy, politics, media, regulation and legal aspects exert influence on planning processes, fundamental issues of social and cultural identity become integrated parts of decision-making procedures. Public involvement can thus be referred to as a story of engagement processes through which practice becomes situated in a certain historical and social context that gives participation procedures structure and meaning (cf. Wenger 2008 [1998]).

Using an anthropological practice-based approach enables us to explore people's reasons for engagement, and how meanings, intentions and aspirations of people become manifested in these planning contexts. Sensitivity to the tangible and associative values of those concerned, and the circulating discourses, multiple contestations and regimes of power enacted and confirmed within the participatory field, all come into play (Gibson 2013; Hajer 2005, Shore et al. 2011). A crucial dimension concerns the actors' relationship to the sites, places and landscapes under negotiation. An equally important dimension concerns how such engagement processes occur over time. By exploring how participatory measures are situated along a temporary trajectory, and analyzing this using the four phases suggested by Turner, the practical outcome and experiences of the engagement process can be better understood.

Case Studies

This article is based upon the exploration of three cases of citizen dialogues in South Africa and Sweden through which local residents became included into planning procedures as part of the creation of new local futures, in different ways mobilizing and drawing of specific conceptions of cultural heritage. The results presented here were obtained through a multidisciplinary research project. The focus of the project was to explore processes of contestation and negotiation around interpretations and uses of the past in order to examine the possibilities and limitations of 'participation' in cultural resource management.

The cases investigated involved sites or buildings subject to intense debate and contestation regarding their meaning and use. Through the examination of debated futures, the article addresses how contestations over city space and particular sites in semi-urban areas may arise when various interpretations and uses of the past are voiced. These contestations can be seen as loci for negotiations as they concretize cultural and social frameworks, such as ideology and essential ideas of the world (Sjölander-Lindqvist 2004, 2008; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al. 2010, 2013). In South Africa, the case of the *Protea Village* in Cape Town focused on the planned rebuilding of a neighborhood for residents who were evicted from the area during Apartheid. The proposed remaking of the shutdown *Barsebäck* nuclear power plant into a site of national heritage and the debated future of the former steam ferry station *Ångfärjestationen* in the city of Helsingborg served as the two Swedish' cases. Both cases are located in the south of Sweden.

To capture opinions regarding the proposed redevelopments among residents, politicians and administrators, different methods were used. The studies were conducted during 2006-2008 and included 110 interviews in total with residents and planners, as well as place visits together with informants, photo elicitation interviews with both single informants and groups of informants, and participant observations at meetings (presented in detail in Sjölander-Lindqvist et al. 2010).

Three Cases, Three Places

The South African case is an example of how a conflict can involve an entire country, a situation that Turner himself mentions as an example of a social drama (1974, 38). A glance at the history of South Africa since the 1980s shows that each of the four phases of the social drama is represented, although a detailed discussion of each of these stages is beyond the scope of this article. In brief, the first phase is constituted by the politically tumultuous 1980s, when it became increasingly clear that the system of Apartheid was socially and politically unsustainable. Towards the end of the 1980s, the second phase, the crisis, was a fact. The Apartheid regime engaged in a dialogue with the anti-Apartheid movement in order to discuss a transition to democracy. This resulted in intense negotiations during the first years of the 1990s, in which the parties discussed the distribution and balance of political power, including the details of introducing representative democracy (Worden 2000, 137).

When democracy was introduced in 1994, the country was ruled for five years by an interim consensus government consisting of the major political parties. The Act on Restitution of Land Rights of 1994 was the first reformist legislation to be passed by the new government. Together with the Act instituting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) this legislation plays an important role in the third phase in Turner's theory, that of reconciliation. According to Turner this involves both symbolic and pragmatic measures, introduced by political leaders in order to control, reduce or solve the conflict. During this unstable period, existing structures and political systems are often questioned; social and political relations reorganized; the number and character of actors on the political arena undergo transformation and new power structures emerge. The TRC and the land restitution program are both examples of such re-organization of social roles and relations (Bohlin 2007).

The fourth phase is constituted by the outcome of the measures introduced in the third phase, and typically involves attempts to integrate new social groups and actors. At the time of the study, the land restitution case in Protea Village could be said to be undergoing this phase, and illustrates how the concept of participation became charged with new meaning for different actors within a shifting political field.

In 2006, former residents of Protea Village, a suburb of Cape Town, who had been evicted from the area under Apartheid because they were classified as coloured, were given back land as a result of their land claim. 86 families planned to return to the area to build residential houses. White residents in the surrounding neighbourhoods had no formal right to participate in the decisions regarding the proposed redevelopment of Protea Village. The land claimants, however, were in a position to decide to what degree they wished to involve residents in the area in the process. In this sense they were able to set the parameters for the participation by white residents as well as to set the agenda for any meeting with them. Compared to their lack of power and influence at the time of the eviction in the 1960s, the balance of power was now almost the reverse.

Interviews with residents in the surrounding neighborhoods show mixed reactions to the absence of formal possibilities for participation in the land restitution process. Most of them described feeling shut out from the process of decision-making, something that was a relatively new experience. During the beginning of the restitution process, the two Residents' Associations in the area had worked intensely to increase their say in the matter, with little effect. One woman in her fifties said that "nobody" cared about their opinions; not the land claimants, not the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, nor the City of Cape Town. Among those planning to return, however, the issue of participation was viewed differently. A woman in her thirties described current white residents as "doctors, lawyers and businessmen" whom she regarded as anything but powerless. The different groups thus had diverging views of each other and on their possibilities to influence the process. Current white residents tended to focus on the formal system and the legislation proscribing who is entitled to participate, and this reinforced their feelings of powerlessness. Those planning to return, on the other hand, were doubtful that the planned return would actually take place, fearing that white residents might use their informal power and influence to stall the process.

Most current residents said that they would have preferred if the possibilities for participation had been greater, but also said that they understood that this was not the case. Some described the current situation as necessary, and as an aspect of living in “the new South Africa”. Even though they were concerned about possible effects of the proposed redevelopment, for example diminished property prices, or losing a green recreational area located where the new houses were planned, they were not against the redevelopment. Some were highly positive to the project, which they saw as an important symbolic act. They found ways of participating in activities in connection with the restitution process outside of the formal channels, for example by socializing with families planning to return; or to participate in the celebration ceremony when the land was handed over to the claimants. In particular, they viewed positively the fact that those who had been forced to leave Protea Village now would have a chance to reconnect with their heritage. They mentioned that it was highly unfair and immoral that people who had been born and raised in the area had been forced to leave it, not least given that many had ancestors still buried in the area. The view of the landscape as a carrier of memories, experiences and not least physical remains and traces of those who had lived there was shared among both current residents and land claimants (cf. Bohlin 2011).

In general, there was a relatively high degree of acceptance among current residents regarding the lack of formal possibilities to participate in the restitution process. According to Turner’s theory this could be related to the fact that the reconciliatory measures, with the demands for reconciliation and tolerance, have been relatively successful. Most were aware that the current political situation in South Africa had emerged as the outcome of a negotiated settlement, and few wished to return to a phase characterized by uncertainty and violence. The relatively limited possibilities for participation in the case of Protea Village could be read as an acceptable price for being able to live in a peaceful society, and as linked to the broader process of transformation towards a more democratic South Africa.

The two Swedish examples that follow focus on real as well as potential conflicts that involve smaller geographical sites. In recent decades, Helsingborg, like many other cities in Europe, has undergone a major transformation of its waterfront. As a continuation of previous changes to the city's northern parts there are ongoing plans to transform the city's southern waterfront, where the focus is also on creating a more inclusive city where social differences should be downplayed. On the quay between the northern and southern parts the steam ferry station is located.

The place where the steam ferry station is located has historically been used for transport, both train and ferry. The station is no longer used as a station and visibly differs dramatically from nearby buildings which are dominated by high stone buildings from over a hundred years ago as well as large white cubic houses from the transformation of the waterfront in the late 1900s. In 2004 the municipal group for the incumbent local political majority proposed an architectural competition for the construction of a conference center on the site of Ångfärjestationen. Local reactions were strongly negative. Politicians had misinterpreted local commitment for the site and the building. To tear down the station, and in addition replacing it with a large convention facility, was not received favorably by town residents. Politicians felt misunderstood and they emphasized the need to renew the area, which, they argued, would be of benefit to residents. People living in the city, however, were of the opinion that the politicians who suggested the birth to be torn down had seriously failed in understanding the role of the birth for local identity. This can be regarded as an example of the first step of the social drama in Turner’s description, which often entails a group of people transgressing or violating norms because they define themselves as acting as representatives on behalf of a collective. We can interpret the local politicians' initiative as a misjudgment of the degree to which they could legitimately be viewed as representatives of local wishes. The result was that the proposal was put on hold, and local groups, including those in favor of a rock club within the ferry station, continued debating the future of the site as well as wider issues or urban development in seminars, exhibitions and through mass media.

Those involved in opposing the proposal to demolish the birth sought to demonstrate not only the historical significance of the building and the site, but also the importance of the present activities taking place in the building. One politician described the process as one in which

residents were aware of the symbolic significance of the building and the site, and that this is what caused engagement in the issue. We can compare with Turner's ideas that actors in a social drama act on the basis of specific views of the world. Such views, or values, contribute to the shaping of the social drama since they affect how actors relate to the place. In particular, objections focused on the perception that the proposal would affect peoples' relationship with the sea. This highlighted the sense of having been excluded from the decision making process.

The social drama involves a series of events anchored in time, but also in space, something particularly obvious in the case of the ferry station. After a few years a new political majority decides that the site will undergo urban transformation, and that citizens should be invited to a dialogue, called citizen dialogue, about how the place should be developed. The dialogue consisted of opportunities to submit proposals for site layout through the web, exhibitions and workshops. We have thus entered the drama's third phase: reconciliation.

The citizen dialogue was intended to provide the city planning administration and the Board of politicians with important experiences of direct democratic approaches for the work ahead, something mentioned by many of the interviewees. For those invited to participate in the citizen dialogue about the future use and design of the site, the process was seen as non-negotiable: the rulers of the city would have to follow the results of the civil dialogue. For the politicians, as well as bureaucratic officials, the process was intended to provide a broad basis of information which would inform the decision, but also to strengthen the legitimacy of the process.

Both politicians and bureaucrats stressed that the various proposals resulting from the dialogue had to be interpreted and evaluated by professionals before they could even enter into the process. This could be regarded as a way of keeping the possibility open to reduce the influence of the public in the process. Thus, the citizen dialogue did not necessarily result in the bringing together of citizens, politicians and civil servants it was meant to achieve. However, it did result in other groups coming together, and to some extent served to bridge for example young and old, or residents of different neighborhoods.

The Barsebäck case differs from the other two in that it inly involves the first two stages of the social drama. During the 1980s it became a symbol of resistance against nuclear power. Many demonstrations against nuclear power took place in Barsebäck, although they mostly involved protesters who travelled to the area as opposed to local residents in the area. Historically, the plant attracted local attention since the company that ran the plant after some years also announced plans to build a charcoal plant on the same site. This proposal encountered fierce protests from local residents, which forced local politicians, who initially supported the idea of a charcoal plant, to reconsider and withdraw their support for the plan. In line with Turner's theory, the company can be said to have transgressed a local unspoken norm, namely local residents' tolerance of the nuclear power plant only in so far as this could provide 'clean energy'; something a charcoal plant could not be said to do.

During the 2000s, when the nuclear plant had been in use for a few decades, its existence began to be questioned due to the plant becoming old and an increasingly lively debate ensued on the benefits and risks of nuclear power. On the national level a political discussion resulted in a decision to dismantle it. Within the local community, residents felt excluded from the national process of decision-making, and that the decision makers were disregarding the plant's contribution to local economy and its energy-providing role. This time, local residents and local politicians were of the same opinion. They agreed that the plant should remain in use and generate electricity as long as it was functional. Local politicians tried to influence national political actors to change the decision without success. At around the same time, representatives of the cultural heritage sector asked whether the plant could be regarded as a form of cultural heritage, and if so, how it could be preserved. Both local politicians and residents were however of the opinion that the plant structure should only remain if it could generate energy for the country. Locally, there was, in other words, a limited understanding of and acceptance of the plant as a form of heritage, as the dismantled plant instead was regarded primarily as a large building without a function. From the perspective of Turner's theory, Barsebäck could be said to represent the first phase in which norms for socially acceptable behavior are transgressed, since local residents and politicians experienced that their voices and interests were not listened to.

The heritage sector's interest in modern and industrial heritage, exemplified by the nuclear power station in Barsebäck, resulted in a seminar on the theme, entitled 'Big, Ugly and Dangerous?' even before the decision to terminate the plant, during the autumn of 2001. In connection with the termination of the nuclear plant the heritage sector documented activities at the site, and there were also discussions whether or not buildings should be preserved. For local residents and politicians, this added another dimension to the perception there had been a transgression of locally held norms regarding acceptable organizational behavior. In their perspective, the place where the plant was situated had been offered to the society as a temporary loan. Even though the local landscape was regarded as valuable, this loan was considered acceptable if the purpose was to create what they regarded as 'clean energy' which would benefit Sweden. As far as they were concerned, to preserve the nuclear plant buildings for heritage reasons was a non-issue.

In this case we see no redressive actions being implemented. Indirectly, the local-national tension has been upheld and reinforced by the municipality of Barsebäck which has proposed a new local development plan for the greater area. In this, the site of the plant is described as a future residential area. This can be regarded as a 'silent' marking with respect to both the national decision to terminate the plant, and the discussion regarding keeping the plant as a form of heritage.

Like Protea Village, the negotiation around Barsebäck have taken place in an active, ongoing process in which people attribute the landscape positive and negative values on the basis of the situations they find themselves in. The valuation of the landscape is a dynamic process shaped by the cultural, political and economic arrangements within which actors operate. In Barsebäck, local perceptions were based on a wish to have the location back in order to preserve the small-scale nature of the area which is situated close to nature and the sea. Although the heritage issue has only come to Turners first two phases, it is essential to understand the process in a historical perspective, since contemporary understandings of the conflict are influence by the previous experiences of the charcoal plant and the events associated with this, which, it could be argued, contained all four of Turner's phases.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In the discussion above we have analyzed negotiations around heritage-related dimensions of urban renewal processes. We have seen how the landscape and the sites involved act as spatial maps of social, cultural and economic negotiations (Ingold 1993; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). We have furthermore used a symbolic anthropological perspective in order to highlight how such negotiation processes occur over time (Turner 1974). The three cases show that historical contexts, including place- and landscape related experiences, affected how stakeholders engaged with the participatory process.

The Protea Village case and the Helsingborg case show that participatory approaches are introduced by different stakeholders for specific and varied purposes, but also that such approaches were put to the test when different interest groups came together. In some instances, attempts to increase public participation in social planning and other initiatives can be understood as measures intended to reduce conflict and to produce what Turners calls a social equilibrium (Turner 1974). Such initiatives typically occur when decision-makers become aware that they, for whatever reason, have flouted social norms regarding appropriate behavior and conduct. Yet, these two case studies show that the practical implementation of the participatory measures, and their outcome, is dependent on a number of contextual factors. In the third case of Barsebäck, there is an absence of formally introduced participatory measures. As in the previous cases, however, contextual factors informed how local stakeholders engaged with the issue at hand. For example, the municipality chose to ignore the agenda formulated by the national heritage sector, an action that local residents endorsed.

In Barsebäck, the nuclear plant is a reminder of a history of having been excluded from previous political decisions; first on a national level, with respect to the location of the plant, and second with respect to the decision to close it down. When the National Heritage Board raised the issue of a potential declaration of the plant as a heritage site, this reminded residents that their municipality had been excluded from having a say in how the local area was to be developed. In the context of this, the impact of the nuclear plant on the landscape, in particular the way that it has reduced access to the sea, assumed significance among local residents. They re-interpreted the site from a one which had been on loan to the state in return for clean energy, to one which they wish to have back for their own use and enjoyment.

In Protea Village, current residents were excluded from participating in the land restitution process, something that nevertheless was relatively broadly accepted. An explanation for this can be found in the current transformation of South Africa into a fully democratic state, which can be likened to Turner's fourth reintegration phase. The absence of formal possibilities for participation in the restitution process for current residents is viewed in the light of previous historical experiences of power relations that today are regarded as unfair. Stakeholders that were previously excluded from influence in local urban development issues were given precedence in the process of redefining the meaning and significance of Protea Village and its past.

Summarizing the findings, we have learned that intentions, roles and outcomes are constantly renegotiated in participatory processes and boundaries are created and renegotiated in terms of participation (including forms of non-participation), time (windows of influence opening and closing) and scope (what issues and decisions can be influenced). The theory of social drama shows that these limits should not be viewed as static but are renegotiated in the conceptualization as well as practical implementation of participatory measures. In efforts to increase diversity in participatory processes, this study shows that the boundaries drawn for participation need to be understood in a social, geographical and historical context as this will affect what interests can be advanced. Paying attention to context also draws attention to how silence and non-action can be understood as engagement in the participatory process. In order to be perceived as legitimate and sustainable, participatory measures thus need to be adapted to a plurality of contexts, actors and purposes.

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