

GLOBAL & STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE FOR CULTURAL TOURISM

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Abstract

Globalization engenders two trends that increase the demand for, as well as supply of, cultural tourism. One such trend is rapid urbanization, which in turn emaciates community fabric and makes people wanting to cultivate humanitarian bonds. The other trend is the geographical expansion of human interaction, which in turn helps people become aware of cultural diversity, and promotes their interest in different cultural traditions and practices. The global espousal of free-market capitalism tends to encourage exploitation of existing cultural heritage and assets, and the increase in demand poses the danger of *the tragedy of the commons* on such heritage and assets. The prospective strategy for meeting the demand and, at the same time, for minimizing the danger is to localize the systemic management of available cultural resources by the host community. In addition this strategy will help mitigate the economic disparity between urban centers and peripheral areas and, thus, enhance the sustainability of globalization.

Conceptual Framework of Reference

As the title suggests, this essay is intended to address the tourism industry. Tourism industry is the term that refers collectively to people and business entities which are engaged in tourism. The *perspective* in the title has two adjectives, *global* and *strategic*. The first adjective, *global*, is to emphasize the feature that the essay is concerned with globalization, and its discussion is general in nature and not focused on any particular country. The second adjective, *strategic*, indicates that the essay aims to elucidate the *strategic* implications of globalization for the industry.

For the purpose of this essay, it is necessary to establish a working definition of *cultural tourism*. The World Tourism Organization defines “tourists” as *people who travel to and*

stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. As this definition indicates, any formal definition of tourism, or cultural tourism, has to struggle for fine delineation between the inclusiveness and the exclusiveness. According to the above definition, people who visit places for business purposes are *tourists*, as long as their activities are not remunerated from within the places visited. In the more ordinary perception, these people are called “business travelers,” and not *tourists*. This example illustrates the need for a more practical working definition of *tourism* or *cultural tourism*.

This essay proposes to define *tourism* as a form of leisure activity in which travel forms an integral part. People regard the leisure activity as free from work or duties, and for pleasure. The activity may be physical or intellectual in nature. This essay proposes to define the tourism of which the primary purpose is for physical pleasure as *recreational tourism*, and the one of which the primary purpose is intellectual pleasure as *cultural tourism*. Holidaying in a beach resort or a ski resort is a typical form of recreational tourism, while visiting UNESCO’s world cultural heritage sites certainly belongs to cultural tourism. Undoubtedly, one can come up with a travel plan that nicely combines physical pleasure and intellectual pleasure. However, the definition is not proposed to play a judge in such a case.

It is important, nonetheless, to point out that the concept of culture has evolved over time. Traditionally, culture represented *fine arts*. Travel to experience some such fine arts was a popular leisure activity of European nobility and gentry in the 18th century, and it has been a popular form of cultural tourism ever since. [Hulme & Youngs, 2002] People have been fascinated with foreign goods and practices from the age of discoveries. Finely crafted goods, distinctly different styles of living, or unique geographical heritage of foreign lands have been enticing people to travel to such lands. However, travel for leisure pursuit had long remained the privilege of those with wherewithal until steam engine became the mainstay of power for transportation. Since people began to avail themselves of modern means of travel in the 20th century, cultural tourism has developed significantly both in concept and activity. For example, the showcasing of unique and indigenous cultural traditions has become an important segment of cultural tourism.

Globalization is, *inter alia*, characterized as the unprecedented geographical expansion of human interaction. Naturally, it has a profound impact on the society or community that is, and has been, the cradle of culture. The concept of culture cannot remain the same

under such profound and evolutionary societal change. Indeed, it has been proposed to characterize culture as a distinct aspect of social compact for human interaction that contrasts with civilization. It is this new concept of culture that provides a global and strategic perspective of cultural tourism, and that has prompted this essay.

Role of Culture in Globalization

The characterization of globalization as an unprecedented geographical expansion of human interaction may sound like a trivial tautology. However, this recognition leads to a few valuable insights into its problems and prospects. Human interaction can be broadly divided into two categories; namely, productive and destructive interactions. Most economic interactions belong to the former, while belligerent interactions belong to the latter. It is, of course, the former kind of human interaction that globalization is meant to promote. Indeed, the prosperity of mankind is achieved through the development of various physical and metaphysical facilities to enhance productivity of human interaction. The thrust for such development stems from mankind's ability to form social compact that effect productive human interaction, which was already manifested in the stone-age tribal community. [Sahlin, 1972]

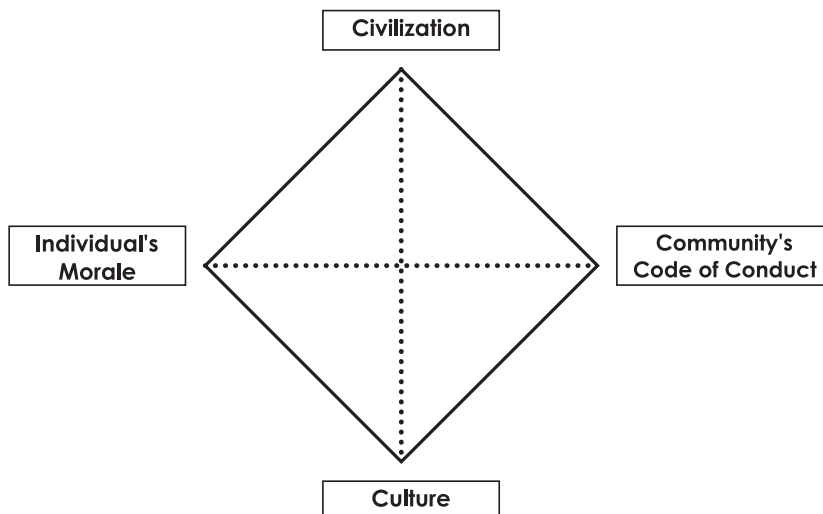
The history of mankind is also the history of sophistication in human interaction. It is natural for this sophistication to be accompanied with the sophistication of social compact. To fully appreciate this sophistication process, it is appropriate to elucidate its structural characteristics. This begins with the definition of social compact, which is "*a systemic whole of responses and solutions that a group of people has developed in order to best adapt their interactions to the existing natural and societal environment.*" Again, this kind of academic definition is not very helpful in the overview of the process and its dynamics. Therefore, it is useful to start from the basics.

The basic tenet of social compact is to strike a balance between individual interest and communal interest in human interaction. The concept of community changes with the nature of human interaction. The above definition of social compact also contains an important expression, which is "a group of people." The group may represent all the members of a society or community. It may also represent a voluntarily formed group of people, who are bound by some common interest, or who wish to make their interaction among themselves more effective, with little concern for those outside the group. The group so formed may be small and minor in a society, or it may be large or predominant majority.

A society consists of many layers of such groups and every group aims to best adapt their interactions to the existing natural and societal environment. Each group thus develops or organizes a systemic whole of physical and metaphysical facilities for their interactions. Such systemic whole is called *culture* when the group is a voluntarily formed one, while it is called civilization if the group is involuntarily formed under a governing authority of the society concerned.

The above argument, and the two fundamental dimensions of social compact, is illustrated in *Figure 1*. In this figure, the horizontal axis represents the continuum of the cognitive basis for productive human interaction, that stretches from the individual's morale to the community's code of conduct. The "community" in this definition may be as small and casual as a neighborhood community, or it may be as large and comprehensive as a nation-state or even the world community. The vertical axis, on the other hand, represents the continuum of invented physical and metaphysical facilities for human interaction, that stretches between culture and civilization. Civilization is different from culture in two accounts. One is the presence of a governing authority, and the other is that the social compact under this authority applies equally to all its subjects. In contrast, culture is essentially voluntary group practice the association with which is a matter of individual choice for people.

Figure 1. A Structural Illustration of Social Compact



Religion offers an interesting example to appreciate the continuum between culture and civilization. People are identified with a religion when they share certain beliefs and practices which are ascribed to the religion. There may be some variances in such beliefs and practices among them. However, they are expected to conform to certain essential beliefs and practices in order to remain in the group. In other words, such beliefs and practices constitute an important part of social compact for interaction between themselves. If this group occupies a predominant majority in a community, it is very difficult for the community to exercise some social compact that runs against the religious beliefs and practices. It is likely for the community to develop a systemic whole of responses and solutions that are compatible with the religion. It is even possible for this system to be recognized as civilization associated with the community, if the community is sizable and its governing authority espouses the religion.

If a community or society lacks written laws or law enforcing institutions, religion can be a powerful instrument for civic governance. Such potential of a religion is well corroborated in the ancient histories of great civilizations, such as in Egypt and Greece where the dynasty or the state were closely associated with their distinctive religious beliefs and practices. Likewise, religious tolerance has been an important policy for empire building that brings many societies with diverse culture or civilization under one realm, as corroborated by the history of Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great and Mongol Empire under Genghis Khan. This style of governance was possible in those times, because much of human interaction was conducted within societies of limited geographical size where coherence in social compact was easier to maintain.

That in turn suggests the significant societal changes that globalization of today thrusts upon us. The illustration in *Figure 1* is useful in recognizing such thrusts. That is because the structural characteristics of social compact remain the same even when globalization leads to its significant evolutionary change. Changes are particularly notable in the nature of civilization and in the nature of community for code of conduct. Globalization is often characterized by the global espousal of free-market capitalism, and it has thus led to the globalization of economic interaction and the attendant development of global economic or financial facilities. This represents further sophistication of civilization in support of the global economic system. However, this advance in civilization has been taken place without a proper mechanism of governance.

If the scope of civilization is global, so shall be the scale of “community,” with regard to the *communal code of conduct*. However, there exists no societal system of governance

today that treats all mankind equally. Although some international organizations exist with such auspices, they only remain as the contesting arena of national interest where realpolitik is its *modus operandi* and not democracy. In short, globalization has so far overlooked the need for development of *communal code of conduct* and, so doing, it has failed to develop the civilization that make globalization socially sustainable. The failure has aggravated the economic disparity and social rift between the capitalist and the proletariat, just like in the early age of the Industrial Revolution. At that time, the community was a nation-state and it had a governing authority that helped to mitigate such social stresses by instituting some measures of socialism. Globalization lacks such authority and, thus, it has engendered anti-globalization movement that is spreading beyond national borders.

It is also important to pay attention to the effects of these changes on the remaining two elements in the illustration; namely, *individual's morale* and *culture*. Thomas Friedman described globalization as a triumph of democratization in technology, finance, and information. [Friedman, 1999] He envisioned that such democratization emancipates individuals, and that this in turn promotes democratization of decision-making and political power. He then tried to expound his vision in his second book, entitled "The World is Flat." [Friedman, 2005] His vision, or argument, has been well received, but it has some fatal flaws. The most critical flaw is concerned with emancipation of individuals. This emancipation does not apply to every member of a community, however small in size it may be. Only those individuals who have the talent to exploit the sophisticated civilization for globalized capitalism can enjoy the full potential of democratization, while others in the community become relatively marginalized. In other words, emancipation of individuals is more likely to lead to emaciation of community or community fabric. [Tanahashi, 2005]

It is also interesting to take note of Friedman's prescription for sustainable globalization. He explains that globalization heightens two basic human desires; namely, the desire for better living (Lexus), and the desire for humanitarian bond (olive tree), and that sustainable globalization depends on realizing the society that can balance those two human desires. [Friedman, 1999] This prescription may sound very sensible, but a closer look at the reality reveals some inconsistency. Suppose that individuals are given the choice between an automobile (better living) and an olive tree (humanitarian bond), figuratively speaking. Few would choose an olive tree over an automobile. Furthermore, espousal of capitalism is more likely to make people ready to sacrifice an olive tree for an automobile. Realization of a society that can balance the two basic human desires, therefore, will not come from individuals' efforts, but it stipulates the enforcement of a comprehensive *commu-*

nal code of conduct or, in more contemporary terminology, *democratic government*.

This situation does not reduce the importance of humanitarian bond: on the contrary, the situation certainly increases its relative importance, particularly for those who struggle to achieve better living. From ancient times people have tried to develop cooperative relationship for survival or better living. Such relationship is the basis of culture. Guild societies in the Middle Ages present interesting examples in this regard. At that time, people's social mobility was limited, and acquisition of professional skills was one very prospective way to achieve better living and humanitarian bond. However, the guild's camaraderie entailed restrictive membership, and that in turn fostered fragmentation of community fabric. The emergence of nation-states gradually made the presence of guilds of various natures and their societal roles incompatible with the establishment of national governments as the sole authority of civic governance. In other words, this epochal change has made the nation-state as the principal form of *community*, and the national constitutions and laws as the explicit *code of conduct*.

Globalization represents another epochal change, and democratization of technology, finance, and information presents a very different environment. The *world community* exists only as an abstract concept, and no credible authority presently exists for civic governance of this community. At the same time, global espousal of free-market capitalism has led to the emergence of the global economic system, and the development of attendant civilization to promote economic interaction. In this environment, the ability to interact effectively, not only with people of similar cultural traits and dispositions but with those of different cultural backgrounds and traditions, has become important. Furthermore, human interaction across national borders has become common, not just for economic interest but also for societal interest.

This trend is well exemplified by the growing number of NGO's which are organized to promote actions and collaborations in pursuance of societal interest. For example, a few international NGO's have been active in order to ban weapons with inhumane effects, such as landmines and cluster bombs. Similarly several NGO's have been active in order to provide emergency medical relief and services in disaster-struck areas. Numerous NGO's have been established and active in order to improve livelihood of people who are economically or socially deprived. The growing number and importance of such NGO's and their activities today reflects the weakness in civic governance in the globalizing *community*. This situation suggests an interesting similarity between these organizations and Guilds in the Middle Ages. Their similarity is that both try to foster a community where people can

realize the desire for better living and the desire for humanitarian bond, when the community is short of effective political and administrative institutions for civic governance.

Impact of Globalization on Cultural Tourism

This was a topic presented at the 8th International Joint World Cultural Tourism Conference in Pusan, Korea. The presentation pointed out the close correlation between expansion of economic interaction and urbanization. Such urbanization represents the migration of people to urban centers from their peripheral areas. Furthermore, these migrating people are, more often than not, the people who have skills and talents for engaging themselves in productive economic activities. Accordingly the economic viability and the communal fabric of the peripheral areas become emaciated. The communal fabric of urban centers does not fare much better. Globalization provides talented or skilled people with more opportunities to improve their economic fortune, but little time and encouragement to nurture humanitarian bond with neighbors. Cultural tourism has been acknowledged to provide vital linkage for economic and social interactions between the two areas, and thus it helps promote cultural interest and activities among the people in both areas.

Culture may be viewed as a mode of humanitarian bond. In this sense, nobody can live as a wholesome human being without humanitarian bonds or some cultural affiliation. If people find it difficult to develop meaningful humanitarian bonds with neighbors, they tend to do so with those who share common interest. Globalization and urbanization have the tendency to engender such people, who are interested in cultural opportunities and activities. Some community leaders are well aware of the growing number of such people, and try to organize such opportunities and activities in their neighborhood. However successful as they may be, those communal associations can satisfy only a part of very diverse individual cultural interests of today. Globalization and its attendant geographical expansion of human interaction have considerably broadened the diversity in cultural interest, and more and more people have developed an interest in getting acquainted with different cultural traditions and practices. Cultural tourism thus finds fertile ground to cultivate among these people, by providing opportunities for them to satisfy their intellectual interests.

Such changing environment for cultural tourism is corroborated by two facts. One is the fast annual growth rate of international tourism in recent years. For the Asian region

on the whole, this annual growth rate has reached 12% in the period from 2000-2004. [Tanahashi, 2007] The other fact is the increasing popularity of creative tourism. Creative tourism is defined as tourism related to the active participation of travelers in the culture of the host community. [Raymond & Wilson, 2008] This form of cultural tourism is not new, as the earlier-mentioned *Grand Tours* belongs to this category. What is new is its increasing popularity, and this trend is much to do with current globalization and its attendant advance in civilization.

Before explaining this relationship, it is perhaps in order to have a better understanding of creative tourism and its features. The typical form of cultural tourism for the mass market is packaged sightseeing tours of cultural heritage sites. Travel agencies have been competing among themselves in designing and offering interesting package deals to their prospective customers. When tourists are not familiar or poorly equipped to make all the necessary travel arrangements themselves, packaged tours offer very practical alternatives. This form of cultural tourism is still widely practiced and remains popular, because of its efficiency and economy. Creative tourism features, as defined, active participation of travelers in the cultures of the host communities. In other words, it features in experiential participation of the travelers in the cultural traditions or practices that interest or attract them.

Cultural tourism is different from adventure trips and, therefore, such experiential participation cannot be left to happenstances, but it has to be planned and prepared. For this reason, travel agencies can still play important roles in its promotion; such as the design of interesting experiential participation for tourists, mobilization of individuals and business entities to effect such participations at the host communities, and provision of transportation services for the tourists. These services certainly help individual travelers enjoy creative tourism with little planning efforts of their own. At the same time, however, they cannot be their own masters in deciding on the timing, length, or content of their tours. If individual travelers wish to be in control of their own tours, then they have to take initiative and time for planning and preparation.

A few decades ago, taking such initiative would have been well nigh impossible, because of the lack of facilities for such planning and preparation. In recent years, however, the situation has improved significantly, due largely to the expansion and enhancement of internet services. Agencies or business entities which are interested in providing opportunities for experiential participation for cultural tourism can advertise their services over the internet. Likewise, airlines and other transportation companies can not only advertise

but also provide detailed information for their services, to potential customers, over the internet. Availability of such information considerably facilitates individual travelers to organize their own programs of creative tourism. The interaction between prospective travelers and hosting agencies for cultural tourism is not limited to information exchange. Nowadays, the expanding payment facilities by credit or debit cards help them make pertinent economic exchange as well.

Emerging Strategy for Sustainable Cultural Tourism

The above arguments may engender optimism for cultural tourism and the tourism industry. However, the increase of demand is like a double-edged sword for cultural tourism: if it is not handled properly, it can harm cultural tourism, or it can jeopardize the chance for realizing the full potential of cultural tourism. A danger lies in the global espousal of free-market capitalism. The above-mentioned growth potential of the tourism industry will not escape the interest of the capitalist, and commercial exploitation of cultural heritage properties as tourist attractions by business entities will only intensify. This kind of development for profit bodes ill for sustainable cultural tourism, if the past is any guide. It is not “for profit” operation that is harmful but the commercialism, that pays too much attention to profit and too little attention to sustainability of cultural heritage properties.

Tourism agencies need and value cultural heritage properties as essential resources for their business. However, they rarely value, or take part in enhancement of their sustainability. Their economic logic is that their fortune is not so much tied to any particular cultural heritage property, but rather dependent on the number and variety of such properties available for their commercial exploitation. For example, agencies have been developing and operating tour programs that feature performance of traditional or ceremonial songs and dances. Yet few agencies take an active part in enhancing the economic or social viability of the communities that have nurtured such cultural traditions for generations. Once these cultural heritage properties are detached from their mother communities, their qualities inevitably suffer and their value as tourist attractions diminish. That means privation for both the communities and the tourists interested in cultural or creative tourism. The loss to tourists is by no means limited to such privation, if the tourism industry is dominated by capitalistic business entities and their commercial interests. Tourists’ choice for active experiential participation will become largely limited to those offered by

these entities. In other words, their opportunities for creative tourism will be reduced.

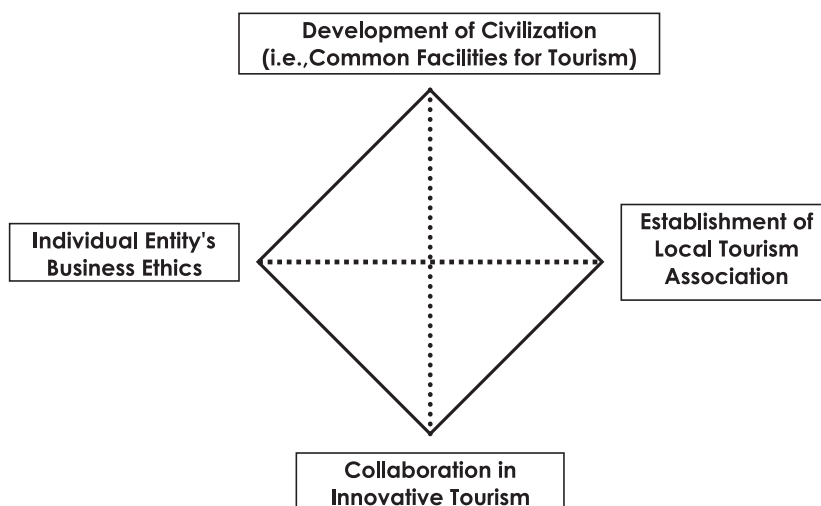
The potential loss to the host community could be far greater. Capitalistic competition among tour agencies tends to encourage their intensive or short-term exploitation of whatever cultural heritage properties available to them, with little regard for negative effects on such assets or other stakeholders. Some local stakeholders may collaborate with such tour agencies to maximize their own short-term economic gains, even at the long-term cost or loss to the local community as a whole. This kind of behavior has often been observed in many economic activities and industries throughout the world, and it is termed as the *tragedy of the commons*.

In fact, over-exploitation of cultural heritage properties may very well mean a tragedy of the host community as a whole. Many such properties have survived to this day, not because of the host community's foresight to maintain them, but because the community has not had opportunities for economic development. Globalization is likely to further aggravate the dichotomy between the urban economic centers and the economically marginalized peripheries. In short, such properties are more often than not the only remaining economic assets that these communities own. Globalization, however, engenders the social condition that favors development of cultural tourism, or creative tourism, for which cultural heritage properties are primary assets. If their host or owner communities allow capitalistic exploitation of such assets and acquiesce to the tragedy of the commons, the economic viability of these communities will be seriously, if not fatally, damaged.

The only agent that can prevent such economic misfortune is the host community itself. The solution to this problem must be found in the ancient wisdom that has developed and nurtured the *village commons* as its heritage. The essence of this wisdom is the community ownership of the assets or properties at issue. The community *ownership* is just a theoretical concept here. The asset or property itself may be legally owned by certain individuals or group of people. What is important is the development of community-wide social compact that will promote the full realization of economic potentials of the asset or property. Such developmental strategy is illustrated in *Figure 2*. It is no coincidence that the illustrated structural feature of this illustration is similar to that of social compact.

The critical element of this strategy is the establishment of local tourism association that embodies the community ownership of cultural heritage properties. The principal objective and functions of this association are also obvious from the illustration. It should aim at (a) development of physical and metaphysical facilities (i.e. *civilization*) for cultural tourism in the community, (b) promotion of innovative tourism projects through collab-

Figure 2. An Illustration of New Strategy for Cultural Tourism



oration of various stakeholders in the community, and (c) cultivation of high business ethics in all the stakeholders. Such descriptions may be deceptive, as they sound very similar to the stated objectives of all tourism associations. Their significance arises from two strategic foci. One is the active participation of the community and its government, and the other is the targeting of individual tourists for creative tourism.

The first strategic focus is particularly important for development of common facilities for cultural tourism. An example may help appreciate this point. One popular cultural heritage property is the enclave of living culture, such as a district where streets and buildings have kept their old cultural characteristics. In practice, however, it is unlikely to find such enclaves in their original forms, as many changes have inevitably been introduced by individuals' conveniences and tastes. In order to increase the value and attractiveness of such cultural heritage, restoration of such changes to traditional style is important. If left to individuals' initiative, such restoration efforts will take decades to complete and may fail to realize the desired condition in the end. The introduction of municipal ordinance and financial incentives for restoration efforts could considerably facilitate such restoration efforts, for the benefit of the entire community.

The shift of focus from tour operators to tourists is also significant. It would have been unthinkable without democratization of information, or the growth of the internet as effective infrastructure for economic interaction. Previously, any tourism-related business had to rely on tour operators to bring enough customers for its viability. Nowadays, the

internet has enabled such a business to sustain its operation with the *Long Tail* customer base. As mentioned earlier, the weight of cultural tourism is shifting to creative tourism. The best strategy for promotion of this kind of tourism is to provide wide choice and opportunities for individual tourists to design and organize their own active experiential participation. As such, the proposed strategy is likely to have synergic effect on creative tourism and its promotion.

The relevance of this strategy is even more apparent when its impact on the local community is considered. The strategy will promote individuals' interest and initiatives in developing or engaging entrepreneurial activities related to cultural tourism. Increased economic opportunities within the community will encourage individuals, who might otherwise seek employment in urban centers, to remain in the community and take part in its economic development. In short, the strategy is likely to contribute to the emancipation of the entire community. That in turn help mitigate the economic disparity between the urban centers and their peripheral areas, and foster sustainable globalization.

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