

Globalization and Structural Violence

(Draft 1.1)

What is Structural Violence?

First of all we should clarify what we understand with the term *violence*. I suggest an extended concept of violence following the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung, who says we should speak of violence whenever one of the following basic needs of mankind is infringed and violated: The very survival of an individual, his general physical well-being, his personal identity, or the freedom to choose among various options.¹ He also states that it is violent to influence people in such a way that they cannot live the life they would otherwise be able to live. An example quoted by Galtung is that a life expectancy of just 30 years was not an expression of violence in the Stone Ages, while today the same life expectancy (whether due to wars, social injustice, or both) would by all means be a form of violence according to our definition.

This is obviously based on an underlying distinction between nature and culture (economic and political structures). Nature causes harm, not violence. Nature does not act. Humans do. Natural hazards often cause serious casualties or constrain human potential. But to call this violent is an anthropomorphization: speaking of the violence of an earthquake, a typhoon, even giving human names to typhoons etc. These cannot really be considered as “violence”, as there isn’t any act, which would imply intentionality.

Besides anthropomorphization of natural events we can also find the opposite, naturalization of violence, which is a much more serious matter. Actually, most violence today is hidden, quasi-natural², because there is no direct violent action visible, no direct intention of somebody to harm somebody else can be identified.³ But it is not natural. It is structural and these structures are created and maintained or changed by humans. Thus if people starve to death when there is food to feed them, or die from sickness when there is medicine to cure them, then structural violence exists since alternative social and economic structures could prevent such casualties. A reason for the naturalization of violence is probably, that natural causes make it somehow easier for us to grieve and yet to accept the natural events that cut lives short or constrain human potential.

Galtung compliments action-oriented views of human society with structure-oriented ones and defines the dominance system in the world in terms of the pattern of structural violence, where

¹ Galtung (1969).

² According to DuNann Winter and Leighton (1999) structured inequities produce suffering and death as often as direct violence does – I would say they do so even more often!

³ It is often invisible both to its perpetrators and to its victims. Wherever violence becomes visible and conscious, we cannot help but be repelled and strive to reduce and avoid it. Therefore our first task is to become aware of it in all its forms.

violence is seen as avoidable deprivation of basic human needs and an inegalitarian distribution of resources. Like direct violence structural violence produces suffering and death. This form of violence is mostly invisible: embedded in social structures and institutions, inside societies as well as between societies, we experience them as familiar and normal. Because it seems they have always been like that, these structures tend to appear ordinary and become our second nature.

I am aware that extending the concept of violence to structures might provoke criticism;⁴ however I believe that the extended concept helps to coherently integrate a range of phenomena in a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to violence that enables us to see cases of violence in the context of an entire “culture of violence”. And of course there is a political and moral effect: Calling structures violent differs from other descriptions (social injustice etc.) by conveying a much stronger appeal and urgency to change them and to work towards an alternative culture of peace.

The Circular Relationship of Structural Violence and Direct Violence

While structural violence is problematic in itself, it is also dangerous because it frequently leads either to passivity, apathy or to actions of personal direct violence. Already Aristotle knew that poverty is the parent of revolution and crime. Those who are excluded, oppressed or abandoned are often those who resort to direct violence, today again more frequently, as in the process of globalization they have lost other ways to get noticed or to gain influence.⁵ “Macht kaputt was euch kaputt macht” (destroy what destroys you) is a German slogan expressing that very questionable attitude: Too often scapegoats are victimized in the process: people who are considered to represent the repressive structures, or even other groups on the periphery, who are easy targets, like foreigners. Problematic is also the fact that suffering seems to be very hard to accept and to cope with in a society where full self-control over one’s life and one’s success is expected.

Those in power often feel they must use direct violence to curb the unrest produced by structural violence. Structural violence often requires police states to suppress resentments and social unrest. Huge income disparities in many countries are protected by correspondingly huge police or military operations, which in turn drain resources away from social programs and produce even more structural violence.⁶ The most distressing forms of violence is that perpetuated in the name of peoples, states or movements. This kind of violence also forms roots in the collective memory, and can lead generations into conflict. The memory of violence becomes a sort of injustice that seems to justify the violence against it (any such violence is merely seen as “counter-violence”).

While structural violence often leads to direct violence, Deborah DuNann Winter and Dana Leighton (1999) argue convincingly that the reverse is also true, as brutality often terrorizes bystanders, who then become unwilling or unable to confront social injustice.

⁴ An entire range of such criticism can be found in Daase (1996), who tries to blame the failures of critical peace research on its terminology. However, it seems to me that the main failure of post Cold War peace research, at least in Germany, was its unpreparedness for rising nationalisms (Balkans etc.) and global terrorism due to ideological and theoretical biases.

⁵ Cf. Beck (1997, 166): „Zugleich haben die Ausgeschlossenen – anders als das Proletariat im 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert – jegliches Machtpotential eingebüsst, da sie nicht mehr gebraucht werden. Ihnen bleibt nur die nackte Gewalt, um ihre Lage zu skandalisieren.“ Also Waldenfels (1997, 133): „Auf die weiche Gewalt der Systeme antwortet eine harte Gewalt der Körper...“ - Besides, this leads to a rise in violent crime; for example, cross-national studies of murder have shown a positive correlation between economic inequality and homicide rates across 40 nations as DuNann Winter and Leighton (1999) report, referring to various empirical studies.

⁶ Cf. DuNann Winter and Leighton (1999)

Global Markets and Consumerism

The ideology of the free market and unlimited competition accelerates the growth of conflicts.⁷ DuNann Winter and Leighton (1999) write: “As global markets grow, income disparity increases around the world. Relaxed trade regulations and increased communication networks are helping powerful multinational conglomerates to derive huge profits off under-paid laborers in developing countries. The result is horrific structural violence to workers who toil under brutal conditions.”

Globalization also leads to cultural homogenization, in which people throughout the world identify the good life with convenience products, Hollywood movies and western values of individualism and consumerism. This affects the cultures of peoples in the world, their perceptions, value orientations and world-views. The seduction of western norms is disintegrating traditional societies which in the past provided meaning and care for its members.⁸

Richard Robbins, in his book *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism (1999)* pointed out that, as long as people have access to the means of production - land, raw materials, tools, there is no reason for them to sell their labor, as they can still sell the product of their labor. Robbins continues: “For the capitalistic mode of production to exist, the tie between producers and the means of production must be cut; peasants must lose control of their land, artisans control of their tools. These people once denied access to the means of production must negotiate with those who control the means of production for permission to use the land and tools and receive a wage in return. Those who control the means of production also control the goods that are produced, and so those who labor to produce them must buy them back from those with the means of production. Thus the severing of the persons from the means of production turns them not only into laborers, but into consumers of the product of their labor as well” (pp. 88 – 89). Maybe we should say it turns them into potential consumers, as they often cannot afford to buy these products.

Also, religious thinkers have been deploring the commodification of more and more aspects of our life, for example Jesuit Father John Kavanaugh in his book *Following Christ in a Consumer Society (1986)* where he discusses the “Commodity Form of life”⁹ and groups together “consumerism and liberal capitalism” (p. 28). And even consumerism contains a competitive element, as we can see in a humorous definition of Hong Kong society: “People spending money they haven’t earned to buy things they don’t need to impress people they don’t like.” (Vittachi 1995, p. 72).

Economic Structural Violence

I already indicated that structural violence is spreading through the rapid expansion of the market system all over the world and the exploitation of underpaid labor. Also, in the Third World subsistence lands are converted into cash crop farming. This commodification deprives populations of relatively simpler access to subsistence food. This means denying food to the hungry and feeding the markets; it is one of the genocidal aspects of globalization.

⁷ Actually, the free market is a myth: Behind the so-called free market are big monopolies and oligopolies that control the markets.

⁸ DuNann Winter and Leighton (1999)

⁹ “The Commodity Form,” says Kavanaugh, “reveals our very being and purpose as calculable solely in terms of what we possess. We *are* only insofar as we possess. We are *what* we possess. We are, consequently, possessed by our possessions, produced by our products” (p. 26). Maybe we could assume an “I consume therefore I am” as the founding principle of the the Commodity Form of life.

Also, physical and psychological harm results from unjust or exploitative social and economic systems. The number of casualties due to the unequal distribution of wealth between countries is dwarfing any other form of violence other than nuclear war. For example, the level of structural violence is 60 times greater than the average number of battle related deaths per year since 1965.¹⁰ 13 to 18 million human beings, most of them children, die each year as a result of hunger, while our planet has enough resources and know-how to provide enough for every person on earth. This is not just happening to us, we are creating it. Today, the world's poor are the main victims of structural violence. The poor are not only more likely to suffer; they are also less likely to have their suffering noticed. Always where there is a center and a periphery, people in the center tend to lack an interest in understanding and respecting the people in the periphery (as we will also see in the chapters on language). Chilean theologian Pablo Richard (2002), noting the fall of the Berlin Wall, has warned us to be aware that another gigantic wall is being constructed in the Third World, to hide the reality of the poor majorities. A wall between the rich and poor is being built, so that poverty does not annoy the powerful and the poor are obliged to die in the silence of history.

Capitalism is a system of exchange, based on markets for goods, services and labour power. As Brian Martin¹¹ points out, oppression in capitalism is built into the exchange system, for example in the surplus extracted by owners, in the alienation of workers, in the degradation of the environment and in dependency of Third World economies. Social inequality is fostered *within* and *between* societies: the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. There is nothing in systems of exchange that promotes equality and the ability of governments to control and compensate for the tendency of markets towards inequality is decreasing in the process of globalization. The welfare state has become more and more dismantled, privatization is moving forward everywhere and world politics comes increasingly under the control of a single power.

Military Hegemony and Structural Violence

The violence of globalization is further manifested in the global military hegemony. The only superpower attempts to make the global market an absolute order, insuring this through unipolar military hegemony over the world. Sophisticated weapons are available and high-tech processes make their destructive force highly efficient. This situation could lead beyond mass destruction to the total annihilation of life on earth. The violence of these wars and the weapons used is often hidden by the terminology: there are “(military) operations”, “targets” and “collateral damage”. The latter seems to include damage to humans as well as to the environment. By the way, this would be another good starting point to introduce the term “structural violence” – as the collateral damage of unbridled capitalism.

And of course the military is connected to capitalism: market forces are driving the arms production and trade throughout the world; half the world's countries spend more on arms than health and education combined.¹² Excessive militarization produces structural violence on a global scale, especially in the Third World. “Market forces” doesn't mean these forces are anonymous or inescapable; there are people involved and they should be held responsible. For example a look at the Bush administration in the US can yield a lot of insights into the workings of the military-industrial complex.

¹⁰ Gilman (1983), p. 8. He continues: “It is 1.5 times as great as the yearly average number of civilian and battle field deaths during the 6 years of World War II. Every 4 days, it is the equivalent of another Hiroshima.”

¹¹ Martin (2001), *Nonviolence versus capitalism*, Chapter 2

¹² cf. DuNann Winter and Leighton (1999)

The Globalization of Language – Linguistic Violence

Not only economic exchange, also communicative exchange is unequal: in the following chapters I will analyze the hegemonic structures of global communication with English as a global language. As my academic background is in linguistics, I would like to address these issues in greater detail. While this type of structural violence is more subtle and won't kill people, it causes severe disadvantages, discrimination, exclusion and loss of identity – violations of human dignity that should not be underestimated.

Global English and the Historic Background of the Dominance of English

Currently, we witness the development of English as the global lingua franca.¹³ This is evident in the rising number of people the world over who use English as their first foreign language. English is in the process of taking on the same role as Latin in medieval Europe as a common tool of communication across cultural and national boundaries. However for the first time in history we witness the rise of a *lingua franca universalis*: universal in a functional sense, i.e. going beyond the limited (commercial, religious etc.) functions of the past and in a the sense of gaining a truly global reach, covering the most remote parts of the world - remote not only geographically, but also linguistically and culturally. In the past many attempts have been made to construct an artificial global language, with Esperanto being the most prominent example. But these attempts were all not very successful¹⁴ thus Esperanto doesn't seem to be a viable alternative.

The main reason for the spread of English can be found in history: Imperial expansion of European and US power changed the linguistic patterns among millions of people and superimposed English (and some other European tongues) in many parts of the world. When the imperial nations gave up their colonial empires, their languages remained.¹⁵

Linguistic Homogenization and Cultural Hegemony

Today for the English-speaking countries English is a commodity that can be exported throughout the world. English-speaking countries have a larger linguistic capital than countries of other languages. Because of this great communicability and acceptability, English-language-related products like movies, videos, MTV, CDs, T-shirts, etc. are exported and consumed all over the world (cf. Tsuda 1999: chapter 2.3).

How do people (non-native speakers) feel about using English as the global language? On the one hand there is excitement about global participation or about being part of a local elite or at least about pretending to be part of an elite with the commodified language serving as a status symbol. On the other hand we often find a general feeling of resentment; especially where the hegemonic use of this language is perceived as an encroachment over local cultures. Mahatma Gandhi wrote the following in the magazine "Young India" in 1921 on the ambivalence of using English and on the interaction between inside and outside:

¹³ English is not only the most taught foreign language across the world; it is also designated as an official language in 62 countries. Even in countries like Japan and Taiwan the option to make it a second official language is currently in the public discussion.

¹⁴ Artificial or planned languages can actually be learned fast due to their high degree of regularity. However, while Esperanto is still taken serious by a number of sociolinguists like Phillipson or Ammon, it seems to be difficult to motivate people to learn an auxiliary language that serves only limited functional purposes and refers to no "real" sociocultural context.

¹⁵ English is still spoken in much of Africa, the Indian subcontinent, the Philippines, and certain areas of the Pacific islands. In most areas it functions as language of the educated elite and of government, commerce, and higher education.

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any, I refuse to live in other people's homes as an interloper, a beggar or a slave. I refuse to put the unnecessary strain of learning English upon my sisters for the sake of false pride or questionable social advantage. I would have our young men and young women with literary tastes to learn as much English and other world languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world. But I would not have a single Indian forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother-tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her vernacular."

The difficulty of identity maintenance and the violent tendencies of the dominant language and culture are described here in the colonial context and contrasted with an ideal of intercultural openness, understanding and fairness. Isn't it puzzling how much our current globalizing world resembles the colonial hegemonic situation and how little it resembles the open and fair one?

Communicative Inequality

A leading critic of the dominance of English in international settings is the Japanese scholar Yukio Tsuda. According to him, the use of English as the lingua franca in international contacts does not facilitate communication because it creates inequality between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs).

Communicative inequality is generated by the power that NSs have, being able to use their mother tongue while others have to use a foreign (or second) language. NSs are in a better negotiating position: they are fluent in the language and can concentrate on content while NNSs often have to focus on the linguistic form which reduces their ability to participate in the conversation.¹⁶ This can also lead to linguistic and social discrimination as NSs tend to perceive NNSs as inferior, by generalizing from their linguistic limitations.

Finally, it causes NNSs to develop linguistic, cultural, and psychological dependency upon, and identification with, the NSs, their culture and people "colonization of the mind" a term also used by Skuttnab-Kangas and Phillipson together with "neo-neocolonialism" and "linguistic imperialism", occurs as a result of linguistic domination: in their mental universe, the dominated, "the colonized" act as colonizers in their own culture, turn the foreign power into their own power, and undervalue their culture, replacing it with the culture and values of the colonizer and leading to a new form of colonialism.

Other Aspects of Inequality: Time and Money

The expenses for language learning, caused by the fact that people need common languages in order to be able to communicate, are not shared evenly. The teaching of English worldwide is paid for by everybody else but the native English speakers. It continues to amaze and puzzle me how heavily not only countries but also individuals, especially Asian parents, are investing in English education. There seems to be hardly any awareness of being victims. Even in Korea which has witnessed so many demonstrations in the nineties, e.g. against the Uruguay Round, global English with all related inequalities is taken for granted. But let me return to inequality: Still it is to some extent the Anglophone monolingualism¹⁷ that forces all others to learn their language while they do not learn other languages, which saves them time and money. Ammon (1994: 240) reports that

¹⁶ This gap is hard to overcome especially for speakers whose mother tongues are linguistically distant from English who are increasingly facing this challenge in a world using a *global* lingua franca (cf. above).

¹⁷ Monolingualism is rising: In 1910, one out of every four Americans could fluently speak some language other than English. Only 14 % could in 1990, which is also due to the shrinking of minority languages. This is despite an increase in minority population and demographic predictions that the end of the white majority in the United States is near, and that there will be a majority of minorities. Only Spanish speakers have had long-term success in keeping their language. – In Britain 66 % are monolingual according to Eurobarometer 2001.

he often heard American colleagues expressing the view that Europeans had no chance to compete with the US technologically because they have to spend time on language learning instead of working more intensively on science and technology. This seems to indicate a conscious choice of monolingualism as a competitive advantage, which, by the way, would be even stronger in relation to Asians. Personally, I heard from American colleagues in the humanities that they had to give up their struggle for common language requirements due to strong opposition from the scientists in their university.

Finally, Anglophone countries not only save time and money from not learning languages, they are even able to *make money* from the learning of the others: English teaching is a multibillion dollar business for Britain and the US; linguistic capital can be turned into monetary capital.

The Asymmetry of the Globalized Language World: Linguistic Homogenization - Cultural Hegemony

Critics of globalization have often pointed out asymmetries. The same can be said about the linguistic world where we can see, roughly speaking the emergence of an Anglophone “center” and a periphery of other languages which is aptly expressed in the cute acronym LOTE (“*languages other than English*”¹⁸). And it’s not only the language itself which is spreading from the center; there is a massive flow of information from central countries to the periphery which is not counterbalanced by a similar flow in the opposite direction. This is not only the case with the mass media, but with the fact that anything written in the Anglophone center can be read in the periphery but rarely things written in the periphery can be read in the center.

NSs and NNSs play different roles. NSs are active dispensers of knowledge, which is submissively taken by the NNSs. This is the case not only in relation to cultures that are remote or small. I have experienced many times, that great European scholars are unknown in the US. The prevalent belief seems to be “What is important is translated into English” or “If it’s not translated, it’s not important”.

An example from the movie theater, invented more than a century ago in France: Today 80% of films shown in Western Europe are of Californian origin, only 2% of films shown in North America are of European origin (Hamelink 1994: 114)¹⁹

Apparently there are asymmetric relations in many areas ranging from academic discourse to popular culture. During the GATT negotiations in the nineties, when the question arose whether the liberalization of trade should also cover cultural goods and services, the French introduced the concept “exception culturelle” into the discussion of international relations:

„cultural goods and services are something more than commercial objects. This doctrine holds that if cultural industries were governed exclusively by market rules they would be unable to compete against the products of the large media conglomerates. Thus states should reject trade liberalization in cultural goods and services - film and audiovisual materials in particular, and remain free to adopt their own internal cultural policies, including subsidies for the production and distribution of cultural products.“ (Tardif 2002: 5)

This has been partly successful for Europeans and others to prevent cultural homogenization. While the US urged liberalization, the EU and others followed the French suggestions.

To achieve equality and fairness in communication Tsuda makes the following suggestions:

- Linguistic localism: the use of local languages by all the participants in communication.

¹⁸ It should be noted however, that this term has been used mainly *inside* multicultural societies with English as the official language.

¹⁹ In this regard also: “(...) the competitive advantage against local cultural providers, the obstruction of local initiative, all converge into a reduction of local cultural space.” (Hamelink 1994: 112)

- “Neutrilingual communication” (third language use): interlocutors who are NSs of different languages communicate with each in a third (neutral) language
- Use of both languages: interlocutors speak in their native languages and force each other to listen to it as a foreign language.

I believe that "linguistic localism" is unrealistic and its enforcement would not lead to desirable results (rather avoidance behavior might be seen). The other two suggestions seem to be viable and actually compatible with the spread of English as a global language – but not English only.

Especially they would give English NSs the obligation to learn foreign languages and develop an intercultural awareness of sharing the burden of using and learning foreign languages. Similar to Tsuda's second suggestion is another proposal by Piron: “to decide that nobody in the UN family has the right to use his or her mother tongue” (Piron 1998: 1), a general consciousness that nobody can expect to use his/her mother tongue in international contacts, that there is a kind of stigma on mother tongue usage or at least it would be against the etiquette.

A Linguistic Human Rights Approach

UNESCO's recently adopted Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity²⁰ calls for action against the homogenization that results from the disappearance of languages:

“Cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations”²¹ (Article 1).

The main argument for the need of linguistic diversity lies in the concept of linguistic relativity which was developed by Sapir and Whorf and goes back to Humboldt:²² It means that language is not just an instrument for communication, which could easily be exchanged, but each language reflects a unique world-view and culture and, as UNESCO puts it, the means of expression of the “intangible cultural heritage” of people. This and the fact that the mother tongue is the primary medium of socialization through which a child becomes part of a community make it a central symbol of individual and collective identity.

Unfortunately, every two weeks a language is becoming extinct and with it a unique world-view, culture and source of people's identity disappears. The intensive spread and promotion of English threatens linguistic diversity.²³ The emergence of a variety of “Englishes”²⁴ does not mean real diversity. Arguing this way would be like arguing for McDonalds's contribution in favor of diversity, because they occasionally include some local dishes. It is a partial re-localization after homogenization.²⁵

²⁰ Adopted at the 31st session of UNESCO's General Conference, Paris, October 15 - November 3, 2001.

²¹ Taking the link between biodiversity and linguistic/cultural diversity further is the so-called Ecology of Language Paradigm (e.g. Mühlhäusler 1996; Skutnab-Kangas 2000) who see a correlational or even causal relationship between them and develop the new paradigm as a counter-strategy to the hegemony of English.

²² According to Humboldt the diversity of languages doesn't mean languages use different signs meaning the same – they actually refer to something different: „Ihre Verschiedenheit ist nicht eine von Schällen und Zeichen, sondern eine Verschiedenheit der *Weltansichten* selbst“; Humboldt GS IV: 27.

²³ On the state of minority languages and the processes of language shift and language loss cf. Skutnab-Kangas 2000, Chapter I. Instead of “language loss” she prefers the strong term „linguistic genocide“. A comparison with proper genocide can be found in Romy-Masliah (1999): “...we cannot remain silent on the sad fact that the policy of the founding fathers of Australia has consistently consisted, for over a century in humiliating or suppressing the speakers of over 270 indigenous languages in conditions which are quite similar to a proper genocide.”

²⁴ These are variations of English which have been summed up under the concepts „New Englishes“ or „Post-Colonial Englishes“.

²⁵ Phillipson / Skutnab-Kangas point out, with reference to Mazrui and Kachru, that these Englishes are not decolonized or deculturized, stripped of their Anglo-American heritage. This would be as naive as hoping that imperialism and racism are eradicated from textbooks by substituting Lagos airport for London and by changing the skin colour of the archetypal middle class text-book nuclear family.“ (Phillipson / Skutnab-Kangas 1985: 167f.). Unfortunately, educational projects supported by the IMF allow local languages only at the primary level.

Aggressive promotion of English threatens the linguistic rights of speakers of other languages. With the human rights approach we can work towards the maintenance of linguistic diversity by stipulating the linguistic rights of speakers of languages which might be threatened, especially by subtractive learning of English or other dominant languages. “Subtractive” means at the cost of the various mother tongues. They could be learned *in addition* to them, additively. Unfortunately people often have either-or attitudes (if you want to maintain your L1, it means you won't learn L2 well; or: learning L2 may mean sacrificing your L1, at least to some extent). Subtractive language learning as the only alternative offered is in my view a violation of minorities' linguistic human rights.

In order to humanize globalization and to create a fair a world language order the following have to be considered:

- Counter-balancing the market – an aspiration towards fairness and equality (the market is obviously not a level playing field but an arbitrary and unfair mechanism)
- Right to mother tongue and an official language (important for minorities)
- Freedom from imposition of language shift
- Language requirements in educational systems

These would be steps to implement an antihegemonic globalization as an alternative to that being so vigorously pushed by market forces, creating linguistic and cultural violence. Instead there would be an atmosphere in which everyone's culture and language are valued and not reduced to their market value. In addition, the financial inequalities could be diminished through something like a linguistic version of the Tobin tax/resource tax, charged on monolinguals and used to compensate foreign language learners/users and support other language related services (interpreting etc.)

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