

Diffusion and Strategies Selection of Urban Conservation Movement in Guangzhou

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Introduction

Recently, there is rapid urban development in Guangzhou. Some urban **conservation movements have risen to respond the problems associated with the** development. The movements can be distinguished into two types. One is urban conservation movement that appeals to conserve traditional urban culture, language and community social network, especially in some major urban renewal projects. The other type is civil right movement of urban property that the owners fight for their right when they are facing crisis in the urban renewal projects.

The participants in the first type use both online and offline activities to promote the conservation of traditional urban culture and community social network. They emphasize the importance of the traditional urban culture and history. They want to conserve the culture and history undergoing social changes such as urban renewal. Therefore, they use photo taking, oral history, exhibitions, and cultural tours to encourage more people to concern Guangzhou traditional culture. Most of the groups in Guangzhou belong to this type.

The other type is insisting the importance of sustainable development of community, civil right and civil engagement in urban renewal projects. Although they also pay attention to traditional community, they focus more on the future development and the local residents. They have tried to understand the need and expectation of residents. They have also done social researches to evaluate the impact of the urban renewal projects on residents. After that, they tried to do an urban planning proposal and sent to the government. Conservation of social structure of community, adequate and suitable compensation, proper housing reallocation, public consultation and civil participation in urban planning are their major concerns.

There are many similarities between conservation movements in Hong Kong and in Guangzhou. The forms of movements in Hong Kong are categorized as follow. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) promote cultural conservation through soft tactics in Hong Kong. For example, Conservation Association and SEE

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network always hold cultural tours, photo exhibition and civil education at schools. They also propose policy advocacy to the government. Furthermore, some NGOs like St. James Settlement also participate in community movement by using the soft tactics that are mentioned above. Besides, they also designed non-governmental planning proposal in H15 (Lee Tung Street)'s movement and blue house movement. Moreover, Choi Yuen Village Concern Group also help the residents of Choi Yuen Village to conserve their community culture and help them to design a new village under the damage caused by railway planning.

Both of the two groups have used the Internet to save and distribute the information about conservation. Most of their information is extracted from Hong Kong, including news, articles and documentaries. During the process, they have collected information from the Internet as the reference of their action. Moreover, some NGOs from Hong Kong also start to hold activities to promote conservation in Guangzhou.

Research question

Compare Hong Kong with Guangzhou, people start to concern the urban conservation and there are many urban social movements rise in Hong Kong over the past decade. The major movements include community movement in Wan Chai, Star Ferry Pier movement, Queen's Pier movement and Choi Yuen Village movement. Many NGOs also promote the importance of urban conservation through oral history, exhibitions and cultural tours.

Except Support Cantonese movement in 2010, we cannot see any large-scale radical movements in Guangzhou because of the high pressure in an authoritarian regime. However, we can observe many young people participating in urban conservation and they have established at least twenty groups.

When we consider the sequence in time, we can find that the movements in Hong Kong are earlier than Guangzhou. We can image that the participants in Guangzhou can receive the information about the movements in Hong Kong through different channels including mass media, the Internet and personal networking. Then we may ask: Are there any relationship? Do the movements in Hong Kong affect Guangzhou? If they have relationship, what is the diffusion mechanism between the two movements?

We can borrow the concepts about diffusion in social movements and understand how the diffusion mechanism occurs and how the members use those diffused items to construct their strategies in China.

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In short, this research aims to exploring the follow questions:

1. What is the structural and cultural foundation of diffusion between movements in Hong Kong and Guangzhou?
2. How do values and tactics about urban conservation diffuse to Guangzhou through different channels?
3. How do different diffusion items affect their strategies in different groups in Guangzhou?

Significance of research

In theoretical level, expects to contribute to apply the suggested theory by Soule that uses concepts of diffusion of innovation by combining with a structural theory by McAdam to study social movement. After Soule's suggestion of putting these concepts into studying diffusion in social movement, there is rare research to adopt it for study. Therefore, using these concepts can not only help us to understand the macro factors and channels of diffusion, but also study the micro level of how activists receive and select different diffusion items in the mechanism.

In practical level, it can contribute to empirical research of social movement in China, especially the urban conservation movement. It is because many scholars have started to study the diffusion in technology, business sectors and NGOs in China, but the application on diffusion of social movement between China and Hong Kong has not yet started. Guangzhou and other coastal cities have close ties with Hong Kong not limited to economic and trade but also cultural conservation and civil participation. The growing number of social movement in Guangzhou has signaled the high time for empirical research to start. Therefore, it can help people to understand the exchange of knowledge and culture between cities in the "One Country, Two Systems" context.

Literature Review

1. Diffusion between Hong Kong and Guangzhou

There are plenty previous researches on the diffusion between Hong Kong and Guangzhou, but most of them focus on the influence on popular culture and language by mass media. In Li's study about regional correlation and diffusion of culture among Hong Kong, Macau and the Pearl delta, she suggests that there are homogeneities and heterogeneities between Hong Kong, Macau and the Pearl delta. The homogeneities provide the foundation of mutual diffusion, and the

heterogeneities encourage the need and possibility of diffusion. She also argues that there are cultural expand from advantageous to relatively backward between different system and modern Hong Kong takes the role of transmitter in the diffusion process.

2. Diffusion in new social movement

The previous explanation of cultural diffusion between Hong Kong and Guangzhou may not be enough to explain the phenomenon about urban conservation. Therefore, the theories about diffusion in new social movement can help to solve the puzzles.

A. New social movement

The development of new social movement theory is a trend after 1980's because of the arising of women's movement, the environmental movement, etc. The traditional approaches including resource mobilization theory, cannot explain the raise of the above social movements validly. According to Gusfield (1994), the concept of new social movements provided knowledge of those movements by "focusing attention to the meaning of morphological changes with structural transformation in society as a whole." Cohen (1984) also points out the new social movements were non- materialism and fought for new identity, social relationship and life style. The new social movement perspective also makes cultural and cognitive factors to the study of social movement. McAdam (1994) uses three distinct ways to explain the cultural root of social movement and claimed that "culture can be said to facilitate movement emergence". There are: 1. Framing as an Act of Cultural Appropriation, 2. Expanding Cultural Opportunities as a Stimulus to Action, and 3. The Role of Long-Standing Activist Subcultures in Movement Emergence. On the other hand, Carl Milofsky (2007) claims that "community movement and local organizations are shaped by mass cultural and political movements and by large-scale social events" and considered that culture as the link between local community and mass society.

B. Mechanism of diffusion

Many scholars used diffusion theory to study new social movements. McAdam (1995) emphasizes the important role that diffusion processes have in the rise of spin-off movements. Soule (1998) claims that, "Diffusion processes play a central role in contemporary explanations of the incidence of collective action and the spread of protest symbols and tactic". She defined diffusion as the spread of something within a social system and there is flow or movement from a source to an adopter. Elihu (1968)

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defines it as “the acceptance of some specific items, over time, by adopting units-individuals, groups, communities- that are linked both to external channels of communication and to each other by means of both a structure of social relations and a system of value, or culture.” Also, McAdam and Rucht (1993) explain that, “diffusion involves the following elements: (1) a person, group, or organization that serves as the emitter or transmitter; (2) a person, group, or organization that is the adopter; (3) the item that is diffused, such as material goods, information, skills, and the like; and (4) a channel of diffusion that may consist of persons or media that link the transmitter and the adopter.”

When discussing the mechanism of diffusion, early scholars focused on the channels of diffusion. Some of them looked at effect on the direct diffusion channels including travel routes (geographical appropinquity), individual social network, (Hedstrom, 2000), mobilized groups of collective actors or organizational ties (Meyer and Whittier, 1994, Morris, 1981), etc. Some scholars focused on the indirect diffusion channel, such as, membership (McAdam and Rucht 1993), educational institutions (Soule and Tarrow) and mass media (spilerman, 1970), etc.

Most of the above channels concern similar movements in a country or location. Although Guangzhou and Hong Kong are in one country, they have totally difference political and economic system.. McAdam and Rucht (1993) suggest a cross-national diffusion model, “that emphasizes the complementary role of relational and non-relational channels.” They start with the idea of similarity and argue that adopters should have a shared identification with the role of the transmitters. “The greater this identification, the more extensive the adoption of elements from the transmitter movement.”

This model provides a big picture of diffusion between different regions. It also distinguishes the difference between the direct ties and the indirect ties. We can use it to discover how the values and tactics diffuse through these channels and which ties are more useful and effective in China. However, the model cannot explain how the adaptor receives the items in the micro level based on his/her special situation.

Snow and Benford (1999) argue that the above researches ignore the agency of the actors and discuss three types of diffusion to explore the role of agency in the diffusion process in social movement. In the first type, reciprocation, both the transmitter and the adopter are interested in the items being diffused. In the second type, adaptation, the active adopter selects items from a passive transmitter. In the third type, accommodation, the transmitter promotes the diffusion of a relatively alien practice by tailoring the innovation to the needs of a relatively passive adopter.

Soule (2004) argues that scholars should ask how an innovation of a particular

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movement comes to dominate other possible innovations in a particular period because some innovations were failed in diffusion. She borrowed Roger's idea (1983) about diffusion of innovation and listed five characteristics of the innovation that affect the rate of adoption. The first was the relative advantages of an innovation that movement actors can gain. The second was the compatibility with the experiences, values, ideas, and needs of activists. The third was the complexity whether it is easy or difficult to use. The fourth was the triability whether there is a low-cost or easy way to try out. The last was the observability that how many advantages can be seen.

Analytical framework

In this research, I will review the similarities between the movements in Hong Kong and in Guangzhou first and find out the structural and cultural foundations of the diffusion process. McAdam and Rucht's model (1993) suggest several factors to facilitate diffusion including the language ability to speak and understand the same language, similar social characteristics and social strata.

Then, I will distinguish the two kinds of diffusion items including values and tactics and study how the items diffuse through the two kinds of diffusion channels. Also, I will study the selection process by adopters through different channels using the diffusion types suggested by Snow and Benford (1999) to understand the influence from NGOs such as Partnership of Community Development (PCD), media, the Internet and the other personal connection.

The last but not least, I will study the impact of diffusion on different stages of movement in different groups.

In summary, I will set four hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1

Direct ties give more effect on the movements than indirect ties.

- Hypothesis 2

The adopters in the movements adopt the diffusion items actively in indirect channels.

- Hypothesis 3

The adopters in the movements select value more than tactics because of the structural and cultural differences between two cities.

- Hypothesis 4

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The diffusion is weak at the early stage of movements and became stronger at the later stage of movements

Research methodology

1. Cases Selection

The research will also select two representative groups from the two types of groups to understand their different reception through different channels of diffusion. In the many groups of urban conservation movement, I will choose two groups to conduct a case study.

The first group I select is “Guangzhou Old City Concern Group” (GOCCG). It is one of the urban conservation groups and it is the most favourite group among the media. They want to promote cultural conservation and gain more support and participation from the youth with long-term campaigns and focus on local culture and the whole city. They interview and take photo with local residents that live in old distinct. After that, they post the photo and write oral history on their blog. They also hold cultural tours to lead youth to understand more about the history and culture in Guangzhou.

The second group is “Enning Road Concern Group” (ERCG). It is an important group that promotes civil right for residents in Enning Road (Enning Road is the great affected community under urban renewal policy in Guangzhou.) They interview local residents, write assessment reports and an urban planning proposal.

In fact, the two groups have had a close relationship as they are spilt up from a large group. Last year, some youth created online groups to promote cultural conservation under the rapid change of urban development in Guangzhou. One of the largest groups is preparing to hold an exhibition and some more actions. The original group has split up into two groups because of the disagreement on the action form. The two groups keep holding activities and many media report their actions. Nowadays, although the two groups separated and have different actions, they still have communication and meetings because they want to hold an exhibition together.

2. Research Methodology

The three methods I have adopted for this study are participation observation, in-depth interviews and content analysis.

The first method includes three ways of participation: 1.) taking part in the workshops held by PCD and observe their participation, 2.) taking part in their online

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discussions in QQ groups and forums, such as Douban.com, to observe how the information about conservation is spread and discussed, 3.) participating in their tour and preparation of exhibition. The second method is to interview the group leaders or the key adopters to understand why and how they collect information and select strategies. The third method is studying the news and magazines about them and the online posts, documents in the group to understand their reception about diffusion items from Hong Kong.

Findings

1. Diffusion mechanism

According to McAdam and Rucht's model (1993), we can image that the short distance of two cities is favorable for diffusion of culture and information. Youth in Guangzhou can receive news, information and idea from Hong Kong. Therefore, the rise of value about urban cultural conservation in Hong Kong can affect the idea of youth in Guangzhou. When they feel similar crisis, they will refer to Hong Kong's experience.

However, most of participators are not affected by Hong Kong's experience strongly. When the campaigns to defend the Queen's Pier or anti-high-speed rail campaign occurred, most people in Guangzhou did not pay too much attention or even care about it because they thought that issues were not related to them. Most of them have never read information from Hong Kong by crossing the Internet safeguard of the Mainland. Only some of their core members always read articles from InMedia and MyRadio. After they have started their movement, they have tried to seek information of people from Hong Kong directly.

There are two diffusion mechanisms of the movements:

A. Indirect mechanism

The first one is indirect mechanism. Before participation, some core members always read articles and listen to online radio from Hong Kong, such as InMedia and MyRadio. It may affect the value construction and strategies selection of their action in their future participation in conservation movement in Guangzhou. After they start to care about conservation issues in Guangzhou and want to initiate an action, they will search information from Hong Kong actively. For example, they watch documentary of RTHK about conservation, read documents of conservation and urban planning from Hong Kong's NGOs. After that, they share the information to other

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members among the QQ group and through email. Moreover, the information that shared in blog and tiny-blog (Weibo) can help to spread the information among different groups in Guangzhou. In Snow and Benford's view, the type of diffusion in the indirect mechanism is adaptation. The active activists in Guangzhou select items from Hong Kong, as a passive transmitter. The urgent need of information on their strategies selection encourages the diffusion.

B. Direct mechanism

The second one is direct mechanism. Some Hong Kong reporters got in touch with, interviewed them, and gave them some books from Hong Kong about conservation last year. They gained much information from the books. Some Hong Kong NGOs got in touch with them and wanted to have cooperation with them for some projects, or had exchange and gave books to them such as Partnerships for Community Development (PCD). Some activists from InMedia that concern conservation also met and shared ideas with them last month. One of the important leaders in conservation movements from Hong Kong always keeps contact with the core members in GOCG and shares information. What type of diffusion do they belong to? Reciprocation or accommodation? It needs time to study. However, PCD is a very active transmitter until now because they also encourage exchange, discussion and participation in different activities held by other organization after the workshop. Also, the social network that built from the workshop starts to play its role to converge more young people to join the movement.

In addition, we can find that the length of time of diffusion is one of the key factors about success of diffusion.

In the indirect mechanism, although most of them did not concern the affair about conservation in Hong Kong, some members who read articles and listen to online radio from Hong Kong chronically play an important role of the decision making or strategy selection about the group. If they are the group leaders, their ideas can drive the direction of the group. However, the spread of their idea in the group also needs a long-time to adopt, especially some sensitive information or idea. When I discuss with them about their ideas about conservation, they always quote Hong Kong's examples.

It seems that the influence of indirect mechanism is stronger than direct mechanism. Although they have chances to meet transmitters from Hong Kong, the chances are still few and each transmitter can only exchange with them for a very short time due to geographical divide. Therefore, the reporters and activists from

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Hong Kong did not bring strong influence on the diffusion process. However, PCD have started to hold a one-year workshop about urban culture and conservation in Guangzhou and have been trying to link up the different groups about urban conservation in Guangzhou. It could play a role of strong transmitter if they take a year to diffuse their idea to Guangzhou.

C. Successful and unsuccessful diffusion

Soule argued that some innovation may be failed in the diffusion process (2004). It is important to find out which diffusion items failed to diffuse in the process.

Values about conservation are the most successful diffusion items. They include importance of traditional culture (symbolic objects), importance of history (individual life stories), importance of social network in community (human relationship), significance of civil right in social policy and importance of public participation in social policy. Those values have cultural similarities about civil society and folk culture between Hong Kong and Guangzhou, so the activists in Guangzhou can accept and adopt those values easily.

In contrary to values, tactics or strategies are difficult to diffuse. First, the political opportunities in Guangzhou are relatively fewer than Hong Kong. Therefore, they cannot try to adopt some hard strategies such as hunger strikes or sit-in strike, and Ku-xing (Walking strike). However, they still try to use some soft strategies such as cultural tour, photo exhibition, writing community oral history, carrying out research on a community, and submitting urban planning proposal to the government. They try to learn the soft strategies from Hong Kong to fit into Guangzhou's political and social environments, but they can only know about the concepts of those strategies and cannot know about the details. They also think that they can only absorb the idea from Hong Kong, but cannot fully copy the method that activists in Hong Kong used. Creativity is need when develop new strategies. Therefore, they use some concepts of the strategies with Hong Kong but have their own operational styles.

In conclusion, the raising ideology of urban conservation in Hong Kong did not affect the youth in Guangzhou too much because of the different life experience, even though they have similar language and culture. However, in the later development of the movement, Hong Kong is a key reference for their strategies.

2. The adaptation of diffusion and selection of strategies

Although most of them are about 20 to 35 year-old, the two groups selected different strategies to respond to urban development. The roots of values of the two groups are different. GOCC's root is mainly about culture and focus on living experience, emotion and sense of belonging. ERCG's root is mainly about right and they follow the advocacy of civil right closely.

In fact, we can find that the two groups belong to a large online group at the beginning if we review their history. The watershed has been their first interview in the community, since that there has been diverge between two groups. The current leaders of GOCC (A) focus more on history and stories of residents and community in his interview question, but the current leaders of ERCG (B) focus more on the compensation and allocation of residents. A thought that B was brain-washed by residents for their desire of more money, but B thought that A's question and idea was powerless and useless for the residents.

Their different action related to the different values and background of group members. There are five important different backgrounds.

A. Affection

The first one is affection. In GOCC, the members started their action because of their affection on Guangzhou. Most of them are Guangzhou local residents. They live in Guangzhou for more than twenty years and have great affection for Guangzhou. Therefore, the conservation of history and culture in Guangzhou is an important issue for them. In ERCG, most of the members did not have a strong sense of belonging to Guangzhou because their living time in Guangzhou is shorter than five years. Therefore, they did not concern too much on the conservation of history and culture in Guangzhou.

B. Security

The second different background is security. In GOCC, the members have families and friends in Guangzhou. They have some relationship with the local authority in government. They always feel the strong pressure and insecurities from government. If their actions bring any risk to them, they cannot leave Guangzhou easily. Therefore, they choose peaceful strategies and are always sensitive to their action. In ERCG, the members do not have families in Guangzhou. After their studies in Guangzhou, they can leave Guangzhou and return to their former home. They can

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bear more risk caused by their action about civil right than GOCG.

Nevertheless, the two groups have different positions when facing media. Many newspaper and magazine had interviewed the members of GOCG. They emphasize that to build a good public relationship with media is very important, so they accept many media interviews with them and regard them as a kind of protection. They have conspicuous and active image in media because they want to use those interviews as promotion of cultural concern. At the same time, members of ERCG do not want to expose themselves and the residents in media and reject any interview. Some reporters in the group did not support to accept interview by media. However, they still have good relationship with media because they can be a bridge between residents and media in urgency. After noticing accidents in the community, they would try to concern them and inform editors or reporters. At some moments, what they can do is only to notice the media and cannot do more for residents because the issues they are concerning are too sensitive and they think that the powers of the residents are separated. In an authoritarian regime, both residents and youths are weak and can only seek protection from media.

C. Occupation

The third background is occupation. Most of the core members in GOCG are graduated and have a job, but the core members in ERCG are university students. The latter's status provide a protection for them. Most of them are studying economic, sociology, urban planning and journalism etc. Therefore, they also consider civil right rationally rather than culture that may affected by their training in their major studies.

D. Identity

The forth is identity. They have different identities for their roles. Members of GOCG regard themselves as Guangzhou Kai Fong (街坊, residents) and Guangzhou citizens, but members of ERCG regard themselves as Chinese citizens. Their identities are totally different. Those identity shaped by many different factors, but one of the key factors is empowerment from their action. Because of their different identities, they have different goal.

E. Language

The fifth background is language. Language is an important factor to affect their communication and cooperation. Different groups have different habitual languages, they use their language to communicate comfortably in their meetings and activities.

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Most members in Cantonese-speaking groups (GOCG) do not like to use Putonghua to communicate, but most members in non-Cantonese-speaking groups (ERCG) cannot speak Cantonese. Therefore, there are cultural and language divides between their communications. Even in public activities with other people that cannot use Cantonese, the Guangzhou members are averse to use Putonghua. When both of them join the workshop with other groups in Guangzhou, they separated into two groups for chatting during the break time. Moreover, the language used by the group also attracts people who use that language to join.

In conclusion, when the core members of GOCG started to concern the development issue, they chose a peaceful way to focus on history and culture because of the affection and consideration about security. On the other hand, the core members of ERCG did not focus on history and chose to protect civil right for local residents in Enning Road that without strong affection on them.

3. Challenge of action

The diffusion and the strategies selection are affected by the challenge from the political environment. After members of GOCG support Cantonese movements, they are called by the police every month to report their action. ENCG feel less pressure from the government due to their role of students. However, both of them start to experience higher pressure from the government after the Jasmine Movement in China. ENCG's film show was stopped by the police. Their cooperative exhibition also delays due to some unspeakable reasons.

How to maintain a good relationship with the government and reduce the risk of being neutralized (被和諧) is very important for them. The way is understood as the game rules.

One core member of GOCG has close relationship with the government, so he always feels strong pressure from family and friends that are close with the government. In August 2010, some core members in GOCG supported Cantonese Campaign, the government wanted to close the group because some core members took action to support "Cantonese Campaign", he protected the group using his relationship (Guanxi) with government. The group is under great supervision of the government because of the sensitive nature of the group. It can only survive as one core member has relationship (Guanxi) with the government. Moreover, they also mentioned that there are some protectors in police. It is because some open minded police also support their value.

Conclusion

In conclusion, whatever local or non-local, participation in these movements constructs their identity as Guangzhouese and citizens. However, they have different identities when they are taking part in different actions. Although they have different values and strategies, they support, collaborate and complement each other.

The diffusion process may not be the core part in their actions, but it influences their values and strategies in their action. However, the adaptation needs a suitable environment for diffusion. Hong Kong experience is an important toolkit for them. They borrow ideas from HK, but they cannot understand the details, so they can only create detailed strategies by themselves.

Further research

The urban conservation movement is still in a development progress. More and more young people join this movement by different strategies. Why they attach great importance to the urban culture? How they treat the urban culture and devote into the urban conservation? The first question I want to follow is their interpretation on the urban culture and its meaning in their action.

Moreover, after their participation in the community and their interaction with the other group, their values start to change. Some core members of GOCG want to try more about community development and organization, because they have started to realize the importance of the right of residents and the importance of organization development on conservation. They also want to strive the right of participation in urban planning. In the same time, some core members of ENCG expressed that they started to love Guangzhou local culture after more communication with residents. Will the changing values change their future direction?

The experiences from other cities or countries are also important for their action. In the past, seldom NGOs got involved in the movements. The intervention of PCD would bring some impact on the movements by affecting their group structure and social network. The second question is studying how NGOs from HK affect their action in the future is an important question. I will join their one-year workshop by participation observation. Also, I will interview the senior staffs of PCD and know about their goal and expectation on their activities in Guangzhou.

Last but not least, one of my focuses is to discover what will happen after the activists meet more cope-mates. After PCD's workshop, they form a new social

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network and keep interact with each other. The new network may bring more resources or ideas into their own groups.

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