

Tourism and Cultural Change



Identity and Intercultural Exchange in Travel and Tourism



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5 Nature, Culture and the Genesis of the Concept of Travel

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Introduction

In more recent discussions and studies in the field of human sciences, the theme of travel has not been given its due importance. If, on the one hand, the study of tourist activity has led research into the phenomenon of travel to be conducted with more rigour, it has also tended to equate the latter with the concept of tourism, without paying attention to the fact that they are actually different. There are two aspects that differentiate these categories: the ontological characterisation of travelling presupposes the dislocation of man in space and time; but since this is insufficient to explain the category 'travel', the ontological meaning must be expanded to contain the perception of a space-time dislocation of man, who leaves the place where he lives to arrive in a place where he does not live or might live in the future.

So, the concept of travel goes beyond the idea of a simple spatial dislocation and involves a dislocation between the same and the different. In this case, the study of tourism would be the study of a specific kind of travel, one that involves leisure, the experience of returning, and the travel package: tourism as a good (Figueiredo, 2010; Figueiredo & Ruschmann, 2004; MacCannell, 2003). Just as the concepts of travel and tourism are confused with one another, scholars have been speculating for a long time on the possibility that travel is a human need. Many studies, following what is said by sellers of touristic products, have associated vacations with travel, causing consumers to believe that it represents a real need and that the Western (and later globalised) population as a whole should take a touristic trip at least once a year to get to know fashionable and idyllic places. This important marketing discourse about travel destinies and touristic products has ended up generating the idea that travelling is a human need, which is justified

by the fact that every person should indulge in sophisticated leisure activities, such as travelling to famous tourist destinations, as if an individual's résumé must be improved by recordings of the trips he or she has gone on. This perhaps explains how photography and filming have become so salient in tourist experience.

By understanding the tourism product as a touristic experience (Uriely, 2005), it has been possible to identify the differences between the traveller and the tourist (Figueiredo, 2010; Lévi-Strauss, 1984; Urbain, 1983, 1986, 1993, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b) and to notice that there are some characteristics that would help to identify travel as a basic need. However, and above all, it is noticeable that the elements that constitute a trip and could serve as examples of this inherent need are actually cultural and specific categories that are part of symbolic processes that exist in certain cultures and groups. It would, therefore, seem impossible to think of them as something natural. This is the case with the search for adventure and risk, which considers different types of adventure – from a love affair to a trip – as a rupture from everyday life (Simmel, 2002). The search for the exotic, for what is different, and curiosity about discovering the Other, as observed in Christin (2000) and Segalen (1999), might lead us to a universal truth for all human beings. Would any human group deny this affirmation? According to Michel (2000), only the desire to get to know other places, to go *ailleurs* (elsewhere), is left to us. So, it is possible to think of human beings as people essentially eager to get to know other places and avid for the experience of spatial dislocation, for going and coming. As Michel (2000) argues, this is a primary desire. Maffesoli (2006) also observes the desire for roaming.

This chapter lays forth some thoughts on the characterisation of travelling as something both natural and cultural, based on studies undertaken by three extremely important thinkers in the field of human sciences: Claude Lévi-Strauss, Clifford Geertz and Bronisław Malinowski.

Travel, Nature and Culture

Travel and its counterpart, tourism, are currently characterised by their possibility for representing post-modern man. The huge quantity of leaflets and propaganda that try to compel people to take trips is testimony to our latent desire to travel at least once a year – often to places that one has never visited before. Travelling would therefore appear not to be something superfluous. It creates possibilities for a better life because it heals and relaxes from the stress of everyday life and represents the endless possibilities of life experiences and (why not?) of educating the traveller/tourist, offering a

transformation in his or her perception of life. Travel provides knowledge. We might conjure up famous and brave travellers as examples. So, it is possible to look at the act of travelling as something associated with a need which has to be fulfilled, as its lack will be harmful to man. This might make man miserable and perhaps physically and spiritually ill. So, in this respect, travelling is seen as something natural. No one mentally healthy should in principle refuse to travel. Some anthropology researchers have closely studied the relationship between nature and culture, so it is possible to try to review how the act of travelling is situated in this discussion.

Nature and Culture in Claude Lévi-Strauss

Man is a biological being and a social individual at the same time. In affirming this, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969: 3–4) presents a basic discussion of this dichotomy in his study *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. To him, culture can be considered neither simply juxtaposed with nor simply superimposed on life. In one sense, it replaces life, and in another sense, it uses it and transforms it in order to synthesise a new order. By means of these arguments, Lévi-Strauss proposes two forms of analysis in order to understand how the formation of culture and the relationship with the natural takes place. One of them concerns the regression of man to a state outside society, involving experiments or otherwise, in which children were raised by apes, wolves or baboons. With the child being raised isolated from society, and based on the most varied studies, the author demonstrates that this type of individual becomes a complete idiot, one who is not capable of reasoning. Therefore, the author notices that there is no point of regression that refers and attaches itself to a previous natural state of what is commonly known as man and his culture, 'since the species has no natural behaviour to which an isolated individual might retrogress' (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 5). The 'wild children', originating from a method of isolation either the product 'of chance or experimentation ... may be cultural monstrosities, but under no circumstances can they provide reliable evidence of an earlier state' (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 5). So, the search through regression for a previous, incipient and initial state, in which a man without culture and in his natural state could be observed, is a fruitless search, because this state does not exist and the only thing experimentation and accident can offer is the identification of unhealthy beings.

The other form of analysis, a way of looking for answers and finding the 'natural man', is to invert the study: instead of searching for inferior stages of man, by trying to find out the behaviour of superior stages of animal life, in which – putting aside complex societies of bees, ants and other insects,

for they are perfect examples of the natural state in instinct and in the anatomical equipment that transmits hereditary features for the survival of the colony – it is feasible to see the impossibility of finding elements of what he calls a universal cultural model. But, before arguing with Lévi-Strauss and conceptions of inversion, we should identify in these elements what would characterise culture or the ‘cultural man’: languages, tools, social institutions and systems of aesthetics, moral and religious values. Thus, it is possible to better ‘hunt out’ the natural man in some mammals, such as anthropoid apes (gorillas, chimpanzees and orang-utans) (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 5–6). For Lévi-Strauss, this pathway is equally frustrating. Chimpanzees may use elementary instruments and tools, show signs of solidarity and subordination, have experiences with the sacred, and present a diversity of eating and sexual habits, but these acts, these sketches of culture, do not go much beyond this even in terms of rudimentary language because, even though there is no biological hindrance, apes are not able to attribute any kind of sign to the few sounds they emit. Sense does not exist.

Such behaviours demonstrate a versatility that could be natural or cultural, but then there would be two models that, associated with the notions of nature/culture and diversity/versatility, would be within the scope of nature, while universal rules and patterns would be within the field of culture. In a clearer and more acceptable way, this means that the universals are found in the category ‘nature’. Regulation and rule indicate culture and are relative. So, universality should be contained in nature: ‘what is constant in man falls necessarily beyond the scope of customs, techniques and institutions whereby his groups are differentiated and contrasted’ (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 8), and is characterised by spontaneity. Culture would be within the domain of the private and the relative.

Clifford Geertz and the Interpretations of Culture

Another important contribution was made by the North American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who carried out studies on the relationship between nature and culture and the definition of mind. According to Geertz (1973: 34), ‘the Enlightenment view of man was, of course, that he was wholly of a piece with nature and shared in the general uniformity of composition which natural science, under Bacon’s urging and Newton’s guidance, had discovered there’, that is, laws of a human nature. This conception has gradually been turned over, in the sense that studies on non-Western societies started to be carried out so that they would be understood as units in themselves. Thus, the search for universal units of man has been progressively put aside – making, in the words of the anthropologist,

'the drawing of a line between what is natural, universal, and constant in man and what is conventional, local, and variable extraordinarily difficult' (Geertz, 1973: 36) – and has contributed to the 'decline of the uniformitarian view of man', in line with the following maxim: 'man may be so entangled with where he is, who he is, and what he believes that he is inseparable from them' (Geertz, 1973: 35).

Geertz explains this recurring concept in the analysis of nature and culture in man as being based on a stratified conception of culture: when the life of man is interpreted as natural, then we have relationships between biological, psychological, social and cultural factors, as if they were different levels, and man is characterised in his essence by what he is biologically. Based on that, layers are formed until the cultural man and culture itself can be reached. This conception has influenced theories disseminated throughout human sciences, such as the famous 'Maslow's pyramid'. Maslow, a theoretician of the psychology of motivation, says that man is formed by various levels of needs and that some of them are more 'urgent' than others. It is necessary to first satisfy the most basic needs and then satisfy the less basic ones. These needs are described as a pyramid, whose base is formed by physiological needs, followed by needs for safety and security, needs for love and belonging, esteem needs, self-actualisation needs, until the top is reached with aesthetic needs (Maslow, 1970). Physiological needs represent nature, which means that hunger is a basic need and is attached to instinct. The other needs would be attached to culture, because they represent the information and instruments needed to live in society; and when put in layers, one by one, they must be met completely.

In short, if the life of man is set up in layers, we only need to remove the layers attached to the social, cultural and psychological aspects in order to find the lost connection. Geertz appropriately reminds us, as Lévi-Strauss did, that this interpretation was built based on the search for a concept of a universal man, which, according to Geertz, existed only in the Enlightenment, in the obvious formation stage of scientific knowledge and in the search for cultural universals. Therefore, some aspects are really necessary for human life and others are peripheral. This is the concept of *consensus gentium* (consensus of all humanity).

Malinowski's Theory of Culture and Universal Institutional Types

Anthropologist followers of functionalism, especially Malinowski, who carried out very important studies in works such as *Argonauts of the Western*

Pacific (1953) and *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia* (1941), which describe his trip to the Trobriand Islands and are classic examples of an anthropological trip – the first of all anthropologists' fieldwork – have an obviously functional interpretation of the relationship between nature and culture. Malinowski produces a relationship between what he calls universal institutional types, which are found in his *The Scientific Theory of Culture* (1944). Among these types (Malinowski, 1944: 62–65), there are –

- *in reproduction* (bonds of blood defined by a legal contract of marriage and extended by a specifically defined principle of descent): the family, as the domestic group of parents and children; courtship organisation, the legal definition and organisation of marriage as a contract binding two individuals and relating two groups; the extended domestic group and its legal, economic and religious organisation; groups of kindred, united through the unilateral principle of descent; the clan, matrilineal or patrilineal; the system of related clans.
- *in voluntary associations*: primitive secret societies, clubs, recreational teams, artistic societies; at higher levels, mutual aid and benefit societies, lodges, voluntary associations for recreation, uplift or the fulfilment of a common purpose.
- *in principles of rank and status*: states and orders of nobility, clergy, burghers, peasants, serfs, slaves; the caste system; stratification by ethnic (i.e. racial or cultural) distinctions at primitive and developed levels.

Taking Malinowski's family category as an example, it is possible to notice that its characterisation as a 'domestic group of parents and children' is a universal categorisation, which obeys the typology of human universals, with the concept of marriage 'a more or less durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of the offspring' (Durham, 1978: 17).

It is necessary to highlight the functionalist characteristics in Malinowski's text, which is based on the following observation: there are a large number of human impulses – biological and natural – which individuals and groups transform into cultural matters. However, some of these impulses are found in many cultures and seem universal. In Malinowski, the understanding of groups and cultures is based on minutely empirical research, to do which he lived at a particular place for a particular period of time. And *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* makes explicit exactly this feature, especially in the chapter 'The Subject, Method and Scope of This Enquiry' (Malinowski, 1953).

The author also seeks to elaborate concepts of permanent and vital importance, which exist in all cultures and are present in: the impulse to breathe (*act*, intake of oxygen; *satisfaction*, elimination of CO₂ in tissues); hunger (*act*, ingestion of food; *satisfaction*, satiation); thirst (*act*, absorption of liquid; *satisfaction*, quenching); sex appetite (*act*, conjugation; *satisfaction*, detumescence); fatigue (*act*, rest; *satisfaction*, restoration of muscular and nervous energy) (Malinowski, 1944: 77).

Culture, Nature, Travelling and Tourism

According to Geertz, the first issue about these kinds of interpretation concerns the substantial or non-substantial forms of universal concepts, dealing with concepts such as marriage, religion or property (taking us back to Malinowski with *family* and to Lévi-Strauss with *kinship*). The author affirms that 'if one defines religion generally and indeterminately – as man's most fundamental orientation to reality, for example – then one cannot at the same time assign to that orientation a highly circumstantial content'. Using other examples, this orientation among the Aztecs is not the same as among the Zunis, the Kayapós or Brazilian Catholics. Thus, the concepts end up becoming general information that loses its rigour. On the other hand, exaggerated relativism has limitations in terms of its contribution to the understanding of man based on the relationships between nature and culture.

So, debates on universals attached to important categories are present in the relationship between cultural and universal phenomena and the universal categories of understanding. According to Lévi-Strauss, the universal and cultural phenomenon observed in all cultural or human groups is incest. In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 3–25) the author, within his concept of culture as something normative and specific, and nature as something universal, finds in incest the prime example of something normative and universal. The communicational aspect (of exchanges) that is so important in Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is actually his explanation of incest, neither exclusively biological nor exclusively social:

We have been led to pose the problem of incest in connection with the relationship between man's biological existence and his social existence, and we have immediately established that the prohibition could not be ascribed accurately to either one or the other. (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 24–25)

Going further in the discussion, the concept of culture will appear as a key concept, which is obviously the result of its relationship with nature. Man is diverse, thus his answers to environmental configurations are also

diverse. According to Geertz, the study of man is not only the study of recurrence, but also of anomalies and alternations; and more important than looking for different identities among similar phenomena is looking first for systematic relationships among different phenomena. In order to achieve this, the author proposes two ideas for the study of man. The first is the characterisation of culture not as a complex of concrete behaviour patterns (customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters) – which it is usually associated with – but as a set of control mechanisms (plans, recipes, rules, instructions) for the governing of behaviour. The second is that this group of control mechanisms is necessary to complete, or to shape, man. So ‘undirected by culture patterns – organized systems of significant symbols – man’s behaviour would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his experience virtually shapeless’ (Geertz, 1973: 46).

Thus, there has not been a moment in which the biologically complete man has needed culture in order to transform him into what he is. This lost connection did not appear in this way, since culture was not added to a finished animal: it was an essential ingredient for the production of this same animal. From an interactive perspective, there has been the passage of nearly one million years between the beginning of culture and the appearance of man as we see him today. Man depends more and more on the systems of signifying symbols (language, art, myth, ritual) for orientation and communication. Culture increasingly shows that it is responsible for what man currently is. According to Geertz, this suggests that what is usually called human nature does not exist independently from culture. Anyway, these systems of signifying symbols that characterise culture show themselves as a group of specific systems, which means that man is not completed by general culture, but mainly by specific forms of culture, as may be noticed in a Javanese or Balinese person, who is different from a Western person (Geertz, 1983).

However, we should not forget that this system of signifying symbols is created by man himself and it is in this attribution of sense to actions where culture expresses itself: ‘that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it’ (Geertz, 1973: 30). These definitions allow for an understanding of how travelling is expressed as an attribute of man. Travelling is understood as a human phenomenon, and it should appear as such. However, the main issue here is to understand how something that apparently occurs in all human cultures, in various groups and historical moments, can be considered a product of culture and not of nature, since travelling shows itself as something universal (as Lévi-Strauss suggests about incest).

Therefore, summarising the main point of the discussion, the difficulties are many: one of them is the characterisation of travel as a basic need, appearing to be an aspect of nature that expresses itself in the behavior of man, that is, as an instinct. Celestino Domingues's *Technical Dictionary of Tourism* describes travelling as 'the dislocation of one person or group of people between two points, with or without return, who use any means of transportation and are absent from their residence for a considerable amount of time' (Domingues, 1990: 285). This displacement can be from one place to another, and can happen by different means of transportation (air, land, sea) and for the most different of reasons (business, leisure, studies, health, family visit, etc.) (Pellegrini Filho, 2000: 289).

In Fernandez Fuster's (1978: 565) words:

man has always met on his slow path the 'travel demon' and has been possessed by it. It is likely that, on many occasions, the very existence of this 'human being' is confirmed by the Cartesian principle: 'I travel, therefore I exist'; in which the dislocation is related to all other vital needs.

A series of other authors have agreed with Fernandez Fuster, who wrote the seminal book *Teoría y técnica del turismo*. The book's basic premise is to see travelling as a fundamental and vital need. Some theories found in tourism texts make us believe that the desire to travel, to get to know other places, was inherent to man from the moment that he acquired culture, according to Castelli (1990), or as both Feifer (1986) and Rouanet (1993) suggest. Such a conception might lead to the unfounded belief that man may have in his genetic make-up some kind of information about travelling, and that the desire would actually be a basic, almost physiological, need.

Referencing Maslow and his pyramid once more, it is possible to see travelling as a basic need, somewhere near the bottom of the pyramid (and thus attached to nature), behaviour that proceeds from instincts that make man commit to dislocation to ensure his reproduction. This issue is demystified by biologism and its immediate answers, because the need for dislocation occurs firstly due to the need for food and shelter when the place of origin does not offer these items anymore. The nomadism of man is, in its origin, attached to these basic needs:

By traveling, they have completed a process of hominization: the *homo viator* is in the origin of the *homo sapiens*. Traveling is an act of freedom. (Rouanet, 1993: 7)

Michel Maffesoli, in his work *Du nomadisme*, presents a category that alludes to travelling: nomadism as an 'anthropological constant', present in

many peoples, religions and cultures, such as in the Guarani Indians' rituals (Maffesoli, 2006). The characteristics of travelling, which are part of the nomadic instinct, are found in many peoples and cultures. The desire for circulation, change and mobility is age old and present even in contemporary patterns of migration.

Travels and Mythologies

Elemental forms of displacement are seen in different forms of travel, which in their turn have different purposes. Migratory displacements, wars of conquest and adventures are narrated as the first manifestations of displacement. The nomad, usually found in groups and tribes, is a common figure and category in displacements, whose aim is to find better means of subsistence. Nomadism is an elementary form present in the origins of travel, displacements and migrations (Feifer, 1986); groups, families and tribes practised it when they needed to look for food, better housing or to engage in communication and commercial exchanges. Today, it is possible to find peoples who still manifest these characteristics, such as the Tuareg and other nomadic pastoralists in North Africa, in India or in Mongolia.

The encounter with and exploration of new realities bring challenges with them, constituting emblematic situations which we find witnessed by earlier societies, such as the Phoenicians, the Sumerians, the Greeks, the Romans and the Vikings. Ancient Greece, and later Rome, evoke the most widely known travel stories that correspond to great heroic adventures: the narratives of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Epic narratives are actually the most admired form through which the imaginary of the search for knowledge and challenges is expressed (both in literature and in Greek/Roman mythology). The adventure, which entails the courageous taking of personal risk, merges with the drama of displacement, travel and exploration.

Simultaneously with the myth of Hercules and his 12 labours, the adventures of Ulysses and of Prometheus, Greek society was also responsible for the emergence of new social rituals, such as the Olympic Games, which was a sporting event that attracted many Greeks from different cities like Sparta, Athens and Thebes. In this case, it was athletes and some spectators who travelled. Today, the Olympic Games, as a sports event, have become explicitly part of the television, leisure and tourism industries. The Roman elite travelled quite often and in relative safety (Feifer, 1986); in some periods of the Roman Empire it was to go to bath complexes, which attracted many visitors. However, it was after the territorial conquests, especially during the late expansion of the Empire, that displacements began to include other parts of Europe, the north of Africa and other regions.

Since those times, it is clear that one of the reasons for such displacements becoming so much more urgent and dynamic involves particular political and economic aspirations. These factors drove European maritime expansion in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. An intense cycle of displacements came mainly with the development of new means of transportation. The great age of sail gave an impulse to travel and subsequently the entire world was explored and 'discovered'. Since then, modern technology has gone on improving the economic, social and technical conditions that enable increased travel around the world. From this perspective, the displacement of whole communities, families and people, that is, the migration phenomenon, has taken place within unprecedentedly short periods of time. This has included the migration of refugees, displaced people and economic migrants.

Tourism, on the other hand, which is characterised as a trip that includes the intention to return and has broadly leisure-oriented purposes, has become one of the main forms of displacement in contemporary times. Touristic travel emerged as the preferred form of travel of late capitalist society and particularly as a post-modern phenomenon (Boyer, 1982, 2003). One may notice that in literature, mythology and history, the characteristics of the traveller are very different from those of the tourist, in terms of both motivation and behaviour. The understanding of tourism as a form of extra-domestic leisure for the individual, which is presented in detail in Cazes (1992), suggests that tourism is related to concepts of leisure which have emerged in modernity. Stendhal's *Mémoires d'un touriste* (1868) accurately enumerates these ideas. Tourism is leisure, and the tourist traveller is a very different category of person from that of the ancient, romantic or adventurous traveller. I would argue that in both cases, however, the desire to travel is fundamental.

Finally, it is important to understand that, although displacement and travel are present in many peoples and cultures, travel cannot be understood as something natural, universal or a rule in the process of formation of modern societies. Different motivations – migrations for economic reasons, sociability and the persistence of nomadism, business trips, military displacements, religious and philanthropic missions and ultimately tourism – cannot be equated, cannot be seen as being of equal value, even though they have displacement as a common active element.

Conclusion

Are we therefore justified in saying that the action of travel and its symbology have nothing to do with nature? Taking into account the manifestations of travel within this discussion, it is possible to observe that

geographic displacements occur in several different forms; therefore, travel, as it is approached in this study, cannot be understood as something instinctive or natural, because what motivates displacements varies according to the culture of a people, as well as to their social, economic and environmental needs. There are currently over 200 million immigrants in the world (according to the International Organization for Migration, IOM, 2013); as for tourism, over 1 billion people are estimated to have travelled around the world in 2012 (according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, UNWTO, 2013).

Therefore, in view of the fact that the action of travel is present in several cultures and across various historical moments, it is noticeable that although there is a clear tendency to understand travel as something natural, several types of displacements are seen as taboos among some groups. In other cases and at other times, trips have been taken very rarely, as in medieval societies, for example. Fear has always been an important factor, reducing its incidence.

Literature, mythology and history have praised travel, but they have also shown that it is circumstantial in nature; certain elements need to come together for it to occur. In any event, this cultural trait, which formerly characterised only certain groups, has become global with the emergence of tourism. Conversely, at the same time that the virtues of travel have been widely praised, the figures of 'the bad traveller' and 'the bad trip' have emerged, represented by the tourist and his/her journey. It should be added that in nearly all cases, this is a class-based prejudice, because the tourist is just the common man who travels.

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This book looks at the relationship between questions of identity formation and modern practices in travelling and tourism. Unprecedented levels of mobility and international exchange over the last 100 years have raised questions about the stability of national and personal identities and new and creative patterns of behaviour and self-realisation are now emerging due to the enormous commercial interests that lie behind the modern travel and tourism industries. The volume will consider these issues and the challenges they create in various geographical contexts (Germany, Spain, Romania, Italy, Africa) and concludes with a number of case studies from the Portuguese context, where the revenues from tourism are integral to its economy and a lifeline in the current economic crisis.

"This book provides an exciting discussion of travel and tourism, and drives the reader into matters of great academic and practical interest. Even if the discussion is mostly centred on travel and tourism, the debate launches bridges for tourism planning and management, and is a source of inspiration for the creation of new businesses."

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"The intersection of tourism, culture, place and identity are cleverly explored in this edited collection. The authors provide a fresh perspective on a variety of issues from dark tourism to travel writing. Conceptually diverse with rich insights, researchers interested in exploring identity and tourism will find this thoughtful volume well worth reading."

Leanne White, Victoria University, Australia

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