
Urban Attributes

On urban dynamics in the Andalusian territory

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ABSTRACT. Andalusia has not escaped the late-capitalist geopolitical and socioeconomic model which has made the entire territory accessible to the city. In fact, perhaps owing to its border status and peripheral position in Europe, it is possible that some of the more characteristic global urban dynamics of the last few years of economic expansion have been aggravated there: speculation, touristisation, proliferation of infrastructures, specialisation, overdevelopment, spatial segregation, etc. The series of case studies presented in the Atributos Urbanos [Urban Attributes] programme reveal what happens when local idiosyncrasies are imposed on these dynamics, and these five samples manifest the increasing ubiquity of the urban in diverse territories. This could well be useful in the current process of reformulation of the concept of periphery and redefinition of new states of urbanity.

KEYWORDS. Urban attributes; overdevelopment; rururban life; latent city; city in dialogue; territory.

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1. Seeking words

What worried Foucault when reading the classification of animals in the Chinese encyclopaedia from Borges' fable was that it showed a taxonomy of elements which had lost "*what is 'common' to place and name*". The awkwardness which caused him to smile when rereading the apparently absurd and chaotic list "*is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought ... the limitation of our own*", that is to say, is the impossibility of thinking it up in our words.

A similar unease is caused by the great number of transformations taking place in urban agglomerations in Andalusia, the result of locally and globally relevant phenomena which in the last decade appear to have defined the production of the city. Far from wishing to diagnose this like a sick patient, we propose to talk about it without prejudices. However, we frequently find ourselves stuck for words.

Aware of our increasing immersion in the *Generic City* (or attribute-less city) announced in 1994 by Rem Koolhaas, we have observed that in the last decade numerous authors have redefined "the city" and proposed endless subjectivisations of the increasingly complex and extensive urban phenomena. With them we share the need to *name things*, to generate *urban attributes*, in order to construct other words to associate with the urban processes taking place in this southern European territory.

The Urban Attributesⁱⁱ programme, directed by the authors and supported by the Andalusian Centre for Contemporary Art, proposes a framework for reflection and debate on the contemporary city, through interactive and propositional work and research dynamics developed in different activitiesⁱⁱⁱ. Through this work, and with an extensive work group made up of local agents and multidisciplinary collectives, we approach the unsettling urban surroundings of the Andalusian territory in search of the attributes that will help us name their urban reality. *Adjectivisations* and *subjectivisations* on different areas for study generated a set of relationships which, acted as a *knowledge relationship*, revealing new issues with which to work from and for the city. The exquisite glossary produced by the architects Carlos García and Plácido González^{iv} served as reference, using a taxonomy or catalogue to compile the different adjectivisations which numerous authors have consulted when naming the city and its characteristic phenomena.

2. Words for naming. On the fields of research^v

Critical proposals, interpretations and projects on different fields of study confirm that normal tools are of little use when tackling the urban processes we are witnessing, and hence expose the need to find the guidelines which determine other ways of constituting cities in different enclaves:

The Metropolitan Area of the Costa del Sol, boosted by the productivity of services and leisure on an international scale, colonises its overdeveloped territory with urbanism and spectacle. A critical reflection on this urban metastasis enables us to recognise other possible urbanity formulae for the contemporary city. Values or concepts such as "sociability spaces" or "private spaces socially open to the public" are offered as an alternative to the almost inexistent (public property) public space. The transition from urbanistic norm to the pact between urban interests shows the framework for negotiation in place in the territory. The idea of "promiscuous city" to

describe the social relationships of its hybrid population is an example, along with many other attributes, of specific, almost exclusive, key points with which its reality can be understood and reformulated.

The landscape between the Campo de Dalías and the Campo de Níjar (Almería) is undergoing a profound transformation, mutation even, owing to the productive (agricultural and tourist) overexploitation of its territory. With evident signs of segregation and stratification, the growing tension in this agrocitry, shows a scenario of emergence: new and emergent socio-cultural dynamics which have appeared at a vertiginous rate and have to face the necessary process of assimilation and crossbreeding of migrant and rooted cultures. This process requires the decoding of the relationships system of its inhabitants and territory in order to give way to a new social and territorial articulation, a committed dialogue between its citizens and the desert land they inhabit and exploit.

The metropolitan region of the Strait of Gibraltar concentrates in its territory the paradox of global geo-economic ordination: minimum geographical distance, maximum distance of levels of wealth. An archipelago of cities where many international borders converge transforms its surroundings into a continuous social, political and economic state of exception^{vi}. Its citizens see how free global transit (tourism, goods, real estate and production speculation) becomes traffic which regulates local mobility, while the transit of immigrants in search of autonomy, better living and working conditions, offers, together with information and communication traffic, the chance to build a communal space between both shores and reveals new forms of citizenship, despite the border.

The incipient conurbation of the Bay of Cadiz, whose geography is historically determined by flood risks in the area, seeks equilibrium between its towns in an alleged competitive cooperation around the bay. This territory where the *fluctuation* of the sea level is in step with that of the population, is experiencing an increased specialisation of the surroundings where *brown and green fields* are turned into *holiday cities* whose seasonal nature inevitably generates other forms of urban production. Far from the coast, other peripheries formed by second and third homes offer new forms of *rururban* life.

The infrastructure layout (SE-30, SE-40) in the metropolitan area of Seville is proof of the periphery's characteristic centrifuge dynamic and centripetal attraction which constitute the city's historical inertia. The infrastructures highlight a territory of economic speculation at node points in the network but can also be seen as "places from which landscapes, where fragmentation is resisted, are invoked as routes that allow the juxtaposition of autonomous urban visions and provide plastic configurations for continuity"^{vii}. The tools used to work in this context are closer to intelligent and relational management of territorial databases (knowledge technology) than to traditional geography. Information exceeds physical limits and generates the possibility of planning creative processes for mediation with the city.

3. Words to continue thinking

From these Andalusian locations we propose other concepts or words, with which we can tackle and generate instruments for the reconstruction of an imagery of what is possible for the refoundation of a new *parliament*^{viii} of things. Perhaps the territory and its settlers ought to be represented in this parliament, as Bruno Latour insists, on an equal democratic level for discussion and decision-making, giving voice to the production processes of cities, rather than to city models:

To work with temporal and fluctuating dynamics phenomena, (that is to say, the permanent, although not constant, dynamics associated with phenomena of a seasonal nature or production times requiring care and contemplation through new action tools or tools for planning – if we persist on using this term) and projects which also work from the ephemeral to the perdurable.

To locate spaces of the *latent city*, expectant urban spaces waiting or under pressure, and understand them as platforms for speculation, research and experimentation. In them we can visualize processes, the sum of many small actions which are frequently associated with non-regulated phenomena, such as informal economies, precarious employment, immigration, and which frequently elude regulatory, political and police control, but constitute a basic pillar of the construction of the city.

To recognise how new technologies have redefined urban and social imagery, and have generated other, non-material, spaces for mediation, interwoven in new spatiality, where flows, connectivity and data cohabit the city along with other economic, energy and power flows.

To represent the phenomena of immigration in this parliament, developing the contributions of the different collectives who settle in or pass through the *territory constructing a new form of migrant city*. To understand conflicting relationships in it as an opportunity for the implementation of flexible, dynamic and inclusive decision-making tools, which come close to a *city in dialogue*.

Equally, there are alternative forms of intervention developed by diverse urban *agents* which require autonomy and interaction in the reconfiguration and redefinition of urban space. Numerous creative (artistic and architectural) proposals work in these spaces on the construction of collective, collaborative and urban elements. Their interventions and ways of working show the emergence of an urban reality where urban networks progress towards new mechanisms for the cohesion of the environment and human subjectivity, in an ethical-political articulation of the territory, which guarantees its sustainability^{ix}.

The journey through these territories enables us to continue drawing up a *cartography of attributes*, new "words" to think up different ways of constructing a city, even if merely uttering them causes us to smile uneasily.

More on www.tributosurbanos.es

4. Annex. Summary of Case Studies.

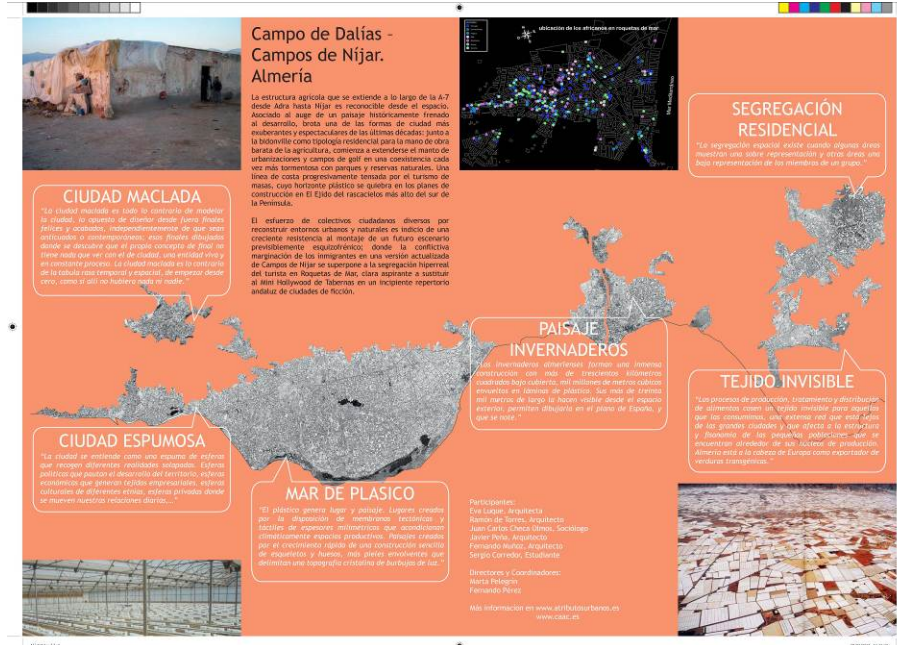


FIG. 1. CAMPO DE DALIAS CAMPOS DE NIJAR Img by Mediomundo arquitectos, Marta Pelegrín+Fernando Pérez.

This southern territory of the province of Almería, where suburban developments are rooted between greenhouses, massive housing estates and tourist occupations of the coast, has been transformed by the intensive agricultural exploitation of the desert, supporting migration flows. This landscape is the stage for one of the most spectacular urban growth phenomena of the last few decades: alongside the *bidonville* as residential typology for agricultural labour, large urbanistic complexes and golf courses coexist, not without conflict, with Natural Parks. Pressured by mass tourism, the coastline redefines its perimeters adjusting to these *glocal* or *translocal* dynamics.

Within this *artificialisation* of the territory which could be termed *agrocit*, different citizens' groups work reconstructing their surroundings, in the midst of a conflictive marginalisation of immigrants and segregation of tourists, almost as if it were an updated version of the Campos de Níjar. The miniature Hollywood of Tabernas as a fictional city is only the prelude of a truly schizophrenic future scenario.

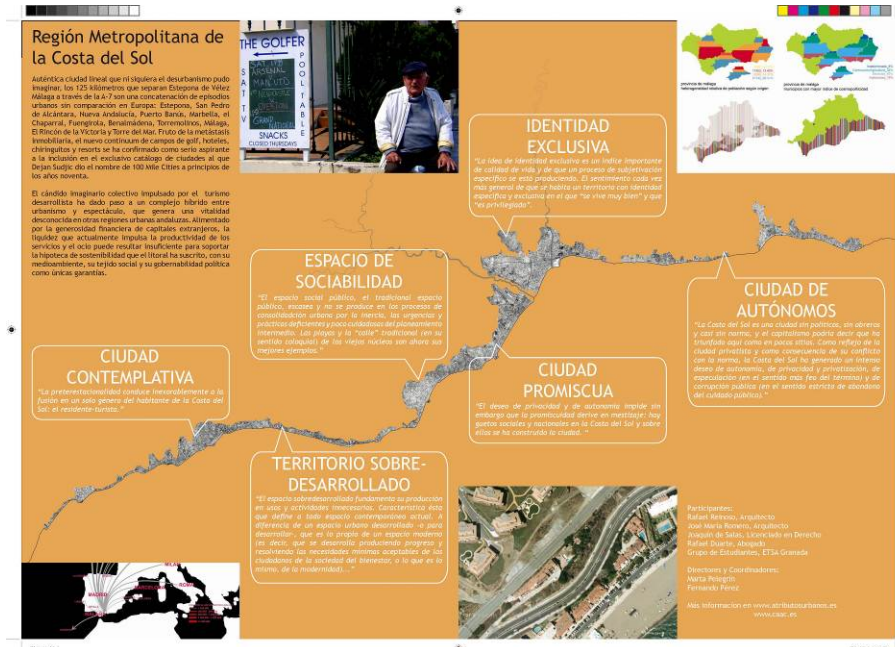


FIG 2. COSTA DEL SOL. Img by Mediomundo arquitectos, Marta Pelegrín + Fernando Pérez.

This is a metropolitan region where tourism has constructed a radically contemporary *urban territory*, structured by infrastructures supporting an *overdeveloped space* where the population seeks formulas for obtaining roots in what is *glocal*. The new *continuum* of golf courses, hotels, *chiringuitos* and resorts, resulting from the real estate metastasis, forms a sequence of urban chapters without compare in Europe.

A *veiled population*, which does not appear in the census, with a diverse origin foreign to the land, presents the paradox of a territory being treated for administration purposes as an accumulation of cities for non-citizens, and subsequently suffering a shortage of necessary public services (health, post, rubbish, etc) along with the excesses of other *unnecessary and productive equipments* (golf, sports ports, spa, paddle, tennis, horse riding).

The liquidity of foreign capital, which boosts the production of services and leisure, may turn out to be insufficient for the sustainability mortgage taken out by the coast, with its environment, social fabric and political governability as sole warranties.

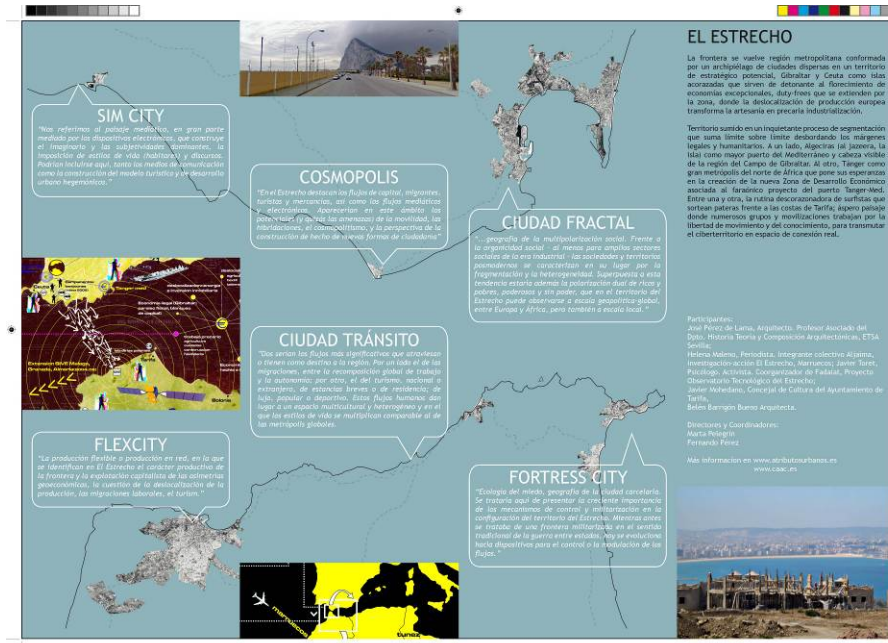


Fig. 3 THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR Img by Mediomundo arquitectos, Marta Pellegrín+Fernando Pérez.

An intercontinental region where the contradictory conditions of nexus and border converge, a transit space whose subverted fluidity transforms it into a space for traffic, of people, goods and mediated communication. The border becomes a metropolitan region or *border territory* formed by an archipelago of cities spread out in a territory of strategic potential, with Gibraltar and Ceuta as islands which trigger off the development of the *factory territory*, exceptional economies where *outsourcing*, the *delocalisation* of European production, transforms craftsmanship into precarious industrialisation.

This territory is immersed in an unsettling segmentation process which adds limit upon limit, exceeding legal and humanitarian margins. On one side, Algeciras (*al Jazera*, the island) is the largest port in the Mediterranean and the visible head of the region of the Campo de Gibraltar [the area around Gibraltar]. And on the other side, Tangiers is a great metropolis in the north of Africa which pins its hopes on the creation of a new Economic Development Zone associated with the Pharaonic project of the Tanger-Med port.

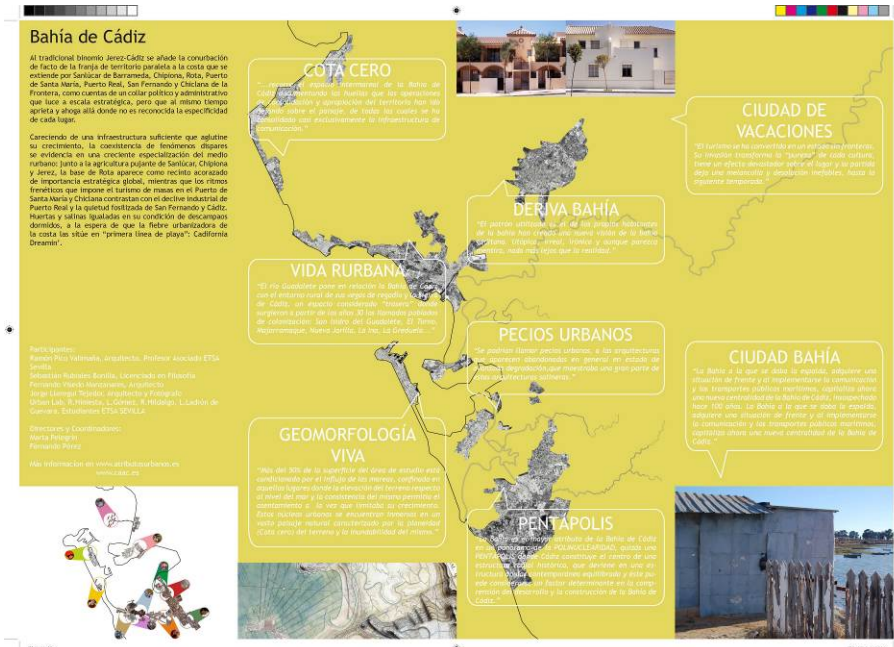


Fig. 4 BAY OF CADIZ. Img by Mediomundo arquitectos, Marta Pelgrín+Fernando Pérez.

A geographical environment which stretches from the Jerez countryside to the coast of Cadiz and where the complexity of new urban settlements with growing specialisation tendencies is superimposed on hugely traditional towns.

To the traditional binomial Jerez-Cadiz it is necessary to add that of the *de facto* conurbation of the strip of land which extends in parallel to the coast like beads from a political and administrative necklace which is dazzling on a strategic scale, but chokes and suffocates wherever the specificity of each place is not recognised.

Due to the lack of a sufficient infrastructure to agglutinate its growth, the coexistence of disparate phenomena can be observed in a growing specialisation of the rururban environment. Along with powerful agricultural growth, the Rota military base is an armoured venue of global strategic importance, while the frantic rhythms imposed by mass tourism in the Puerto de Santa María and Chiclana contrast with the industrial decline of Puerto Real and the fossilised stillness of San Fernando and Cadiz. Vegetable cultivation and salt pans are equally dormant open spaces, awaiting the urbanising fever of the coast to place them *right on the beach: California Dreamin'*.

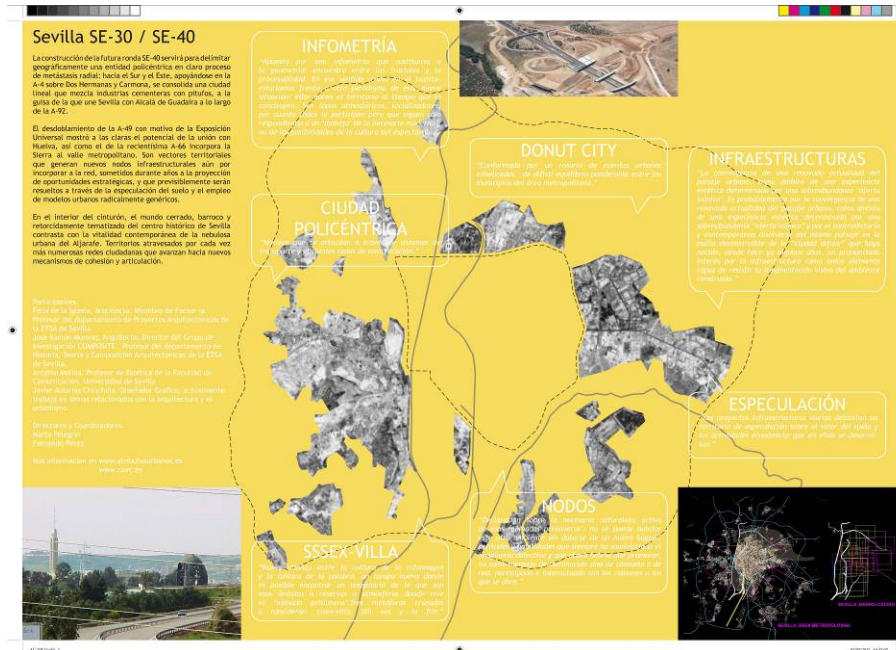


Fig. 5 SEVILLA: SE-30/SE-40. Img by Mediomundo arquitectos, Marta Pelgrín+Fernando Pérez.

The space delimited by the phantom layout of the future SE-40 bypass appears as a segmented metropolitan panorama, ripped apart by the centrifugal dynamics that are typical of the periphery and centripetal attraction which is inherent to the status of capital.

The construction of the future SE-40 bypass will be of use to delimit geographically as a polycentric entity undergoing a *radial metastasis*: towards the South and the East, supported by the A-4 in Dos Hermanas and Carmona, a lineal city is consolidated, combining cement industries with *pitufos* [tasteless terraced housing developments], in the same manner as the one which joins Seville and Alcalá de Guadaira along the A-92.

The widening of the A-49 for the Universal Expo in 1992 clearly showed the potential of a union with Huelva while the recent A-66 incorporates the mountains into the metropolitan valley. These are territorial vectors which generate new infrastructural nodes yet to be incorporated into the network, subjected for years to the planning of strategic opportunities, and which will be predictably resolved through land speculation and the use of radically generic urban models.

Inside the ring, the closed, baroque and deviously themed world of Seville's historic centre contrasts with the contemporary vitality of the urban vagueness of the Aljarafe. Territories increasingly crossed by numerous city networks which progress towards new cohesion and articulation mechanisms.

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ⁱ Foucault, M. *THE ORDER OF THINGS*. An Arthaeology of the Human Sciences, 1966. He quotes "a Chinese encyclopaedia" in which it is written that "animals are divided into a] those that belong to the Emperor, b] embalmed ones, c] those that are trained, d] suckling pigs, e] mermaids, f] fabulous ones, g] stray dogs, h] those included in the present classification, i] those that tremble as if they were mad, j] innumerable ones, k] those drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, l] others, m] those that have just broken a flower vase, n] those that from a long way off look like flies".

ⁱⁱ Atributos Urbanos is a programme of the CAAC, directed by the authors, and under development since 2007 which has also had an extensive work team. See <http://www.atributosurbanos.es/equipo/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Diverse activities complemented the work: a cycle of conferences with the participation of the urban geographer Edward Soja, the architect Andrés Perea, the architect Gustavo Leclerc, workshops for each field of study. Video screenings "Signos de la Ciudad"; Exhibition and round table "Repertorios Fotográficos en Andalucía", Cervantes Institute in Beijing. See <http://www.atributosurbanos.es/actividades/>

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^v Complete contributions of workshops on <http://www.atributosurbanos.es/areas/>
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^{vi} Agamben, G. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1995.

^{vii} Purini, Franco. *Cuestiones de infraestructuras*, in the journal *Casabella* 739-740, 2006.

^{viii} Latour, B. *We Have Never Been Modern*, 1993.

^{ix} Guattari, F. *THE THREE ECOLOGIES*, 2000.

Fig. 1. CAMPO DE DALIAS CAMPOS DE NIJAR. Img by Mediomundo arquitectos, Marta Pelegrín+Fernando Pérez.

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