



Notes on Sociology of Globalization

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Abstract

The notes contain some comments related to the ongoing debates on sociology of globalization concentrated on U. Beck's idea of 'cosmopolitisation' and the shaping of 'cosmopolitan communities.' A forthcoming paradigm shift in social sciences; the definition of 'cosmopolitanism' and the establishment of 'cosmopolitan communities'; what is the first phase of cosmopolitisation showed; an idea and possible scenarios of it realization; critics of 'cosmopolitisation theory' concept; 'cosmopolitanism' vs. corporate (or cluster) nationalism; and what is going now and what should be done – are main issues in question. Author concluded that: the evolutionary potential of existing sociology is not exhausted; an 'anthropological shock' should be avoided; much more attention should be given to the study of economic and political sources of current disasters; and that local and global sociologists should be much more active in public arena and environmental politics.

Keywords

cities, community, corporate nationalism, 'cosmopolitization', environment, globalization, politics, risks

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The study represents the critical analysis of the Ulrich Beck's 'cosmopolitization concept' from the viewpoint of 'real politik' approach.

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1. A Forthcoming paradigmatic shift in social sciences

The key points of the 'cosmopolitization concept' introduced by U. Beck are the following: (1) global challenges demand shift from 'methodological nationalism' to 'methodological cosmopolitanism'; (2) we need to overcome the 'orthodox sociology' of the past and to reorient it, theoretically and empirically, towards 'cosmopolitization' as the social force of emerging cosmopolitan realities; (3) global risks provoke the emergence of 'new transnational constellations of social actors, arising from common experiences of mediated climatic threats, organized around pragmatic reasoning of causal relations and responsibilities, and thereby potentially enabling collective action, cosmopolitical decision-making and international norm generation.' (Beck et al., 2013: 1); (4) then, Beck introduces the notion of 'metamorphosis of the world'. Social change does not allow to sociologists to understand 'that we are becoming different..., while metamorphosis is about the transfiguration of the social and political order.' Metamorphosis follows the logic of 'and' and not that of 'either-or' logic (Beck, 2015: 77); (5) in particular, the metamorphosis produces hidden emancipatory side-effects of global risks. It is going on about positive side effects of producing 'bads'; (6) after then the 'cosmopolitization' is the social force of producing of new cosmopolitan realities; (7) one possible result of this new reality is the emergence of 'cosmopolitan communities of climate risk'; (8) in the Beck's concept, the questions like dependence, interdependence, interconnectedness take central position and lead to the major methodological question: How do the sociologists must research the interdependent world?

Moving from the point 3 to point 1, we can conclude that the driving force of cosmopolitization process (and the emergence of the 'cosmopolitization concept') are the 'new transnational constellations of social actors' which are potentially could resist to global risks. But are their resources and common experience sufficient for the emergence of such transnational actors capable to make 'cosmopolitical decision-making and international norm generation'? In my view, surely not! Because the driving force of such constellations is much lower than the power of leading states as China and the US or/and any big transnationals. More than that, these stakeholders are in the permanent severe struggle with one another.

Then, the 'common threats' like fires, floods, etc. are actually not common for the reason of different potential to mitigate these 'common risks'; this varied response is conditioned by economic, cultural and other differences of states and communities which are exposed to seemingly the same risk. To my mind, today the 'cosmopolitan communities of climate risk' are still no more than a metaphor since our world is full of deadly threats, thousand deaths, millions of refugees; these threats are still not only resolved but even slightly mitigated. In recent rather unstable configuration of the disposition of global stakeholders *any decision-making process acquires a permanent character.*

2. The idea of 'metamorphosis': could the 'bads' produce the positive results?

I agree with Beck that the negative side-effects could produce positive results (i.e. common goods) but it happened rather rare. My experience in the study of the consequences of forest fires in Russia in 2010 and step fires of 2015 showed that in such cases 'positive result' means the restoration and rehabilitation of what has been before disaster. That is, it means the move back towards already established social order and what is of a no less importance the affected people strive for the restoration of their primary eco-structure (Yanitsky, 2012). Any 'new social order' is perceived by affected local population as an additional threat. On the other hand, no one international program (for example 'Taiga Rescue Network') has been converted into actual social force which has brought long-term 'positive' outcomes.

I don't quite understand why a social change does not allow us to understand that we as well as the world at large are becoming different, while metamorphosis does it? It depends how we understand a social change. If it means a restoration of already existed social order then Beck is right. But why social change cannot lead to profound social changes as revolution or revolt? May be I am wrong, but it seems to me that the opposition of social change and 'metamorphosis' is a bit artificial. 'Cosmopolitan realities' can emerge as a result of profound social changes as well. These 'realities' as history shows have mostly been of a temporal character but it is another story.

Next question is much more substantial. Are the global climatic risks produce only 'positive' constellations of distant social actors or these risks may produce extremely negative, i.e. destructive social forces? A current reality shows that the both results are possible. More than that, the 'positive constellations' of actors fighting against risks later on could transform into adversarial forces if not actually fighting each other. Another case: the adversarial social actors or the both, i.e. risk-producers and risk-consumers, could conclude a temporal treaty. I called such 'constellations' as negative risk-solidarities (Yanitsky, 2004).

But if we will accept the ideas of U. Beck, to whom these questions should be addressed first of all? Beck and his colleagues said that their project will be based on a field research in four largest mega-cities of the world. But to whom its major research findings will be addressed: To the policy-makers, to ordinary people? If one took into account the time gap between the Beck's concept developing and testing and the possible results of its social and political implementation, it would take no less than a decade, though 10 years is a big time-span.

The next then question arises: why the above concept avoids any political frames or constellations? Beck clearly and definitely stated that the '*history is back*', that is, 'the notion of metamorphosis is an antidote to '*presentism*' of social and political theory and social scientific research' (Beck, 2015: 77). Nevertheless, what about economics and policies? Why these pillars of human history have been practically excluded from the 'cosmopolitization' concept? Of course, it is the question for separate thorough investigation therefore I make here some preliminary remarks only. First, any political 'constellations' (talks, agreements, roadmaps) are always an intermediate between the next phase of struggle between states or/and transnationals. Second, such big businesses as hydrocarbon mining and oil trade always take over any



political constellations and produces new tensions and reconfiguration of the disposition of political forces on the global arena. Third, the ongoing process of misery export (in particular as a result of the shift of dirty industries from the North to the South) is a serious impediment of the emergence of any 'cosmopolitan constellations.' Four, the brain drain from the developing countries to the developed ones simultaneously means the drain of social capital to the latter. That is, the diminishing of their capabilities to construct these 'cosmopolitan constellations.' Five, such already existed religious constellations as Hijjiligrimage could not be ignored by any political regime.

Therefore, there is one more question: May be the appeal 'to learn from cosmopolitan future' should be first of all addressed to the schoolchildren and other teenagers who are the most sensitive to any knowledge about the future of the globe? If yes, the media should play a decisive role in this turn of young minds. Recently, media full of negative movies and shows, say, cosmic wars, cyborgs' attacks, the seizing our Planet by unknown beings and microbes, etc. The results of the discussed project should teach them how to struggle for the better, i.e. more safe and clean world. Beck's concept of 'metamorphosis' has an eschatological inclination whereas, to my mind, it should have positive and humanistic stance.

Finally, why climatic risks and suggested emergence of 'cosmopolitan communities' have been taken as a model for radical reconstruction of both the existing social order and social theory? Or more generally: why global *natural* disasters have been taken for the above theorizing? In my view, there are at least five global *man-made* forces which are capable to produce global calamity, namely: radiation, genetic engineering, geo-engineering (i.e. use natural processes as a global weapon), mass terrorism, barbarianism, and a global nuclear war.

3. The establishment of 'cosmopolitan communities'

Cosmopolitan communities of climate risk are new transnational constellations of social actors, 'arising from common experiences of mediated climatic threats, organized around pragmatic reasoning of causal relations and responsibilities, and thereby potentially enabling collective action, cosmopolitical decision-making and international norm generation.' (Beck et al., 2013: 2). In short, 'cosmopolitan communities' is the collective response to a 'world at risk.' Second, these communities may potentially offer 'new social, political, cultural and techno-economic possibilities of responding to climate change in the construction of more attractive, more sustainable, and less unequal and exploitative futures.' Third, a 'cosmopolitical integration by conflict needs a paradigm shift: it means decomposition and recomposition of social orders, in a new cosmopolitan direction of transnational, translocal fora of interaction, conflict management and joint decision-making' (Beck et al., 2013: 3). Four, 'cosmopolitan communities' are new, not-yet-established realities. They are rather 'would-be' ones which are needed long-term and solid empirical confirmation. Five, key concepts like dependence, interdependence and interconnectedness, as Beck noted, are the central points for the empirical confirmation of the 'cosmopolitan community' concept, namely, how we research the interdependent world? Six, Beck and his colleagues relies upon the 'reassuring' examples of collective pro-environmental activity of some international grassroots organization like the largest and most influential transnational urban alliance as the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and some others (Beck et al., 2013: 13). But such alliances and constellations can be easily destroyed by 'switching off' their web-networks by the global web-owners if the goals and activity of such initiatives are against of interests of some transnationals. There are many other means to prevent or destroy such international alliances: to organize counter-movement, to launch public company against this kind of activity, to blackmailing their leaders, etc. My own experience in the study of the relationships between the 'real-politik' of such initiatives and their internet activity showed that the more pressure exerted on such initiatives by opposing forces the more these initiatives retired to the international web-clouds or/and curtailed their political activity. In order to have a safe base for such activity these grassroots should have a support from mighty political and economic forces. But this turn contradicts with the idea of 'free constellations' of any risk communities within the capitalist world.

The last but not least issue: Why Beck concentrated on the consequences of global climatic risks only? There are minimum two forces that should be considered. The first is an impact of other space (i.e. cosmic) forces on global natural and social processes. I am not a specialist in this realm of natural sciences but the sun activity on the life of the Earth should not be neglected. In mid1920s Russian biophysics AlexandrChizhevskiy, the founder of solar biology suggested a hypothesis that the cosmic physical factors exert an impact on mass natural and social processes on the Earth. In particular, it had been going on about the synchronization of fluctuations of solar activity and the mobilization of psychical energy of people (AlexandrChizhevskiy, 1926, 1964). Chizhevskiy not only speculated but tried to confirm his idea by means of empirical investigations of oscillations of solar energy flow on mass behavior by the measuring of the degree of ionization of the surface air. There is a hypothesis that the ideas of Chizhevskiy have been used by 'social-engineers' for the development of tools for mass mobilization in order to fasten the modernization processes in some developing countries. The second one is of a purely social character: Are the changes of social behavior directly depends on global climate warming, or these changes are the consequences of manipulation by and 'indoctrination' of mass consciousness made by mass media? Anyhow, these factors should not be excluded from a sociological analysis.

4. Urban areas as critical systems

Urban areas are the most fragile and vulnerable social systems especially in the developing and overpopulated countries. The highest degree of concentration in these urban areas of people, all kinds of communication and traffic systems and their unseen interlacing, influx of jobless, migrants and refugees coupled with chronic lack of funding for the keeping urban critical infrastructures in a proper manner – all this produces very high probability of accidents and disasters threatening at once thousands of city dwellers. This in turn requires more rescue forces, new systems of individual and collective protection and so on. Being initially an urban planner, I had an opportunity to see practically how fragile an urban organism. Later on, having become an urban sociologist the above practical observations had been confirmed by the work



of Robert Park and his colleagues, the founders of urban social ecology (Park et al., 1926). Although about one hundred years has passed the methodology of urban socio-ecological studies developed by them are still valid.

Second, modern cities are not only 'clusters of possible and/or actual risk' but producers of 'creeping disasters' usually unseen for always in-harry urban dwellers and visitors. As Alena Bleicher and Matthias Gross point out, "situations involving a lack of economic incentives, ongoing health threats, and often unknown chemicals shifting beneath the surface prompt us to refer to such contaminated sites as slow, or creeping disasters' (Bleicher and Gross, 2010: 187).

Third, it is not the end of history because these unidentified chemicals reacting with each other may produce new rather dangerous substances by which urban resident and their immediate living milieu may be affected. This process named as *urban metabolism* has yet not been sufficiently investigated. Unfortunately, until now the focus of urban metabolism studies has been on energy flows outside and within urban areas (see, for example, Newcombe et al., 1978; Martinez-Alier, 2009). Such metabolism can affect not only a particular city's inhabitants but continents and the globe at large as in the case of Chernobyl and Fucusima-1.

Four, critical situations, especially disasters and wars, are usually accompanied by a social metabolism as such. Under these conditions the entire socio-functional structure of a city is changing. As it has been noted earlier, the major shifts are as follows: (a) direct clash of natural and social forms and processes; (b) as a result, the former changes the latter, and the way round; (c) a long-term and unseen process of transformation of natural landscape under the impact of social activity of new types of plants and animals; (d) chemical reactions of the wastes and other alien bodies and substances with natural systems and processes; (e) destroying the human communities under the influence of natural anomalies and disasters; and (f) transformation of communicative structure of a city which in turn depends not only on the IT technologies development but on cultural and ethnical structure of a given community (Yanitsky, 2015: 1091-92).

Five, any urban or regional armed conflict has a world-wide response. As my current desk-research (the study of various media reports) of armed conflict at the south-west of Ukraine shows the critical situations of 'territorial character' sooner or later acquires an international character. It means that the global actors of a various origin (say, the international observers, political and military advisers, charity organizations as well as the private troops and unidentified military forces) have become actual social actors at an urban field. And, then, have become participants of social metabolism. Actually, not only wars but any critical situation has a complex or hybrid character (Wolman, 1965; Hodgkinson and Stewart, 1991; Keen, 2008; Phillips, 2009). As Brenda Phillips clearly showed any recovery process is as complex as the disaster mitigation. She insisted that recovery process should be holistic. In particular it is important that the 'recovery period demonstrates the lengths to which people will stretch in order to be of service to people they even do not know' (Phillips, 2009: xxii). This statement is resonated with the Beck's idea of 'cosmopolitan constellations', i.e. of joint actions of remote from each other people. Following Beck, it means that critical or/and disastrous events have from time to time positive outcomes: better mutual understanding, rendering help to those who are 'remote' and other forms of risk-solidarities.

Six, recently there are still places on our Planet to resettle or to escape. Though the living areas, that is territories more or less clean and safe, are diminishing as the shagreen leather. Thus, discussing about the outcomes of globalizing processes, sociologists and policy-makers should not forget that many disastrous events have local if not personal roots.

5. Risk perception from below

In accordance with the worldview that the 'current' is deeply rooted in the 'past', we should start this kind of theorizing 'here and now'. The overwhelming majority of local people across the globe are concerned with their own everyday deeds: work, bread winning, housekeeping, care and education of children, rendering assistance to elderly, etc. The life of their local community (neighborhood) including the care for their immediate living environment is the next point in the urban residents' everyday agenda. The spread of internet has a double effect: on the one hand, it sharply widened an access of urban residents to the outer world and to opportunities it potentially offers (of work, relaxation, travelling); on the other hand, the possibility of distant work and learning, a spread of part-time work have made the everyday life more home-centered.

The TV and internet broadcasting has also the double result: people become more mobile and globally informed and at the same time less concerned with the state-of-art in their local living milieu. This thesis related both to the constant and temporary population of towns and cities (job-seekers, adventurers, refugees, tourists and other categories of 'flow population'). Besides, the TV and mobile media generated the phenomenon of 'passive participant' or simply detached onlookers (in Russia we call this category as 'sofa or sitting-participants'). The effect of 'presentism' (be present everywhere) produced by media has its adversarial effect: a lot of people attend as if everywhere but not actually participates in mitigation of risks and damages. All this leads to passive reaction on regional and global risks: urban dwellers have become 'spectators' and not 'active participants.' Thus, the very process of life of an individual in the modern world has two interdependent sides. On the one hand, the 'social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus altering their character.' On the other hand, *'the nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanisms of trust in abstract systems, especially trust in expert systems'* (Giddens, 1992: 38, 83; his italics).

Who are then actually active in the case of global accidents? The answer depends on about what kind of accidents is going on. If we speak about rescue operations after the earthquakes and other distractive events it will be first of all highly trained rescue teams and the medicine of catastrophes. The assistance rendered by volunteers, both local and distanced, is rather important as well. Beck sees the Hurricane Katrina as a trigger for the emergence of environmental justice



movement. But as empirical analysis run in the aftermath of this disaster showed that 'urban planning policies that rely on neoliberal tenets of "urban space as a mechanism of capital reproduction" and utilization of public resources for the encouragement of private investment run the risk of increasing the kinds of social inequities that manifest so dramatically during disasters. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the city of New Orleans has witnessed a dramatic surge in property values and rental rates, the demolition of four major public housing developments, a re-emerging homeless population, and a crisis among non-profit organizations' (Barrios, 2010: 111).

Who is actually active? If we keep in mind tough ethnic conflicts and local wars it most likely will be those who have already been the participants in previous conflicts of such kind. More than that, an overall conflicting character of global social life has engendered a permanent group of armed collective nomads (private armies) which shifted from one place to another irrespectively of a damage which they may cause to any kind of environment. In the both cases it is going on not about 'cosmopolitan' or 'imagined' communities but on rather concrete actions of the state, civil actors or/and their joint action. And they are not new 'transnational constellations of social actors' as Beck suggested but well organized and equipped mobile troops which pursue public and private interests. It is this kaleidoscope of competed interests and forces requires mobility of these troops.

Anyhow, the basic behavioral triad that of 'perception-comprehension-action' and the way round should be carefully studied both from bottom-up and top-down especially for the case of the impact of climatic changes on human behavior.

6. 'Cosmopolitanism' vs. corporate (or cluster) nationalism

To begin with, what is the price of the 'cosmopolitanism' emergence? To my mind, the 'anthropological shock' is too high price for it, be it hybrid wars, climate changes or financial crisis. The lessons of two World Wars must not be forgotten! History showed that any 'anthropological shock' had always been accompanied by radical and extremely painful economic and political transformations which in the majority of cases led to the destruction of a nation-state, sharp drop of living standards, class and ethnical conflicts and civil wars.

I agree with Anthony Giddens statement that the 'ecological threats are the outcome of socially organized knowledge, mediated by the impact of industrialism upon the material environment. They are part of what I shall call a new *risk profile* introduced by the advent modernity...The threat of military violence remains part of the risk profile of modernity...We live today in a global military order in which, as a result of the industrialization of war, the scale of the destructive power of the weaponry now diffused across the world is massively greater than has ever existed before' (Giddens, 1992:110).

Therefore, I convinced that people are not needed in any 'anthropological shocks' and 'catharsis' if their cost is tens of billions of deaths, wounded, displaced and distraction of billions of acres of lived-in environment and loss of cultural values. We, the former inhabitants of the USSR, had felt it on our own back. In the run of 'perestrioka' years (1986-91), i.e. shock reforms, we had lost one billion men as a result of deadly clashes of competing gangs and mafia groups only. It is too high price for globalized changes of consciousness and practice. And Russia was needed 25 years to overcome this 'shock' and to launch the movement forward. Therefore, the 'methodological nationalism' (in the Beck's sense) is the indispensable economic and political defensive reaction and lever to begin this motion.

From the 'real politik' viewpoint, the 'cosmopolitization' is no more than political mask of competing national or supranational interests. Hence, each format of struggle for piece is simultaneously the struggle for somebody particular interests. From early XIX century onwards, when global arena began to shape the temporal alliances of states have become insufficient and more developed forms of nation-states conglomerates (or clusters) came to the foreground. Though, the law of shaping such clusters remained the same: the more a particular country or their alliance has become strong the more the smaller and weaker countries played the role of their satellites. That is, the price for their safety has always existed. To imagine that it has been 'alliances of free will' is a kind of wishful thinking. Thus, in the terms of 'real politik' the 'cosmopolitization' means a state's or/and their clusters self-defense and justifying their pretention for regional or global leadership.

I don't quite understand why Beck opposes 'cosmopolitanism' to 'nationalism': they are two competing sides of historical process. Basically, the 'cosmopolitanism' is only the one side of it. Of course, it is one of the driving forces of human evolution. But the very process of 'cosmopolitization' means that it engenders the losers and outsiders, in ones cases temporary in others forever. In one way or another, 'cosmopolitization' produces an inequality as well as hierarchy within 'constellations.' Besides, there is the dark side of 'cosmopolitanism' exaggeration: the diminishing of biological and cultural diversity of the globe. This diversity is the basement of the global system sustainability. Yes, science and technologies' development work for unification of human beings and their behavior, though to the definite limit only. Beyond it a man lost his social and cultural identity, became uprooted, his 'cocoon of basic trust' (Giddens) is replaced by the cosmos of indefinite and potentially hostile universe. In any cases, global risks do not necessary lead to common and united response. Conversely, a usual nation-states reaction to them will be individual, aimed at protection of people and environment under national jurisdiction. It is quite natural because they are both the national resources.

But the reverse situation cannot be excluded: a global risk (and the anthropological shock) may be the cumulative effect of numerous local and regional disasters as fires, floods, devastation and civil wars coupled with world-threatening technological accidents as the loss of atomic weapons or Fucusima-1.

Finally, it seems to me that shocks are possible but not central forces to overcome not only 'nationalism' but two other urgent problems of our time: 'twin forces of exclusion and unequal inclusion form a microcosm of inequality at the global level' (Burawoy, 2015: 8). Hence, not climatic shocks but the social movements are the transformative power of our times. As Burawoy continues, the social movements 'are a critical tool for facing an unequal world...Social movements need to



be at the very center of a new sociology' (Burawoy, 2015: 17). If we understand these movements not only as protest ones but as a form of mental and social mobilization, the Burawoy's thesis seems quite logical: critical events require critical transformations in comprehension of any threat and another set of measures and tools. These measures imply a general mobilization of media, people and resources, which, in turn, requires efficient critical infrastructures, that is, well organized system of information, recruiting, resource supply, access to emergency stocks, etc.

7. Conclusion

First, the evolutionary potential of existing sociology is not exhausted and any 'anthropological shocks' should be avoided. Nevertheless, the question how should we research, the interdependent world and by what instruments are on the agenda. Therefore, the very idea to speculate on the development of global sociology is fruitful. This sociology is on the road: the space of sociological imagination and research has to be opened up to new approaches and concepts. Second, the 'history is *not* back' as Beck definitely stated. We are still in the flood of historical process deeply rooted in the XX century with all its conflicts, clashes, inequalities and deep distrust between people and nation-states. Unlike to Beck, I think that the age of nationalism and separatism is continued. Recent nationalism is overburdened by the religious demarcations even within the Christian or the Islamic worlds. Third, today the new transnational constellations of social actors have emerged here and there but the 'cosmopolitan communities of climate risk' are still no more than a metaphor since our world is full of deadly threats, thousand deaths, millions of refugees. The emerged global civil networks for peace, justice and joint actions aimed at climate changes prevention are yet too weak and can be easily blocked by mighty transnationals or by temporary constellations of business interests. Four, the states 'constellations' like the NATO or the SCO (the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) means that the era of supra-national cooperation is continued. Besides, as some recent armed conflicts or natural disasters (Nepal, Ukraine, Yemen) showed the actual cooperation of state's forces in rescue operations is actually existed. But the configuration of cooperation of these rescue forces is permanently changes because it highly depend on goals and principles of national (or of transnationals and cluster-of-states) politics. A cluster or like-corporation forms of such temporary cooperation, i.e. corporate or cluster nationalism, have prevailed. Five, much more attention should be given to economic and socio-cultural sources of current disasters. Nationalism has become a form of resistance to inequality and social exclusion. Western-induced nationalism coupled with consumerism is the other side of the same coin (world-wide spread of selfie is the best example). Besides, the current forceful re-division of the Planet's resources enhances the risk of disaster emergence greatly. Six, local and global sociologists should be much more active in public arena and environmental politics. The results of interdisciplinary research should be understandable to public and convincing to politicians. The global sociology must combine the top-down and bottom-up analyses because in the run of global research the insiders are as important as the outsiders. Sociologists should consider every 'hot point' as the point of intersection of global and local processes. Seven, environmental politics is part and parcel of economic, social and cultural politics. The motto 'first wellbeing then environment' is wrong! Today, environmental processes of any scale exert a direct influence on human wellbeing. Inverse ratio deserves attention as well.

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Author' biography with Photo



Biographical Note

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