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**CHALLENGING SOCIAL TRENDS WITH COVID-19 IN URBAN AREA: THE CASE OF  
YAOUNDE –CAMEROON**

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**ABSTRACT**

Like many cases of past epidemics, COVID-19 could be imagined as one of the dramatic pathetic occurrences in the world after the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918. Convinced that within six months of its outbreak, it has not only affected global socio-cultural, political and economic lifestyles, but the loss of human lives is quiet alarming. This makes it a serious health threat as WHO declares that a novel coronavirus was the cause of a respiratory illness in a cluster of people in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, which was reported to the WHO on 31 December 2019. It could be a loophole to development for many countries especially developing countries with daily increasing affected cases like Cameroon through the pending plight of readjustments. With participant observation as our major method -technique in association with interviews and life stories, our data collection seeks to understand the dilemmas of alterations to stop the spread of COVID-19 epidemic, expose the socio-cultural constraints to the current global trend and the need to check the effectiveness of the necessary measures put in place to rollout the epidemic. Evidenced about the wearing of face-mask, the washing of hands as well as the usage of disinfectants prevails to stop it spread. However, social distancing and other practical measures are still very challenging due to family tides and mindsets of a communalistic African spirit besides, individual views about the existence of COVID-19 and Vaccine. Resilience to new cultural traits is imperative notwithstanding continuous education and awareness for social readjustments cannot be over emphasis.

**Keywords:** challenges, social, trends, COVID-19, urban area, Cameroon

## INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, the outbreak of coronavirus was professed in the Wuhan Province of the People's Republic of China as noted by Tang (2020). Since then, its prevalence has been noticed in Asia, Europe and Africa, resulting in the death or quarantine of several people. Still not long, the World Health Organization proclaimed that the coronavirus has gone from an epidemic to a pandemic, with over **170,000** cases in 146 countries, and about **6,500** deaths.

Yet D.S. Hui, I.A. E, T.A. Madani, F. Ntoumi, R. Kock, O. Dar, *et al.* (2020) monitored its frequency and spread globally. In Africa, Cameroon is not left out by this pandemic. Subsequently, on its early days of occurrence, the Government applied a stoppage and answer strategy intended at discontinuing the spread of this epidemic. Though the number of cases diagnosed with the virus in Cameroon is recorded in all the regions, the number keeps increasing daily with most cases treated and few dead. It should be well-known, that no local outbreaks of this epidemic have been recorded in Cameroon and the cases identified so far are persons who have recently been abroad or persons who have come in contact with them.

### Definition and Causes of COVID-19

COVID-19 is said to be a respiratory illness caused by a new virus with symptoms which includes: fever, coughing, a sore throat and shortness of breath. The virus can spread from person to person. Though with reference to the National Health Commission of China, the mortality rate among confirmed cases in China was 2.1% as of NHS press conference (2020), the situation is controllable. Meanwhile WHO (2020), report gives statistics of the different cases handled, making each individual who need knowledge on COVID-19 to be aware of the situation. C. Huang, Y. Wang, X. Li, L. Ren, J. Zhao, Y. Hu, *et al.* in Lancet (2020), stipulates that among patients admitted to hospitals, the mortality rate ranged between 11% and 15%. In addition, presently, COVID-19 can be treated. It just a matter of knowing who is at risk and what you should do if you think you have COVID-19. Measures and information is publicly available through oral, written or designs track.

The purpose of this appraisal is to recap the present understanding of COVID-19 with causative agent, [pathogenesis](#) of the syndrome, analysis and cure, device as well as prevention strategies in our community as individuals and help others to do same.

Notwithstanding, its origins the coronavirus (COVID-19) is said to be a zoonotic disease. Zoonotic diseases are transmitted between animals and humans. Diseases passed from animals to humans are a significant threat to human health. When the symptoms are serious, our lack of prior exposure means humans have no existing antibodies to defend themselves against the disease. Recent zoonotic disease outbreaks include Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS (2002); Avian Influenza or bird flu (2004); H1N1 or Swine Flu (2009); Middle East Respiratory Syndrome or MERS (2012); Ebola (2014–2015); Zika virus (2015–2016); and the West Nile virus (2019).

### **Area of study**

Jobs and delivery of services such as the MDGs (World Bank 2013), reports that urban areas are better places in creating value added standards. This could be a fact since imminently; urban areas afford an inspired setting for cultural, social, economic, green and political improvements. Though, a serious query scratch necessities could be put in place after the assumption which can be usually ignored in a quick growth and alteration of urban-rural dealings. Urban surroundings are areas of social change for young people and women who are more likely to easily put their full skills prospective. Suggested by UNDESA, the number of metropolitan areas of a size of 1 to 10 million in developing and emerging countries is expected to rise from 314 (2011) to 530 (2025). Considerations to this statement could be held to the fact that cities are platforms where citizens meet in search of social wealth and the state could see its members face to face given it social package. Besides, cities are parlors of good governance in tangible and representative constructions and observation are attached. In addition, mega cities are areas of cultural exhibitions and identities since urban landscape continue to flourish outside traditional patterns of concentration and built-up areas. However, in the heart of a pending urban expansion there are some imperative issues that go along with health being one and need to be examined. The case of Yaounde would be highlighted in this study due to health challenging issues and constraints surrounding big cities like the present situation of COVID-19 touching the world and Cameroon identified with increasing cases on a daily basis. Provision of practical hygiene in the formal and informal sector, social distancing among others is a necessary tool of persistent awareness to the population. But how practical are these measures with increasing internal migrations and social needs to an already depending population.

### **METHODOLOGY**

With Qualitative research as main method used in collecting, direct observation helped us maintained objectivity. Through this technique we observed activities, lifestyles, people's language attitudes about going to the hospital in relation to COVID-19 and structures put in place to handle the pandemic. We followed the national statistics on its prevalence on CRTV, social media, etc. People's opinion on COVID-19 were solicited which is quite vital since different people have different world views on the notion of COVID-19. 05 Focus groups with different sexes were held to get opinions of both men and women in public places like schools, markets, drinking spots in Odza, Yaounde IV, neighborhood. While respecting the social distancing and having the mask on, we sought to know people's opinion about the emerging pandemic. Life stories were recorded and put in writing from informant on the topic. There were unplanned cases of discussions with people from different social classes, professions and ages ranging from 10 years and above. Traders, military, animal readers, builders' administrators and tenants were some of our informants which we used the snowball technique to identify affected persons and different preventive measures This permitted us to consolidate our knowledge and observations on the field. From onset it was considered as the disease of the rich. We targeted homes having cases of healing so as to understand their health seeking behaviour in times of suffering through their friends or relations. Health experts were contacted to understand their own version connected to the health challenge. A strategic measure to fight the mode of causation also preoccupies our inquiry. We asked how they undergo diagnoses and treatment given that the number of cases keeps increasing each passing day. Besides,

sicknesses causation does not only depend on the physical environment but also the spiritual. What was surprising was the statistics that were given each day since people undertake treatment with biomedical only as they government was still trying to understand the mechanism of Covid 19. Until latter, attention was paid to spiritual traditional practitioners. So, perception is the route map of treatment. Documentations were explored for our secondary data as well as internet sources. Though there is a lot to hear, documentation on Covid 19 is scarce since many services have been closed because of COVID-19 and awareness is wide. Our data collection was purposive and our varied target population gave room to a better understanding of urban health constrains.

### **Socio-cultural challenges constraining with COVID-19**

Based on the government measures and coincidental status of COVID-19 in Cameroon and Yaoundé in particular since mid-march, 2020, the population of Yaoundé as observed is taken aback by some dynamic challenges. This has to do with human activities and social behavior. To begin with, videos' talking about COVID-19, what to do and how to behave in or outdoors were diffused on social media. How to receive people if need be. Sanitizers and disinfectants were bought and placed in homes by individuals. Meanwhile, planning programs for offices were produced and people were getting along with the instructions to stop COVID-19. Music too is playing its own role as musicians come up with compilations on the new fight COVID-19 out of our environment.

Concerning marriages, the numbers of invitees are reduced and distanced representation making the merry and warmth of such longing programs cool. Births as well as death are quite disappointing. Total population in funerals is brought to 50 at most. Rituals practices and corpse removals limited to 8 persons and this made relatives and sympathizers unable to strengthen ties with *last respect* and *laid to rest* of their love's ones.

One of the greatest trials is cases where a love one dies of COVID-19 and is not buried by the family of the decease. They only watch their decease burial from a distance for fortunate cases while others do not even know where their loves ones are buried since such cases are handled by the government. Traditionally, family burial is considered when members of a family carry ground from the dug grave while making some utterances drop on the coffin of their death. But this is not done in trends of death connected to COVID-19.

*I could not witness the burial of my husband as he was said to have died of COVID-19 and had to be buried within 48hours. I was not in town.* Informant, Suzzy , merchant, 52 years,

Many stories like Suzzy are told. Some sad situations for others are that their relatives were buried before their results came out labeled COVID-19 negative. *What a dilemma when I had these results. I wanted to dig back the corpse and travel to bury in my home land but a law has been passed that people should not travel out of town with corpses.* Joyce, Researcher, 48years

*The Tso ritual which is usually performed during the death of someone who dies through an accident or sudden death is not even practiced due to COVID-19. Benny 62 Custodian of tradition.*

Politically, many political rallies, or conferences have been online or postponed, even the National day which is usually celebrated on the 20<sup>th</sup> May at its boulevard was not celebrated. A big challenge to the country's image! Meanwhile the activities of Boko Haram and the crisis in the North and South regions had known some calm with the outbreak of COVID-19.

Economically, markets continued to function but alternation and closure to clean and defect them following a calendar drawn by the council. Some people did not until they find themselves there. People put on mask to go shopping, wash hands and carry disinfectants however, market prices keeps sky-rocking as movements are restricted and the urge even to move has drop in the heart of many.

*Travelling to buy goods as usual is very difficult as transporters have a limited number to carry talk not of international businessmen. James, businessman, 50 years.*

Construction activities like roads, houses, etc has known a halt. We observed a builder and team whose activities in a certain house slowed-down when asked given the speed in which they were putting up the structure, he made this clear.

*My boss travelled and was affected physically and economically with COVID-19. He has just recovered of the disease. So work will resume soon. Kito, builder, 28years.*

Like the above case, though road activities in Yaounde and its environs have been re-launched, the early outbreak of COVID-19 paused many construction works.

Social and family tides especially in nuclear families dropped from the initial stages. The joy of a mother or father after a busy day on returning home to embrace their children is pending with the situation of COVID-19. This makes it quite difficult as a parent comes in to wash hands or disinfect him/her before expressing motherly or fatherly feelings.

*Whenever my children see me returning home they rushed to hug but with the virus, the same reactions caused me to reproach them from embracing me because I need to go into the house first, wash my hands and disinfect myself or take a bath. Or when the argue comes up I just say corona..... Ma Pat 35 years teacher.*

Ma Patience is not the only one in this social dilemma with the children, many family members has suspended emotions or manifest poor expressing with love ones as a result of COVID-19. In other areas the culture of eating together from the same plate among northerners is pendent while the communal spirit among Christian and Muslim fellowships are debasing.

On the medical page, visiting some health Centres, we noticed that they were quite full on asking to know why? Many people said they were afraid to go to bigger hospitals for fear of being contaminated or diagnosis for COVID-19. Road drug vendors are making quick sells as people explained and buy their drugs directly.

*I still doubt this story of COVID-19 because a woman died in a motor accident but her corpse was labeled COVID-19. Jean, Tenant, 45years.*

Jean is not the only one talking as such. Many people are embarrassed with the verdicts and government policies concerning COVID-19.

Still, some persons questioned why the church which is supposed to be a place where people ought to go and beg God to forgive his people and take away the disease has been reduced to 50 persons per service in Cameroon while bars which are places where people drink and sometimes dance without respecting social distancing is not limited in numbers. Besides when COVID-19 was announced schools and many public activities were closed but with the increasing number of cases these structures are open for people to use mask and wash hands while maintaining social distancing. How possible? Talking to know the spiritual perception from many Christians, we identified Sister Jeannette and this –she expressed.

*To Christians, COVID-19 is a Bible fulfillment about God's judgment because of the sinful nature of the world today. Before there were no existence of homosexuality, Lesbianism or same sex marriage as it is the case today. Such actions provoke God's anger to judge sin as was the case with Sodom and Gomorrah. Jeannette, Christian, 25 years.*

### **Representation of the COVID-19 pandemic**

It is said that Coronaviruses are facilitated by human actions. This has been affirmed as described. According to the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, "There is a single species that is responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic – us." To them it is said that not all coronaviruses result in a new zoonotic disease. Still without animal-to-human transmission, the current SARS-CoV-2 virus would not have presented itself in the form of COVID-19. Indeed, other coronaviruses are circulating in animals and have not yet infected humans. Therefore, Coronaviruses are leaping to humans more frequently because we provide them with more opportunities to do so. In the last 50 years alone, the human population has doubled and the global economy has almost quadrupled. Rapid migration from rural to urban areas and creation of new urban centres has affected demographics, lifestyles and consumer behaviour. Like the case of Yaounde, many internally displaced person's floods the town and social behavior are almost difficult to control.

*I have not heard from my mum and sister for long and since they have travelled all the way from the village I cannot wait to wash my hands or put on a mask before we hung ourselves please----- Ageline,*



*house wife, 23years.*

She is not the only case in such a situation given that many people are on phone on a regularly bases with their friends and relatives but touching and feeling one another's warmth is quite absence even within the same town due to life constrains.

### **Ecological changes**

Human activities linked to deforestation in Cameroon and Yaounde in particular, is quite visible. Due to expansion and housing problems either by force urban relocation or movement to new areas within the town, many forest and trees have been cut without replacement. Thus our changing lifestyles have vividly reformed the land around us. Clearing of forests and other natural areas to create spaces for urban areas and settlements, agriculture and industries have compact overall space for wildlife and ruined natural cushions among humans and animals. Consequently, climate change is also a driver of zoonoses. Greenhouse gas emissions—mainly the outcome of burning fossil fuels is a source to temperature variation and moisture, which openly marks the existence of microbes. As assessment by UNEP and ILRI on zoonotic, rapid changes to habitat due to unusual weather events such as heat, drought, flooding or wildfires are too fast to allow ecosystems to balance sudden spikes in populations of group species such as mosquitoes, which can be vectors for emerging diseases. It's therefore suggesting that epidemics will become more frequent as the climate continues to change.

### **Social variations**

Request for dairy and meat products has steered passionate production in livestock farming in rural areas and big cities like Yaounde. Due to high prices during festivals like Christmas, New Year and others, individuals have chosen to rear their own Livestock for personal consumption and in due course, often human infections, significance pathogens may be conceded from animals to livestock then to humans. Some markets in Yaounde worry as people get animals in informal markets, often in unsanitary and unhygienic conditions. Viruses and other pathogens may be easily spread among animals that are kept close together; or to the humans who hold, gait, trade, buy or eat them, when hygienic and protective practices are not followed.

*I bought a goat in Marche Vogt ada and kept to eat during the New Year, but after three weeks the animal started passing businessman out watery stool, was very weak and I was advised to seek a veterinary assistance for consultation and treatment. I could not go because it is costly. I latter kill it because it was almost dying. Ben, trader, 42 years.*

Ben like many who rear pigs, goats, fowls and other animals within residences in Yaounde and other towns in Cameroon are very ignorance about the dangers of having these animals without any health care. Though some succeed to go about this clandestine rearing, they do not know the dangers that these animals could cause to humans by polluting the air or spreading viruses which could lead to death.

### **Pathogen alterations**

In another sense, pathogens are constantly unstable and live in diverse animals, humans and settings. By so doing, expansion in agriculture, the abuse of antimicrobial drugs by many people to make quick economic turns has impacted both animals and people. Thus, pathogens are becoming more unaffected to the very treatments that might have been active in handling zoonotic infections. Therefore, food items like plantains, tomatoes, fowls and others which are treated with chemicals to get mature or ripe for immediate consumption endangered human lives.

### **Language use**

Communication on the situation of COVID-19 is verbal and non-verbal. The verbal information through TV, placards wash hand points, designs, in addition to mask wearing tells us that information is being sent out on the disease. Closure of schools and reduction of staff in commercial and individual cars all over the territory of Cameroon at the onset of COVID-19 outbreak in mid-March 2020 was a sound message to the population. (See Government measures on COVID-19 at <https://www.spm.gov.cm/>).

“These are difficult but necessary measures to ensure the protection of each and every one and to limit the spread of this pandemic. In case of need, the public is invited to call the toll-free number **1510** set up for the mobilization of rescue teams. The Government calls on the public not to panic, but to show discipline, solidarity and a sense of responsibility at a time when the whole world is going through difficult times”

### **Lesson on COVID-19**

COVID-19 is a prompt sickness that human and ecological health is meticulously related yet there are about 8 million species of life on the earth, of which humans are just one. According to 2017 IPBES report an estimated 1.7 million unidentified viruses, are known as types that may infect people, existing in mammals and water birds. Thus, they could be transferred to humans, if preventative measures are not instigated. Thus, the most essential way to protect ourselves from zoonotic diseases is to prevent destruction of nature. Observations show that healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, promotes resilient, pliability and help to regulate diseases.

Recognizing that they are still best chances for a better future, UNEP supports countries as they advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It's Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and other crucial agreements on issues such as biodiversity, oceans, chemicals and waste management. Implemented, by UNEP's COVID-19 Response; two points from the SG's report are particularly relevant to the UNEP mandate: which are: The 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is still our best chance for a brighter future. Had we made faster progress on these processes, the world would have been better equipped to face COVID-19 – with stronger health systems, fewer people living in poverty, less gender inequality, a healthier environment and more resilient societies. And Continued learning – With over 1 billion students no longer able to attend school, UNEP has been working with leaders in environmental education to create “Earth School,” an innovative set of lessons hosted on TED-Ed. UNEP will also collaborate with other UN



agencies, educators and governments to integrate environmental themes across curricula to help the world “learn back better”.

### Way forward

One way to thwart and slow down the spread of COVID-19, is information about it causes and how it drifts. Guarding yourself and others from contamination by washing your hands or using an alcohol based rub regularly and not touching your face is reasonable. So COVID-19 virus extents chiefly through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes and it touches another person. It is important therefore to practice respiratory etiquette (by coughing into your handkerchief). Using legs or gestures to greet could be better to coughing and using the same elbow to greet. There is risk to carry the droplet to the next person.

Meanwhile, there are many clinical trials evaluating potential treatments, WHO will continue to provide update information as soon as findings become available. On this note, COVID-19 has pushed many people and researchers to seek cure for it. In Africa Madagascar is announced to have found the cure with Artemisia –based herbal tea discovered recently by scientists of Madagascar. In Cameroon as well, Bishop Kleda is said to have discovered treatment for COVID-19 made from natural products. Though not officially confirmed by WHO he is said to have effectively treated patients with COVID-19, thus many people are on the way for the cure against corona. Cameroon being the highest affected country in Central Africa, the government is putting in place measures for testing and free treatment for her citizens.

Consequently, the government has taken the initiative to sensitize and placed many testing and treatment sites to enable individuals to know their COVID-19 status in all the regions. For the central region we have the following:

#### List of testing sites for COVID-19 in the Centre Region

NO	Health District	Site
1	BIYEM ASSI	CSI SIMBOCK
2		BIYEM ASSI COUNCIL
3	CITE VERTE	PALAIS POLYVALENT DES SPORTS
4		CENTRE MEDICAL DE L’ECOLE DE POLICE
5		HOPITAL CENTRAL YAOUNDE
6	DJOUNGOLO	HOPITAL JAMOT DE YAOUNDE

7		EPC DE DJOUNGOLO
8		STADE OMNISPORT DE NFANDENA
9		CLUB CAMTEL
10	<b>EFOULAN</b>	CMA AHALA
11		CENTRE MEDICAL DE L'AMBASSADE DE FRANCE
12		QUARTIER GENERAL MINDEF
13		INFIRMERIE DE LAMISSION CATHOLIQUE DE MVOLYE
14	<b>NKOLBISSON</b>	CMA OYOM ABANG
15	<b>NKOLDONGO</b>	CSI EKOUNOU
16	<b>MFOU</b>	AEROPORT NSIMALEN

Airport = optional site

Legend: State testing site

Red: Catholic Mission testing site

Source: Minsante

### Impact

Psychological health is fundamental of humankind as it permits us to prime ecstasy involving our environment. With COVID-19 virus it is different since our physical health and consensus is touched causing mental suffering. Anguish of loved one, loss of jobs, Quarantine and restraints on movement, socialization, problematic kinfolk's, undercurrent, insecurity and fear for the future, depression and unanswered questions flood the world yet another epidemic like COVID-19. Where can man put his head? Echoes many in the mist of afflictions and solitude.

Mindset expressed in an information sheet makes us see suffering, discrimination as stated in an exact below: "Throughout my life, and in my own family, I have been close to doctors and psychiatrists treating these conditions. As prime minister of my country, Portugal, and as High Commissioner for Refugees, I became acutely aware of the suffering they cause. This suffering is often exacerbated by stigma and discrimination, which is absolutely unacceptable.

After decades of neglect and underinvestment in mental health services, the COVID-19 pandemic is now hitting families and communities with additional mental stress.

Those most at risk are frontline healthcare workers, older people, adolescents and young people, those with pre-existing mental health conditions and those caught up in conflict and crisis. We must help them and stand by them.

Even when the pandemic is brought under control, grief, anxiety and depression will continue to affect people and communities. This is the background to the policy brief on COVID-19 and mental health that we are launching today.

Mental health services are an essential part of all government responses to COVID-19. They must be expanded and fully funded. Policies must support and care for those affected by mental health conditions, and protect their human rights and dignity. Lockdowns and quarantines must not discriminate against those with poor mental health... (UN News/ Global perspective). [COVID-19: Messages from the UN Secretary-General](#)/ COVID-19 and Mental Health: Policy Brief 15 May 2020.

Through a universal plague, when the world appears to have been shut down, our work hurts as much as the economy does. For researchers, going out for population surveys, data gathering and teamwork with fellow researchers, students and lecturers come to a standstill. COVID-19 is one such global pandemic where dreams are pending. To preserve instruction and stay safe, one possibility is to stay at home. But enfolding ourselves would imply that our work is rested. Opinion is centrally interrupted. As, schools, and workplaces are shut, perhaps a researcher cannot carry on their work throughout a home-stay. Thanks to online facilities. Works from home abilities have actually made issues relaxed these days. The evolution of technology, gives admission for high rapidity internet and by that we can provide virtually all through web services. Functioning from home on a part-time or full-time foundation has also assisted many researchers and academics who cannot bestow that enormous quantity of vital period on a daily basis to attain a fruitful investigation view. Thus, to share with their family and give eminence time to both individual and professional life, have originate work-from-home on part time jobs, certainly beneficial and rewarding in relations to work-life stability and money. In short, functioning from home can also help academics in a lockdown condition like the present.

## CONCLUSION

Evidenced that COVID-19 pandemic is undoubtedly an international public health problem, a reawaken has pressured among researchers leading to speedy progresses in the knowledge of its pathogen, how it contaminates cells, thus originating the disease, and its medical features. Given its fast mode of spread, it is suggested that nations over the world had better rise thoughtfulness in checking both ecological and human system in its totality. While scale up country willingness and reply actions counting creating rapid intervention response teams, cultivating the aptitude of the nationwide workroom system be instituted. In this consciousness, a one for all and all for one opinion in solving this big challenge need to be adopted. Therefore, the individual community, nation continent and the world a large needs adaptation and improving lifestyles benefitting the stoppage of COVID-19. The perception of the COVID-19 vaccines

comes in with stories which many people stand at cross roads when some consider a moment or refer to. A lot of things are said and shown making people to continue to live in dilemma and confusion. Many Africans relied on the notion of ethno medicine for the treatment of COVID-19 like any other health problems. Bearing in mind that colds, cough, catarrh and nose flu is handled during suffering by traditional herbs and composition, COVID-19 is not different and could be dealt with as well. So, suggestions from other sources of treatment like Artemisia in Madagascar and Bishop Kleda amongst others, only confirm their notion of treatment. Apparently medical pluralism with ethnological views could clear out many constraints and contribute to diligent normalcy relating COVID-19.

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