Indivisible Portmanteaux and the Timing of Ellipsis

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1. Introduction

Hungarian generally allows ellipsis of the complement of negation, but for a robust sub-population (27 out of 47 relevant speakers surveyed), there is a contrast between trying to elide a 3rd person present tense copula and trying to elide any other copula. The contrast is illustrated with a 1st person copula in (1).[1]

(1) a. Pisti otthon van, de én nem
Pisti at.home be.PRS.3SG, but 1SG NEG ~~be.PRS.1SG at.home~~
'Pisti is at home, but not me.'

b. * Pisti itthon van, de Ildi nem
Pisti at.home be.PRS.3SG, but Ildi NEG ~~be.PRS.3SG at.home~~
Int: 'Pisti is at home, but not Ildi.'

The 3rd person present copula is different from the 1st person present copula in that instead of negating analytically, it has a special negative portmanteau, which is obligatory for all 47 speakers.

(2) a. Én nem vagyok otthon
1SG NEG be.PRS.1SG at.home
'I am not at home.'

b. * Ildi nem van itthon
Ildi NEG be.PRS.3SG at.home
Int: 'Ildi is not at home.'

c. Ildi nincs itthon
Ildi NEG.be.PRS.3SG at.home
'Ildi is not at home.'

For the 27 speakers who do not accept (1b), *nincs* is an elliptically indivisible portmanteau. Although the intended ellipsis boundary falls between the two parts of the portmanteau, the portmanteau cannot be split into an overt default negation and a silent 3rd person copula. This paper focuses on the grammar of these 27 speakers, and analyses elliptical indivisibility. I argue that this portmanteau forms post-syntactically. It then follows that for elliptical indivisibility to be possible, material on both sides of an ellipsis boundary must be simultaneously accessible to the post-syntax, to allow portmanteau formation to bleed ellipsis of the copula. In particular, this means the contents of an ellipsis site are can be post-syntactically active, and so are not lost or made otherwise irretrievable within the narrow syntax itself,

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[1] The vowel in 'at home' varies depending on whether home is proximal to the speaker or not. If it is, the form is *itthon*, and if not, *otthon*.

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as has been proposed by Baltin (2012) and Sailor (forthcoming). Analysing the judgements of the 20 speakers who find *nincs* to be elliptically divisible is left for future work.[2]

2. Data

All data in this paper comes from elicitations with one of two adult native speakers of Hungarian from Dunaújváros or Százhalombatta. The judgements presented in the introduction reflect the results on an online questionnaire filled out by 55 respondents, of which 47 had the relevant kind of ellipsis construction. 27 of the 47 had *nincs* as an elliptically indivisible portmanteau and are the focus of the paper. Unless stated, sentences reflect the judgements of the two consultants, who both find *nincs* to be elliptically indivisible.

The 3rd person present copula is unique among the copular forms in that it forms an obligatory portmanteau with sentential negation. Table 1 shows the singular inflections for the affirmative copulas, and table 2 shows their negations. While most of the copulas can be negated by adding the pre-verbal sentential negation marker *nem* (*ne* in the subjunctive), the 3rd person indicative present copula cannot be negated this way. The portmanteau negative copula *nincs* is used instead of the expected **nem van*. Plural copulas show exactly the same patterns, just with different agreement markers, and are left out for brevity.

Table 1: Affirmative singular copulas

	PRS.IND	PST.IND	SJV
1SG	vagyok	voltam	legyek
2SG	vagy	voltál	legy(él)
3SG	van	volt	legyen

Table 2: Negative singular copulas

	PRS.IND	PST.IND	SJV
1SG	nem vagyok	nem voltam	ne legyek
2SG	nem vagy	nem voltál	ne legy(él)
3SG	**nincs**, *nem van	nem volt	ne legyen

Example (1b) shows a 3rd person present indicative copula not being elided under negation. In fact, none of person, tense, or mood is independently responsible for the inability to elide. We have already seen that non-3rd person present indicative copulas can elide, as in (1a), so tense and mood alone are not enough to block ellipsis. As example (3a) shows, a 3rd person past indicative copula can be elided under negation without issue as well, so person and mood cannot account for the pattern either. Finally, as (3b) shows, a 3rd person present subjunctive copula can also be elided, so person and tense cannot account for the inability to elide either.

(3) a. Pisti otthon volt, de Ildi nem
Pisti at.home be.PST.3SG, but Ildi NEG
'Pisti was at home, but not Ildi.'

b. Megkövetelem, hogy a Dóri itthon legyen, de megengedem, hogy a Peti ne
require.PRS.1SG C DEF Dóri at.home be.SJV.3SG, but allow.PRS.1SG C DEF Peti NEG.SJV
'I require that Dóri be at home, but I allow that Peti not be.'

None of tense, person, or mood on its own, or in pairs, is enough to block ellipsis. For speakers who have the restriction on ellipsis, it is unique to the one copula that forms a portmanteau with negation. Is

[2] Anikó Lipták (p.c.) notes that it is possible that these speakers interpreted the sentences as involving focus on the location, which would result in negation applying just to the location and not the copula, and so the portmanteau would not form in the first place.

is precisely because the 3rd person present indicative copula forms a portmanteau with negation that it cannot be elided under negation. So what exactly happens when a speaker tries to elide a portmanteau negative copula? It is possible for all 27 relevant speakers to pronounce the whole negative portmanteau outside the ellipsis site, as in (4).

(4) Pisti itthon van, de Ildi nincs
Pisti at.home be.PRS.3SG, but Ildi NEG.be.PRS.3SG
'Pisti is at home, but Ildi is not.'

But this on its own is not informative. It is not clear whether the source of (4) is ellipsis of the complement of negation, which the copula exceptionally evades by being part of a portmanteau, or ellipsis of something smaller, such as just the location. It turns out that of the 27 speakers of interest who cannot split *nincs*, 15 do not have the option to elide just the location for non-portmanteau copulas, as shown in (5).

(5) * Pisti otthon van, de én nem (*vagyok)
Pisti at.home be.PRS.3SG, but 1SG NEG (*be.PRS.1SG)
'Pisti is at home but not me.'

For the 15 speakers out of the 27 who do not accept (5) but do accept (4), the source of (4) could not be ellipsis of just the location, since that smaller ellipsis is not generally available to them. So we can conclude that trying to split an indivisible portmanteau results in the portmanteau surviving outside the ellipsis site, rather than crashing the derivation.

3. Discussion

The existence of elliptically indivisible portmanteaux means that portmanteau formation has to be able to see into ellipsis sites to determine whether the conditions for an indivisible portmanteau exist or not. If portmanteau formation could not see into ellipsis sites, we would expect all portmanteau to be split by ellipsis. This means that the timing of portmanteau formation gives us an earliest bound on the derivational timing when ellipsis sites become inaccessible, if at all.[3]

3.1. Why portmanteau formation is post-syntactic

3.1.1. Portmanteau formation is not pre-syntactic

Pre-syntactic portmanteau formation would involve the features [NEG,√BE, PRS, 3, SG], which correspond to the portmanteau *nincs*, being an indivisible bundle for the purposes of the narrow syntactic and post-syntactic parts of the derivation. In principle, this could be implemented either in a Lexicalist model of morphology, where the syntactic atom consists of both the bundle of features and the phonological form of *nincs*, or in a Late Insertion model like Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz 1993, 1994), where the syntax operates only over the morphosyntactic feature bundle [NEG,√BE, PRS, 3, SG], and phonology is introduced only in the post-syntax. Either way, the elliptical indivisibility of the portmanteau negative copula would fall out directly from the fact that for the purposes of the syntax, the features [NEG,√BE, PRS, 3, SG] form an indivisible atom. But Lexicalism has been argued against in morphosyntacitc literature on the basis of syntax being able to operate inside words (Marantz 1997), and so I will not adopt that model of morphology.

Allowing feature bundling without Lexicalism creates an inelegant duplication of arbitrary listed information. To capture *nincs* by pre-syntactic bundling in a Late Insertion model, the set of features

[3] Not all theories of ellipsis silencing propose that ellipsis sites are made inaccessible by ellipsis. For example, Park (2017) and Saab (forthcoming) propose theories where ellipsis sites are fully transparent to morphosyntax, but do not undergo vocabulary insertion in a Late Insertion model of morphology. These approaches are discussed in more detail in section 3.2.

[NEG,√BE, PRS, 3, SG] has to be listed once in the pre-syntactic list of atoms, and again in the post-syntactic list that stores information about exponence. But there is no reason to think these two lists should align, and so the indivisibility of *nincs* in Hungarian is essentially an accident. This approach could just as easily model the analytical negative 1st person copula *nem vagyok* to be elliptically indivisible because it is a syntactic unit, which undergoes fission before exponence. Approaches to morpho-syntax that adopt Late Insertion but explicitly assume *No Bundling* to avoid this duplication include cartographic approaches (Cinque & Rizzi 2009) and Nanosyntax (Caha 2009, Starke 2002). Following this, I will assume *No Bundling*, and reject pre-syntactic portmanteau formation by assumption.

3.1.2. Portmanteau formation is not syntactic

Having rejected pre-syntactic portmanteau formation, the next derivational stage to consider is the narrow syntax. Note that since Lexicalism requires pre-syntactic portmanteau formation, by rejective the latter, we also reject the former. So we are now only considering Late Insertion approaches to morphology. Syntactic portmanteau formation would involve negation and the copula being structurally distinguishable in the narrow sytnax, based on whether or not they will go on to be realised by a single exponent or not. Put another way, syntactic portmanteau formation would require the structural relationship between negation and 3rd person present indicative copula to be different from that between negation and all other copulas. But this does not seem to be supported by the data.

In affirmative locative constructions, the copula is realised after the location, as in (6a) and (7a). In negative clauses, sentential negation appears after the subject, and the verb must appear adjacent to negation if it is a separate word, as in (7b) or as a portmanteau with negation as in (7b). In fact, all verbs must appear immediately adjacent to sentential negation in most Hungarian negative sentences as per Puskás (2000) and É. Kiss (2002).

(6) a. Ildi itthon volt
Ildi at.home be.PST.3SG
'Ildi was at home.'

b. Ildi nem volt itthon
Ildi NEG be.PST.3SG at.home
'Ildi is not at home.'

(7) a. Ildi itthon van
Ildi at.home be.PRS.3SG
'Ildi is at home.'

b. Ildi nincs itthon
Ildi NEG.be.PRS.3SG at.home
'Ildi is not at home.'

Obviously, speaking of adjacency between negation and the copula does not make sense in (7b) where the two form a portmanteau. But it is important that the portmanteau appears in the same place with respect to the other constituents in the sentences as the negated verb in (6b). That is, a negated copula, whether it is a portmanteau or not, appears in the same place in all cases: after the subject and before the location.

Since we have rejected pre-syntactic bundling of features to distinguish *nincs* from *nem volt*, negation and the copula begin the derivation as separate pieces. There are no word order facts that distinguish the relative positions of negation and copula in constructions where they will go on to form a portmanteau from those in which they will not. So, maintaining that the two cases are syntactically distinguishable involves stipulating that the movement that is responsible for bringing the 3rd person past indiciative copula to negation in (6b) is different from the movement that is responsible for bringing the 3rd person present indicative copula to negation to form (7b).

This may at first seem like a reasonable option, given that Harizanov & Gribanova (2018) argue for the existence of two different kinds of head movement: syntactic and post-syntactic. On their view, syntactic head movement is the result of Internal Merge of a head with a phrase, as in for example Matushansky

(2006). Post-syntactic head movement, which they call *amalgamation* is instead a PF process involving nothing in the narrow syntax. If the portmanteau were the result of syntactic head movement, and the non-portmanteau the result post-syntactic head movement, the two would be distinguishable before the post-syntax. Elliptical indivisibility could then be modelled as the result of negation and the copula forming a complex unit in the narrow syntax, and so ellipsis of the complement of the verbal constituent would not delete the copula that had syntactically moved out of it already. But unfortunately, the key properties which according to Harizanov & Gribanova (2018) distinguish syntactic from post-syntactic head movement are inconclusive at best in the Hungarian case.

Harizanov & Gribanova (2018) list certain properties where the two types of head movement should differ. Firstly, only post-syntactic head movement is supposed to produce the kinds of head-adjunction structures that map to words. Certainly, *nincs* is a single word, but this is a problem. In order to capture elliptical indivisibility, we would need to say it is the result of syntactic head movement at least for some subset of speakers, and so should not be a single morphological word for these speakers. Secondly, the two types of head movement are supposed to obey different locality conditions. In particular, syntactic head movement should be subject to the same locality restrictions as phrasal movement, and post-syntactic head movement should be subject to the head movement constraint. But in the Hungarian case, the two movements are from the same place (the verb) to the same place (negation). Given that the origins and landing sites are the same, there is no way to distinguish which kind of movement is involved in each case, and more importantly no evidence that they are different. Finally, Harizanov & Gribanova (2018) predict that syntactic head movement can have interpretive effects, but post-syntactic head movement cannot. But this is also inconclusive, since there is no obligation for syntactic head movement to have interpretive effects - only the possibility to have such effects. So on two out of the three properties where syntactic and post-syntactic head movement are meant to differ on this approach, there is no difference between movement of a 3rd person present copula and movement of a 3rd person past copula. On the third property, the prediction goes in the opposite direction to what is observed, with respect to which kind of head movement should form words.

So we are left with a situation where distinguishing the negation and copula pair that will go on to form a portmanteau from those that will not within the narrow syntax requires stipulating two different movements which have no observably different effects on word order or interpretation. This is not explanatory, and so we will not pursue this further.

3.1.3. Summary of the argument

In preceding subsections, we have seen reasons to not treat portmanteau formation as a pre-syntactic or a syntactic process. Pre-syntactic portmanteau formation results in duplication of arbitrary information in two different modules of the grammar, with no explanation for why a particular bundle should be doubly listed. Syntactic portmanteau formation requires stipulating the existence of two different kinds of head movement operations but which have no observable effects on word order or interpretation. Having eliminated pre-syntactic and syntactic portmanteau formation, we are only left with the option to treat portmanteau formation as an entirely post-syntactic operation. That is, whether a negation and copula pair will go on to form a portmanteau or not is only determined in the post-syntax. Given this, it follows that ellipsis sites are post-syntactically accessible. This is discussed in the following section.

3.2. Why ellipsis sites are post-syntactically accessible

What happens to an ellipsis site once ellipsis is licensed in the course of the derivation to make it silent? This question only makes sense to ask in those cases where we have reason to the think that the ellipsis site contains structure parallel to the antecedent. If the ellipsis site has no structure in it at all, as in Culicover & Jackendoff (2005), or a silent pronoun, it's quite clear that nothing needs to be done to the ellipsis site in order to make it silent. But if there is full structure inside the ellipsis site, how is it made silent? Proposed answers in the literature have varied. A top level distinction that can be made is whether the contents of the ellipsis site are made inaccessible to the derivation after some point. In one camp, Park (2017) and Saab (forthcoming) say no. They assume a Late Insertion model of morphology and propose that ellipsis is licensed in the narrow syntax (the mechanism is not important for us), resulting

in the terminals in the ellipsis site no longer being eligible for vocabulary insertion in the post-syntax. The features inside the ellipsis site are still visible to all operations, except vocabulary insertion. In the other camp, Baltin (2012), Murphy (2016), and Sailor (forthcoming) say ellipsis does make ellipsis sites inaccessible. For Baltin (2012) and Sailor (forthcoming), this happens in the narrow syntax, either by deletion or by Segregated Transfer respectively. For Murphy (2016), ellipsis sites are also deleted, but it happens later, in the post-syntax by means of an impoverishment operation.

Baltin (2012) and Sailor (forthcoming) present theories which involve an early separation of the ellipsis site by some means which makes its contents inaccessible to subsequent operations. If the contents of the ellipsis site are deleted, the features will obviously be inaccessible to all subsequent operations. If ellipsis sites undergo Segregated Transfer, they are sent immediately to PF upon licensing in the syntax, where they are interpreted separately from the unelided structure. In either case, material inside and outside the ellipsis site are not available to any operations in the derivation at the same time after ellipsis has been licensed on these views.

The ellipsis in Hungarian does involve unpronounced structure, as can be verified by case matching for example, as shown in (8).

(8) Emese elment a delibe, de a bolt*(ba) nem
Emese go.PST.3SG DEF deli.ILL, but DEF store.*(ILL) NEG
'Emese went to the deli, but not the store.'

From (8) we see that the remnant of ellipsis, the store, has to have the same illative case marking as its correlate in the antecedent. As per Merchant (2018), this is a test for structure in ellipsis sites because the case matching requirement is readily understood if the case assigner is inside the ellipsis site and assigns case before being deleted, but is not understandable without stipulation if the ellipsis site does not contain structure.[4]

Having established that the relevant ellipsis involves unpronounced structure, suppose that Baltin (2012) and Sailor (forthcoming) are right about making the contents of the ellipsis site inaccessible to the rest of the derivation, and that this happens in the narrow syntax. If this were the case, the PF cycle interpreting negation and the remnant of ellipsis might see something like what is shown in (9).

(9) BUT [√ILDI [NEG ✖]]

In (9), ✖ represents the ellipsis site. It is either empty because it has been deleted, or is opaque because it was interpreted in a previous PF cycle (where it was left unpronounced). Either way, PF operations have no visibility into ✖, and so would never be able to tell whether a portmanteau across the ellipsis boundary was possible or not. In other words, it is not possible to tell whether (9) represents the second clause of (10a), which is not grammatical, or (10b), which is.

(10) a. * Pisti itthon van, de Ildi nem
Pisti at.home be.PRS.3SG, but Ildi NEG
Int: 'Pisti is at home, but not Ildi.'

b. Pisti otthon volt, de Ildi nem
Pisti at.home be.PST.3SG, but Ildi NEG
'Pisti was at home, but not Ildi.'

Clearly, the contents of the ellipsis site have to be accessible to the post-syntactic operation responsible for portmanteau formation. Otherwise, it is impossible to tell whether an elliptically indivisible portmanteau could form or not. It does not actually matter whether the contents of the ellipsis site are accessible because they are never made inaccessible, as in Park (2017) or Saab (forthcoming), or they are

[4] Readers may realise that regardless of the syntactic evidence for the presence of structure in ellipsis sites, describing elliptical indivisibility in a silent pronoun approach is very bizzare. It would need to say that the silent pronoun can refer to a copular phrase, unless the copula in the phrase is a 3rd person present indicative copula.

made inaccessible after the portmanteau forming operation has already applied. Either way, the contents of ellipsis sites have to be post-syntactically accessible, to allow portmanteau formation to determine whether an elliptically indivisible portmanteau can form or not.

4. Sketch of a possible analysis

In this section, we will see a sketch of possible analysis that can account for elliptical indivisibility. We have eliminated one class of approaches to ellipsis silencing, but there are still two left: non-insertion approaches which involve no deletion of ellipsis sites (Park 2017, Saab forthcoming), and post-syntactic deletion (Murphy 2016). This section presents a non-insertion approach, as in Saab (forthcoming), but alternatives will also work.

While it is clear that in negative sentences in Hungarian, the verb must move to negation, there is disagreement in the literature on Hungarian syntax as to where exactly the movement is occurring to. Puskás (2000) and Olsvay (2000) propose that the verb undergoes head movement to negation as in (11a), but É. Kiss (2002) and Surányi (2002) argue that in fact the verb stays within the complement of negation, moving to its edge as in (11b).

(11) a. Ildi [[nem volt$_i$] [otthon t$_i$]]
Ildi [[NEG be.PST.3SG] [at.home]]

b. Ildi nem [volt$_i$ [otthon t$_i$]]
Ildi NEG [be.PST.3SG [at.home]]
'Ildi was not at home.'

Surányi (2002) in particular uses the availability of ellipsis in sentences like (10b) to argue that the verb and negation do not form a complex head. If they did, ellipsis would have to delete a non-constituent: the copula which is part of the complex negation head, and the complement, which contains the location. Under the assumption that ellipsis targets constituents, this is an argument against treating the verb movement as head movement to negation. For the purposes of this analysis, it will not matter which structure is actually correct. For concreteness, the representation in (11b) will be used, but if the other turns out to be correct, the analysis should still work in exactly the same way as long as Surányi's concern about non-constituent ellipsis is dealt with.

Elipsis is triggered in narrow syntax by an E feature, as per Merchant (2001). Following Saab (forthcoming), the effect of E is to delete the feature that triggers post-syntactic vocabulary insertion, which Saab calls *Q*, from all the terminals in the scope of the E feature. So, a non-elliptical negative copula construction would look like (12a), where all the features still have their *Q*s, while an elliptical negative copula construction would look like (12b) where everything in the ellipsis site has lost its *Q* feature.

(12) a. . . . NEG+Q [[√be+Q PRS+Q 3SG+Q][. . . AT.HOME+Q . . .]]
b. . . . NEG+Q [[√be PRS 3SG][. . . AT.HOME . . .]]

Vocabulary insertion proceeds bottom up, as proposed by Bobaljik (2000), but following Svenonius (2016), associates vocabulary items with spans, not exclusively terminals. Insertion makes reference to spans in terms of targets of insertion, as well as contexts of insertion. The heart of the proposal is that reference to spans in both cases depends on a formal visibility condition, defined in (13).

(13) A span is visible to the insertion operation if and only if it contains at least one *Q*.

For speakers who have an elliptically indivisible *nincs*, the relevant lexical items are shown in (14).

(14) a. nem ↔ ⟨NEG⟩
b. van ↔ ⟨√be, PRS,3SG⟩
c. nincs ↔ ⟨NEG, √be, PRS,3SG⟩

Faced with the structure in (12b), for these speakers, the vocabulary items in (14a) and (14c) both correspond to visible spans. For the latter, only NEG has its *Q*, but this is enough for any span containing NEG to be visible as per the condition in (13). Following Haugen & Siddiqi (2016), let us assume that a portmanteau is preferred if it spells out at least as many of the features of the relevant span as non-portmanteau forms. In this situation, (14c) is equally good at spelling out the visible span ⟨NEG, √be, PRS,3SG⟩ as a combination of (14a) and (14b), so it will be preferred. It does not matter that some of the features in the span are *Q*-less, since the presence of at least one *Q*-marked feature means that the span is a valid target for insertion. This means that for these speakers, even when the features of the copula have lost their *Q*s, the existence of a portmanteau by span means the whole negative portmanteau can be pronounced as long as all the relevant features are present, and least one of them is not elided.

The point of this example analysis is to show how elliptical indivisibility can be modelled. What is crucial is that the contents of the ellipsis site be accessible to whatever post-syntactic operation is responsible for portmanteau formation for the speakers with an indivisible *nincs*. Alternative approaches to model elliptical indivisibility may be equally successful as long as they maintain this crucial property.

5. Conclusion

While most verbs in Hungarian are negated by adding the sentential negation marker *nem*, 3rd person present indicative copulas cannot be negated this way. Instead, there is a special portmanteau negative copula form *nincs*, which is obligatory for all speakers instead of the analytically expected *nem van*. This portmanteau interacts with ellipsis of the complement of negation. For a majority of speakers, while nearly all other verbs can be elided in the complement of negation, the copula which would go on to form a portmanteau with negation cannot. It exceptionally survives ellipsis for these speakers because it part of an elliptically indivisible portmanteau.

In this paper, we saw arguments that the portmanteau formation operations must be post-syntactic, and that this means that the contents of ellipsis sites must be post-syntactically accessible. Portmanteau formation must be post-syntactic, because any earlier implementations of portmanteau formation are not able to account for the facts without stipulation. Pre-syntactic portmanteau formation requires doubly listing the same set of features as special, once because they are an indivisible unit for ellipsis, and once because they have a single exponent, without linking these two properties. Syntactic portmanteau formation requires stipulating different movement operations with no word order or interpretive effects, essentially restating a fact about the Hungarian lexicon - that portmanteaux exist. So, by the process of elimination, we are left with post-syntactic portmanteau formation. This immediately means that ellipsis sites have to be accessible post-syntactically, if elliptical indivisibility is going to be modelled. For speakers who treat the portmanteau as elliptically indivisible, the choice of how much to pronounce depends on whether the copula and negation form a portmanteau or not. If the contents of the ellipsis site were made inaccessible to the post-syntax, the post-syntactic portmanteau forming operation would not be able to tell whether an indivisible portmanteau could form or not.

The paper concluded with an example of how elliptical indivisibility could be analysed as the result of the interaction between portmanteau formation by non-terminal insertion and a non-insertion approach to ellipsis silencing. Other approaches might be equally successful at modelling indivisibility, as long they involve portmanteau forming operations that have access into the contents of ellipsis sites.

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