

**Does the state turn 'new' social movements into 'old' social
movemnts?**

SO310 Popular Resistance

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According to theorists whose arguments are based on the Resource Mobilization (RM) theory, the state turns new social movements (NSMs) into old social movements (OSMs) through various strategies such as increasing the cost of mobilization. We will review this argument by looking at Hays (1987) and Lowe and Flynn's (1989) ideas. An in-depth case study of Greenpeace will be introduced as an example of the hypothesised transformation claimed by the RM theory. The problem is not all NSMs are transformed into OSMs by the state. Reclaim the Streets is an example of this. The RM theory cannot account for the NSMs that stay 'new', in which case the New Social Movement (NSM) theory becomes useful. This theory insists that we are seeing a new type of social movement (SM) that are fundamentally different from traditional ones because they involve new values (Inglehart 1981), new classes (Cotgrove and Duff) or new struggles (Melucci). Both theories examine social movements on different levels and dimensions and have both strengths and disadvantages, which we will see in more details in this essay. The aim of this essay is to address the two theories and outline the arguments proposed by the two with regards to whether the state changes the NSMs into OSMs.

Before we begin it is important to define what the differences between NSMs and OSMs are as this comprises a big part of our discussion. Extensive effort has been made by writers in defining the differences particularly among the NSM theorists, who believe that contemporary social movements are fundamentally different from old social movement like labour movements. The attributes compared in Table 1 are drawn from the work of Buechler (1995), Cohen (1985), Gamson (1988, 1992), Inglehart (1981), Martell (1994), Melucci (1994), Mertig (2001), Offe (1994), and Sutton (2000).

Types of ...	Old Social Movements	New Social Movements
Ideology	Political Focus	Cultural Focus
Society	In Early Capitalist Societies	In Advanced Capitalist Societies
Period	Pre-1960's Movements	Post-1960's Movements
Participants	Class-Based Participants	Cross-Class Participants ¹
Issues raised	Class-Based Issues	Non-Class Or Cross-Class Issues
Goals	Materialist Goals	Post-materialist Goals ²
Organization	Centralised: Formal and hierarchical	Decentralised: Informal and grass roots
Medium of Change	Institutional Action	Direct Action
	Collective Action	Collective and Individual Action
	Political Involvement	Individual Lifestyle

Table 1 *Old and new social movements*

The most important elements we will be looking at are the types of organization [formal or informal, centralised or decentralised], medium of change [institutional action or direct action], and ideology [political focus or cultural focus]. However social movements embrace a rather complex formation and are diverse (Doyle and McEachern 2001: 61) and not all movements will fit in to this ideal classification. In addition there are debates surrounding the topic of whether the so-called NSMs are really new or not³. However this essay will not discuss this topic in depth as these lines of argument would divert us from the present theme of this essay and bring out arguments about whether new social movements really exist or not, which are beyond the scope of this essay.

In facilitating a theoretical framework of the discussion theories of "collective mobilization as rational action" (1999: 7) must be explained. This is consisted of the resource mobilization theory and the political

¹ Cotgrove and Duff would not agree to this as they believe in the emergence of a new class. See pages 11 and 12 for a brief explanation.

² The theory that new social movement involve a post-materialist value has a problem. For details please see page 12.

³ For example "D'Anieri et al (2000) argue that there are no differences between the utopian movements of the 1800s and present-day movements" (Pichardo 1997: 418).

opportunity structure model, which are built upon Weber's theory of rational action (Rhodes 2004b). According to the RM theorists social movements involve "*rational, purposeful and organized action[s]*" (della Porta and Diani 1999: 8). RM theory proposes that the channel from condition to action is depended upon the availability of resources. So the social movements would pursue their ends by managing and mobilizing resources. The opportunity structure (Tilly 1978) is also another important element, which can be classified as the political opportunity structure (POS) model. Social movements, according to the POS writers, take into consideration the cost and benefits of a given action. This is very similar to the RM theory since they both see SMs as rational actors. Therefore at the risk of over-simplification I would refer these ideas altogether as RM theory.

Social movements take actions in rational ways considering the available resources and the opportunity structures. Successful social movements are to attract and exploit available sociopolitical resources⁴ (Gamson 1990). So if the opportunity structure changes mobilization happens to alter the resource allocation. The opportunity structure generates the structural conditions which sustain social movements. So how did the state change the opportunity structure? Hays, Lowe and Flynn give a thorough explanation.

Lowe and Flynn (1989) studied the opportunity structure of environmental organisations in the late 1970s in the UK. Ms. Thatcher's administration's aim was "*to reduce oversensitivity to environmental considerations*" (Lowe and Flynn 1989: 261) and to solve environmental issues by taking a scientific approach (Yearley 1992). We will see how the state manages to achieve these two points. There are three important points worth noting from them.

⁴ This can be from funding, people, social networks to media coverage.

First, they suggest that the British environmental organisations have “*relatively easy access to government and the political system ... [which is granted] ... entirely by discretion and custom*” (1989: 270). However “*if a group is too outspoken in its criticisms or fails to show the necessary tact and discretion*” access to the government was lost (Lowe and Flynn 1989: 270). In addition, in 1979 more access channels⁵ were available (Lowe and Flynn 1989: 271-2), which “*increased opportunities for groups to promote their views and influence parliamentary opinion*” (1989: 271). Consequently the importance of access to the government amplified. So access to the government depended on the environmental groups’ capability of scientific arguments and eradication of radical actions. Scientific and managerial experts were promoted and radical direct actions were discouraged.

Second, the state funds a range of environmental groups and also promotes creating new organizations (Lowe and Flynn 1989: 272). These state interventions “*distort the objectives of environmental groups ... [since they] are obliged to seek funds for activities that government is inclined to support.*” (Lowe and Flynn 1989: 272-3). Also groups try not to offend the government by avoiding lobbying or campaigning (Lowe and Goyder 1983) which is to put the state on your side – ‘or else’ state funds would cease.

Finally environmental groups’ charitable status is lost if environmental groups get engaged in “*overt political activities*” (Lowe and Flynn 1989: 270). Charitable status is valuable as it gave part of the income (e.g. donations, membership dues) to be exempted from taxable income. This distorts environmental groups’ objectives because it discourages activities such as lobbying, whereby engaging in less political activities. It is worth nothing however that, in a sense, choosing to follow

⁵ These were the Environment Committee, the Science and Technology Committee and the European Committee (Lowe and Flynn 1989: 271-2)

the government's favourite method can be perceived as political because you are actually considering political inclinations.

The state's strategy to form SMs is not confined to the UK but also applies to the US. Hays (1987) focuses on the environmental management in the US in the 1970s. The RM theory is the basis of his argument. Due to popular pressure for legislation the "[c]ongress was subject to so many conflicting demands" that it was "a burden on the political system" (Hays 1987: 414). Consequently the public's excessive political demands needed to be dealt with. The US government decided to move the location for handling the issue to the courts and administration which resulted in "a reduction of litigation and an increase in compromise with a more confined context of debate among institutional and technical leaders than in the general public" (Hays 1987: 416). Mediation is an example of this. Disputes are mediated through neutral third parties such as Resolve. The purpose of this was to reduce "controversy and conflict" (Hays 1987: 416). An example would be when Greenpeace confronted Shell for its plan to carry out an onshore dismantling and a deep sea disposal of Brent Spar⁶, which was solved through a mediation organisation (Lise 2004a). Environmental professionals such as lawyers, biologists, chemists, or managers who emphasised "scientific and technical formats under the direction of professionals" (Hays 1987: 416) were now getting interested in mediation. National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) was founded in 1974 by them in Washington, which was an organisation originally aimed at preventing deceptive activities⁷ (Lise 2004b). An

⁶ Brent Spar was a facility used to load and store oil which stopped its operation.

⁷ Deceptive activities such as by people claiming to be environmental professionals who in fact had no experience or by companies who employed environmental professionals so as to create evidence that was favourable to the company to suit the company's interest.

interview with one of the co-founders, Norman Arnold, verified that environmental professionals' positions were primarily scientific and its aim was to look at environmental issues in a broad holistic perspective, including elements such as time, cost, technology, and consequences (Lise 2004b). So it was not exclusively focusing on the environmental issue itself. Also, environmental professionals stressed "*the desirability of resolving disputes in 'non political' ways*" (Hays 1987: 416)⁸.

In sum both Lowe and Flynn and Hays' argument claim that the state manipulates the law and take actions whereby changing the opportunity structure that shape social movements. Scientific measures were privileged and grass root activities were undervalued in both cases. New social movements, playing the game set by the state, gain financial benefits (e.g. funding) as well as better results (e.g. to have influence over decision makings). It is a game, in both the UK and the US, where environmental organisations need to compete with scientific and legal expertise because these experts are the key actors in the opportunity structure.

So according to Hays, Lowe and Flynn's argument NSMs choose to become institutionalised, professionalized, and scientised involving formal organisation to make the most of the resources and to get a fair amount of results. Let us now turn to a case study of Greenpeace (GP) which will demonstrate whether the ideas proposed by Hays, Lowe and Flynn hold true.

GP started as a radical movement (Lowe and Goyder 1983: 127) in the 1970s, which was primarily informal, decentralised, had no paid officers, and largely took direct actions. In the early days, GP drew a lot

⁸ This is reflected in one of NAEP's codes of practice – prohibiting environmental professionals to be engaged in lobbying activities (NAEP: www.naep.org). Arnold Norman states that this is essential to qualify for tax exemption. In addition to Hay's argument, we can therefore also claim that this aspect could distort experts' views and objectives as well, which perhaps was (and is) the state's intention.

of attention from the public and the politicians, owing to its high media coverage (Peter Brown from the Guardian interviewed in "Greenpeace end of an era?"). GP's undercover of Britain's radioactive waste dumping, in 1978, is an example of GP's early radical actions. GP happened to be on the sea on the way from Iceland to Spain and discovered that the UK was conducting a dump. They decided to take action. Peter Wilkinson, an ex-Director of Greenpeace UK gives a description:

"You are on this small inflatable dingy with along side a very large vessel which is doing thirteen knots ... being constantly sprayed with high pressure hoses to discourage from continuing. And above you sitting on this fragile tipping platform is a barrel ... can weigh up to 3 tons ... and of course the ship is rolling and as the ship is rolling the barrel is coming closer and closer to you. And then you've got this idiot from the UK Atomic Energy Authority screaming at you that 'This barrel is coming over and it's your funeral! We're carrying out a legitimate dump'".

(Greenpeace end of an era?).

This image of the vessel that is dumping barrels of radio active waste - the goliaths, the small boat - the Davids, and the ocean (Peter Wilkinson in "Greenpeace end of an era?") "*reached TV screens around the world*" (Greenpeace UK: <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk>). It was this simple but thrilling image that gave excitement and enthusiasm to the many viewers.

Another example of their early activities would be GP activists' attempt⁹, in 1980, to block a discharge pipe at Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant in Cumberland (Greenpeace end of an era?). GP achieved revealing a high release of radioactive water which was not warned by British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL). As a result BNFL was fined 10,000 pounds. However BNFL was granted a permanent injunction against GP and the state fined GP 50,000 pounds for contempt (Greenpeace UK: www.greenpeace.org.uk). George Pritchard, a former GP campaigner talks about this:

"The most important thing is that we win the battles for the environment. Not that you are in a secure job with your friends and colleagues ... money doesn't matter at the end of the day ... we were fined and the people throughout the country sent in their donations and we paid the fine. But we never compromised."

(Greenpeace end of an era?)

The majority of the key actors were not paid officers, but passionate activists like Grace O'Sullivan, George Pritchard or Peter Wilkinson who would literally risk anything to protect the environment (Greenpeace end of an era?). The money didn't matter so long as they won the battle.

In 1985 when the Rainbow Warrior was bombed by the French secret agent as a reaction to GP's protest against French nuclear experiment, it was clear that the state was taking GP's activities

⁹ They actually couldn't block the pipe because BNFL changed the pipe shape over night.

seriously. It was no longer a small group of people campaigning, but a serious repression target of the state.

Since then GP became under a new management. Lord Peter Melchett, the new Director, took over the organisation. "*The radicals who were controlling Greenpeace UK were persuaded to resign*" (Greenpeace end of an era?). Lord Melchett notes: "*We aim to run Greenpeace as professionally and cost effectively as we can... we want to make the most of every penny of our money we get from our supporters*" ("Greenpeace end of an era?"). The change was clear to Pritchard, who was with GP from the early years. He says "*the most important thing in the mind of the board at Greenpeace [then] was that actions didn't endanger the assets of Greenpeace*" ("Greenpeace end of an era?"). As the organisation grew, they multiplied their assets. The more assets you have, the more capital you risk by taking radical direct actions (e.g. assets being taken away due to illegal actions). Now there would be immense implications if all their assets were to be taken away (e.g. GP has the duty to pay officers or to maintain offices).

The new GP also started using stunts to carry out actions; a campaign at Sellafield nuclear plant in 1993 involved a band called U2. All they did was hang around the nuclear plant and carry out a demonstration with flags. The protest was not as radical as when GP took direct action in 1980 to block the pipe. If GP acted too radically then GP could lose support from the state, which can result in low benefit (e.g. no influence over policy) and high cost (e.g. fines). It is like a baseball game. If you already have three strikes in a baseball game then you would not swing the bat full on in your next round. In other words if you are about to cross the line, and to upset the state, then you need to back off. A campaign in Dumont Durville in the Antarctica, which was aimed at

stopping an air strip construction, another example of GP's backing (if not a sell-out) and reduced outspokenness.

The structural aspect of GP changed too – it has become bureaucratised. Grace O'Sullivan talks, with critical attitude, about the increased time spent on meetings to make decisions and David McTaggart (Ex-chairman of Greenpeace International) criticised about the amplified paper work. Both elements are characters of hierarchical organization – factors of OSMs.

Another point worth noting is Ms. Thatcher's speech in New York in 1989 at the United Nations head-quarter. She suggested that the government shall work together with environmental organisations ("Greenpeace end of an era?") This accelerated the politicisation of the organisation. People started to associate GP with political parties (Peter Brown from the Guardian in "Greenpeace end of an era?")¹⁰ and so people were becoming less interested in GP because of its loss of radical edge. Less support from the public meant fewer resources such as passionate campaigners or perhaps less networks.

From what we have seen so far, we can identify two decisive elements that triggered GP to institutionalise themselves: sequestration of assets, and government's endorsement of environmental organisations. GP chose, if not forced by the state, to transform itself into an OSM. 'Sequestration of Assets': GP is "*vulnerable to threats of legal actions by antagonists seeking financial compensation or sequestration of assets*" (Rootes 1999). This led the organization to think direct action = high cost (at least in the minds of post-1980 GP leaders). The state's manipulation of GP's assets as a

¹⁰ In the early years, as David McTaggart (Ex-chairman of Greenpeace International) noted, GP did not want to have anything to do with political parties except of lobbying politicians (Greenpeace end of an era?).

pressure/suppression point is clear. 'State's endorsement of environmental organisations': by being included in the government's arena and being supported by them, the organization was politicised (whether in favour or not of politicisation).

GP was formed into an OSM by the state as we have seen. However GP is merely one example among many others. Friends of the Earth (FoE)¹¹, founded in 1969, would be another example. We will not go into detail as I believe GP's case study suffices for the purpose of this essay. So far an empirical study of GP was used to establish RM theory's validity. The disadvantage is that the RM theory implies all NSMs follow the same route taking rational decisions (unless a SM is acting irrationally), which does not hold water in all cases. Some NSMs stay 'new'. Reclaim the Streets is an example.

Reclaim the Streets operates on an informal basis by carrying out direct actions. Their first action, as far as I could acquire from their website, was in 1995 in Camden, London. No formal organisation, no paid officers, no political ties, and no scientific researches are involved. The only organisational element may well be the website (www.reclaimthestreets.net). Reclaim the Streets transgresses and embodies alienated city-space (e.g. communal road) and invents open and non-territorial autonomous zones (e.g. street parties). The spectrum of struggles intersects around the question of the social production of space, therefore placing cultural emphasis. They embrace many of the characteristics of a NSM and none of OSM.

¹¹ It has transformed into an OSM from a NSM - they currently have formal organisation, carry out scientific researches [although at the point of foundation in 1969, FoE was already involved in scientific research (Burke in Lowe and Goyder 1983:127)], have paid officers and so on. I presume there are various causes and an example I can give would be the states' threat to confiscation FoE's asset . In a road protest in Twyford Down FoE got involved in, they withdrew after being threatened by the state to be prosecuted, which meant confiscation of assets (Barnett : Lecture Week 4). They were consequently accused of a sell-out (Rootes, Seel and Adams 2000: 9). This situation is identical to Greenpeace's case at Sellafield.

"[F]rustration at the lack of action by established groups is a recurrent theme in archivists' explanations of their allegiance to newer and looser groups committed to direct action and relatively unconstrained by considerations of legality" (Rootes 1999). Reclaim the Streets has resisted transforming itself into an OSM (at least not yet). How are we going to explain this? Clearly the RM theory does not offer an account, since RM theorists claim that all NSMs turn old. Here, the new social movement theory is useful. This perspective emerged in Europe as a challenge to the limits of Marxism (Della Porta and Diani 1999: 11) that stressed economic or class-based (rooted in the process of production) movements to the exclusion of most others. NSM theorists generally say that NSMs do not focus on issues of distribution of wealth (like the labour movements), but rather on quality of life and non-material dimensions such as rights (e.g. women's rights) and self-realization. Therefore more focus on the cultural realm than the political realm where maximising influence is the influence (Buechler 1995 in Buechler and Clyke 1997: 296). It is important however to note that there are several theories, which stress different elements, within this branch of this theory. Let us look into three different arguments.

The new middle class argument (Cotgrove and Duff 1980) claims that the new social movements are composed of a specific class of people. They found out from their research that a high proportion of environmentalists in their sample was dominated by the *"non productive service sector: doctors, social workers, teachers and the creative arts"* (Cotgrove and Duff 1980: 340) who are the marginal class in industrial capitalist society. They do not have influence over decision making nor had any core jobs that involve core activities. They called this group of people the 'new middle class'. According to Cotgrove and Duff, to overcome that fact they are not involved in wealth creation, they seek a

platform on which it can assert capability and generate power through social movements.

Another theory is the post material value argument (Inglehart 1981, Dalton and Kuechler 1990). This theory claims that "*the basic value priorities of the Western publics ... [shifted] from a Materialist emphasis toward a Postmaterialist one*" (Inglehart 1981: 880). People born after the World War Two grow up in affluent conditions, where basic needs were met. This is why people, nowadays, prioritise struggles to meet their higher-order needs, whereby dedicating more time and energy in campaigns on environmental issues (a non material issue).

Melucci provides a slightly different account. He thinks that NSMs are to be seen as a revolt against change directed from above, the state and the market, to gain personal autonomy (Della Porta and Diani 1999: 12). According to Melucci individuals' desire to reclaim "*identity and the right his or her private and affective life*" (Della Porta and Diani 1999:12-3) give rise to NSMs. Thus they do not insist on material reproduction or distribution, which old social movements like trade unions were concerned with. Rather, cultural reproduction and socialisation was important for the NSM actors.

The NSM theories can straightforwardly explain why Reclaim the Streets does not employ professional, institutional and scientific approaches like Greenpeace did, whereby being turned into an OSM by the state. For instance applying Melucci's theory we can say that Reclaim the Streets stress individual autonomy and individual lifestyle than being politically influential, they want to regain access to public roads/streets. Or perhaps the actors of Reclaim the Streets are composed of the new middle class (Cotgrove and Duff') who are marginalised from core activities and jobs and need a platform to act on.

Through a brief discussion of the NSM theories we have seen how this branch of theory generally agree that we are now seeing a new form of social movement, whereby cultural dimensions, such as identity and autonomy, are emphasised. It places an importance on the actors and also achieves to avoid defining social movements in relation to Marxism's notion of production (Della Porta 1999: 13). However there are drawbacks with the NSM theory.

First of all it neglects the importance of processes by which individuals or groups make decisions, develop strategies, and mobilise resources. The emphasis on identity and highlighting the development of social movements come at the cost of considering social movements' strategic dimensions. Second, because of its cultural emphasis, political level of discussion is neglected. Therefore connection between social movements and political reform or the state is not taken into account. It also does not have much to say about organisational dimensions of social movements like leadership or recruitment. Finally the theories introduced can be criticised simply because their research finding does not hold water. For example Inglehart's theory is dismantled by Cotgrove (1982) because the industrialists had materialist values even though they were affluent which gave rise to the correlation between affluence and environmentalism. The new middle class argument by Cotgrove and Duff is also problematic because it is simply saying that "X is a result of a certain class pursuing their interest". We need to treat these type of theories with suspicion because then we can "*claim that almost anything is 'in the interests' of an organisation class or state*" (Rhodes 2004a). This means we can even claim the opposite of what Cotgrove and Duff argue¹².

¹² Rhodes explains this pitfall introducing how it can be overturned: "*We can argue the opposite case to Cotgrove and Duffs. The New Middle Class's employment and levels of income are dependent on economic growth. It's in*

In sum the NSM theory is useful in explaining SMs in terms of cultural dimensions; therefore they are able to explain Reclaim the Streets as a NSM that does not turn old. However NSM theory is not capable of arguing with theoretical grounds that the state does not change NSMs to OSMs, since they do not take into account political and strategic dimensions of social movements. Rather NSM theorists insist of the newness of contemporary social movements meaning they would answer 'no' to the concerned question.

So far it seems, as illustrated extensively, that the RM theory provides the best theoretical grounds to say 'yes the state turn NSMs into OSMs'. However there are some pitfalls with this theory. Jenkin points out that the RM perspective that focuses on material resources, expertise support and institutional access cannot satisfactorily explain the new social movement such as middle-class and student involvements in the various movements of the 1960s that were motivated by changing cultural values in that period (Jenkins 1983: 535).

Second, "*legalization increases the costs of mobilization because it imposes additional resource requirements*" (Piven and Cloward 1991 cited in Lyman 1995: 153) such as hiring experts, renting offices or running a research laboratory. However if 'lower-stratum challengers' are to follow the same as GP they would run into serious resource deficits (Piven and Cloward 1991 cited in Lyman 1995: 154). Therefore a big question is unanswered by the RM theory – "how would the 'lower stratum challengers' find it beneficial to follow normal politics like Greenpeace?".

Furthermore Della Porta and Diani notes that "*social movements are not organizations ... [and] the two are not identical*" (1999: 16) and to use the term "*'social movement' to mean both networks of interaction*

their interests to promote massive economic growth and oppose anything that gets in the way of it." (Rhodes 2004a).

and specific organization" is too problematic (1999: 16). Pamela Oliver notes that an organisation is a decision-making entity and not a crowd or a social movement (in Della Porta 1999: 16-7). However Della Porta and Diani point out that the nature of social movement as an informal network is not taken into consideration and that we should not assume social movements as rational, decision-making entities. This means that RM theory is in trouble, because to speak of NSMs as turning into OSMs which involves an organization, is irrelevant, because of its "*obvious differences*" between organizations and informal networks (Della Porta and Diani 1999: 17).

We have now seen two theoretical arguments – the NSM theory and the RM theory. They both provide convincing theories. However as we have seen there seems to be a hole in both opponents as they have limitations to explaining certain contemporary social movements. Perhaps a well thought integration of the two or a development of a new theory that can assist clear up the cloud.

To conclude the RM theory, which is based on the preposition that SMs are rational actors, say that the state change NSMs to OSMs through methods such as asset confiscation, political endorsement, change of debate locus, or its encouragement of scientific backing. NSMs, if they were to be successful, needed to become scientised, professionalised and therefore institutionalised to gain the most from its resources. According to the RM theory the state facilitates the opportunity structure – more beneficial for SMs if employed experts and discourage political activities or radical campaigns. Our case study of Greenpeace established that the transformation hypothesis holds true. On the other hand, we saw that the NSM theory cannot account for the alterations that the state make to NSMs (turning them into OSMs) because they do take into account the cost benefit analysis processes of

NSMs and the political relation or interaction between the state and NSMs. Rather, the NSM theorists emphasise the newness of SMs. However the RM theory entailed a problem - a number of NSMs do not turn old. The example seen was Reclaim the Streets, which took only forms of a NSM. The NSM theory, which puts cultural dimensions an emphasis and insists on the emergence of new social movements effectively accounts for this type of SM. Whereas the RM theory has no adequate answer but to say they act irrationally NSM theorists have theoretical grounds to explain Reclaim the Streets (e.g. because of its new classes, new values or new struggles). In conclusion we saw that the RM theorists claim that the state changes NSMs into OSMs and that the NSM theorists insist on the newness of contemporary SMs implying that NSMs stay 'new'.

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