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Globalisation and the Challenges of Managing Cultural Diversity: From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism



ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of the article is to analyse the impact of globalisation on managing cultural diversity in organisations, considering two approaches: multiculturalism and interculturalism. The article seeks to identify the key challenges faced by organisations in a globalised world and assess which approach – multiculturalism or interculturalism – is more effective in promoting social cohesion, innovation, and competitiveness in the global market.

Methodology: The article uses a literature review and case study analysis from international corporations. It evaluates the different approaches based on available empirical research and reports.

Findings: Interculturalism is found to be more effective than multiculturalism in promoting integration and innovation. However, implementing this strategy requires appropriate resources and leadership commitment.

Value Added: The added value of the article lies in providing a comprehensive analysis of two approaches to managing cultural diversity in the context of globalisation, which is relevant for both theorists and management practitioners. The article offers new insights into the effectiveness of interculturalism as a strategy supporting organisational development in a globalised world, while also proposing practical recommendations for implementing these strategies.

Recommendations: It is recommended to develop intercultural competencies and implement policies that promote dialogue and cooperation. Organisations should prioritise diversity management as a strategy.

Key words: globalisation, cultural diversity, multiculturalism, interculturalism, diversity management, organisation

JEL codes: J11, J59, M14, M54

Introduction

The modern world is becoming increasingly globalised, reflected in the intensification of intercultural contacts, increased migration, trade and global information flows (Current World Population, 2024). Globalisation, as a dynamic and multidimensional process, brings both benefits and challenges (Wood & Wilberger, 2015). On the one hand, it enables widespread cultural exchange that leads to enriched and diverse societies, but on the other hand, it raises questions about how to maintain cultural identities in the face of global homogenisation trends (Lutz et al., 2021). In this context, the concepts of multiculturalism and interculturalism, which offer different approaches to managing cultural diversity, are key. Multiculturalism implies the coexistence of different cultural groups within one society, while promoting respect for cultural distinctiveness and equality of rights for all citizens (Parekh, 2001). This approach has gained popularity in countries such as Canada and Australia, where multicultural policies aim at social integration while preserving cultural diversity. Interculturalism, on the other hand, emphasises dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures in order to build bridges between them and promote harmonious cooperation. This approach is particularly evident in Europe, where many countries are introducing educational programmes and policies to strengthen intercultural competences (Mishra & Kumar, 2014).

However, both approaches are not free from criticism. Multiculturalism is sometimes accused of fostering cultural separatism, which can undermine social cohesion. Interculturalism, on the other hand, is sometimes seen as a form of assimilationism that can threaten unique cultural identities (Cox, 1991). The purpose of this article is to analyse the impact of globalisation on cultural diversity and to present the notion and concepts of multiculturalism and interculturalism as tools for managing this diversity in a globalised world.



Globalisation as a universal phenomenon

Globalisation is a multidimensional process that includes economic, political, social and cultural aspects. Globalisation at the economic level leads to an increasing integration of world markets, which in turn affects the migration of people, flows of capital, technology and ideas. Such integration is fostering an increase in intercultural contacts, but at the same time can lead to tensions and conflicts due to cultural differences and the phenomenon of cultural homogenisation (Brisset, 2017). According to the UN's world population projection, the population will increase from 7.3 billion to 9.7 billion in 2050. More than half of this population growth will come from Africa, where the population is projected to double to 2.5 billion people. According to a projection published in *Science*, by the end of the 21st century, there could be at least three times as many people living in Africa as there are today. The continent's population will range from 3.1 billion to as many as 5.7 billion people. Nigeria alone, which today has a population of 160 million, could have as many as 1.5 billion inhabitants (UN, 2015). Nigeria's population will overtake America as the third most populous country. Congo will reach a population of 195 million and Ethiopia 188 million. Africa in 2100 will be as densely populated as China is today. India will surpass China as the most populous country. China's population will reach 1.42 billion in 2028, while India is projected to have 1.75 billion people four decades later (UN, 2015; Gross-Golacka, 2018). In 2024, the global population will reach 8.1 billion people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, speaking different languages and following different customs, traditions and religious rules (UN, 2015). Due to global economic integration, facilitated by trade, migration and capital flows, people from different cultures interact with each other on a daily basis. Globalisation processes have a significant impact on the development of corporate culture.

Globalisation should be seen as a dialectical phenomenon of the modern era, characterised by a multiplicity of direct and indirect linkages involving international and national trade structures, nation-states and their institutions, competing formal and informal organisations, businesses

and transnational corporations (Kim & Bhawuk, 2008). The shaping of the global economy is facilitated by several factors (Mussa, 2000; Gereffi, 2005; Turner, 2010):

- Integration of financial markets;
- Information revolution (computerisation, Internet and easier access to information), enabling constant contact with partners/customers world-wide;
- Expansion of transnational corporations and foreign companies to new global locations;
- Implementing flexible working modes, including remote or hybrid working, enabling companies to adapt to the constant changes in the global economy in order to maintain their position and capture new markets;
- Increased involvement of Third World countries in international trade, as well as in investment processes and the international division of labour;
- Growing interdependence, integration and interdependence between countries.

Globalisation, an irreversible process, is becoming the driving force behind many changes at a global level, contributing to the creation of a new socio-economic structure that crosses national and cultural boundaries. The increase in interdependence and international integration makes it necessary for companies and institutions to adapt to changing market conditions, as well as to the cultural diversity of their employees and customers. Globalisation affects every aspect of life, forcing individuals and societies to constantly adapt to new realities, leading to both cultural enrichment and tensions arising from global homogenisation.



Cultural diversity – theoretical perspective

In the context of globalisation, cultural diversity becomes a field where different forces clash – on the one hand, the desire to preserve local traditions and identities, and on the other, the pressure of global trends that promote cultural uniformity.

Cultural diversity is one of the key challenges as well as riches of the modern world. In the era of globalisation, when migration processes, the development of communication technologies and the intensification of trade contribute to the growth of intercultural contacts, this issue assumes particular importance (Nawaz et al., 2023). One of the key aspects of cultural globalisation has been and continues to be the spread of Western cultural patterns, which is sometimes referred to as the ‘westernization’ or ‘Americanisation’ of global culture. This process, however, is not a one-way process and does not just lead to homogenisation. It is also often a catalyst for the revival and promotion of cultural diversity (Balogun & Aruoture, 2024). Local traditions and languages can gain importance as symbols of identity in the face of global influences. Globalisation is also leading to the rise of popular culture from non-Western countries, for example, such as K-pop from South Korea (Park, 2020) or Bollywood from India (Eriksen, 2020), which are gaining popularity on international markets. In many cases, globalisation enables smaller cultures to reach a wider audience, for example through social media, which allows local cultural content to be disseminated globally. Cultural diversity in the context of globalisation also poses a challenge for public policies. Countries need to strike a balance between integrating immigrants and protecting local traditions and languages. Many countries are introducing multicultural policies that aim to promote a balance between different cultural groups while avoiding social conflict.

This phenomenon thus shows that globalisation not only homogenises but also enables cultural diversity on a new scale, creating space for intercultural dialogue and cultural exchange. In sum, globalisation both supports and threatens cultural diversity. On the one hand, it enables the mutual enrichment of cultures, while on the other hand, it can lead to the erosion of local identities

in favour of global patterns. In the face of these challenges, it becomes crucial to promote intercultural dialogue and create policies that support diversity in a globalising world (Paunova, 2020).

Multiculturalism vs. interculturalism

Globalisation, while on the one hand helping to bring people from different corners of the world closer together, on the other hand raises questions about the preservation of cultural identities and the possibilities for diverse cultures to coexist harmoniously within a single global village. In this context, two approaches are emerging: multiculturalism and interculturalism, which offer different ways of managing cultural diversity. Consequently, globalisation raises the question of how societies manage this new, complex cultural reality.

Historically, multiculturalism has been regarded as a positive approach to recognising and institutionalising ethnic diversity, particularly in English-speaking countries and some Western European countries. Multiculturalism was one such policy framework adopted in traditionally immigrant countries such as Canada, Australia, the UK and the USA (Freeman, 2004). Although it has not always enjoyed full support, it has often been regarded as a forward-looking path of social development. However, since the late 1990s, and especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, multiculturalism has come under increasing criticism. This criticism was both intellectual and political in nature, with the dominant emphasis on the political aspects gaining the most visibility. In response to this changing mood, some critics have begun to call for the abandonment of talk of ‘differences’ as a central aspect of diversity management. Instead, they propose an alternative approach that offers a new way of thinking about and managing diversity – interculturalism. This approach involves not only recognising cultural differences, but also actively promoting dialogue and mutual understanding between different ethnic groups. Interculturalism is gaining prominence as a response



to the inadequacies of multiculturalism, which some argue has not always fostered genuine intercultural integration and understanding (Joppke, 2018). Instead of passive acceptance of diversity, interculturalism promotes active interaction and cooperation between different cultures, leading to deeper integration and mutual enrichment (Antonsich, 2016; Cantele, 2012; Modood, 2021). On the other hand, interculturalism emphasises dialogue and mutual understanding between different cultures, aiming to build bridges between them and develop common ground. This approach is particularly evident in the educational policies and programmes of many European countries, where cultural cooperation and exchange are promoted as a way of addressing cultural conflicts.

The intercultural approach is, therefore, not a new concept. In fact, it emerged well before current discussions on diversity management. The term 'intercultural' itself was in use long before the concept was introduced in its modern, European form, which gained wide recognition in Western research some two decades ago (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). The European version of the intercultural approach places particular emphasis on the importance of contact and exchange at the micro level, i.e. between citizens and different groups within civil society (Levräu & Loobuyck, 2018). Interculturalism, as a theoretical framework, emerged in response to the challenges and limitations perceived in earlier approaches to managing cultural diversity, particularly in the context of multiculturalism. While multiculturalism focused on the coexistence of different cultural groups in one society, often emphasising the preservation of separate identities, interculturalism promotes active engagement, dialogue and exchange between these groups. The aim is not only to coexist, but also to develop mutual understanding, respect and enrichment through continuous interaction (Cantele, 2012). Central to interculturalism is an emphasis on contact and communication at the micro level, involving citizens and different groups within civil society. This approach suggests that through everyday interactions, shared experiences and joint activities, different cultural groups can better understand the values, traditions and perspectives of others. This process not only strengthens social cohesion, but also contributes to a more inclusive and dynamic society (Levräu & Loobuyck, 2018). In

academic discourse, interculturalism is often juxtaposed with multiculturalism, emphasising its proactive stance towards cultural integration (Joppke, 2018). While multiculturalism has been criticised for fostering the creation of parallel societies, interculturalism encourages the breaking down of cultural barriers through purposeful and continuous interaction (Meer & Modood, 2012). This approach assumes that meaningful intercultural dialogue can lead to the internalisation of shared values and norms, which fosters a more harmonious and resilient social fabric. As societies become more diverse, the importance of interculturalism grows, offering a framework for managing diversity that goes beyond mere tolerance and strives for a more integrated and engaged community (Elias & Mansouri, 2020).

In light of the above, multiculturalism describes a situation in which different cultures coexist but rarely interact with each other. Interculturalism, on the other hand, refers to a scenario in which interactions between cultures are sustained, open and regular. It is important for organisations to strive to promote interculturalism, which fosters positive relationships between cultural groups, active emotional engagement and social integration (Mróz, 2012). However, both approaches are not without controversy and challenges. Multiculturalism is sometimes criticised for leading to cultural separatism and weakening social cohesion, while interculturalism can be seen as a form of assimilation that threatens unique cultural identities. In the context of globalisation, where national boundaries are losing meaning and cultures are increasingly intermingling, questions about how best to manage cultural diversity become particularly relevant. As a result, personal and business relationships, political or cultural dialogues and all forms of cooperation require awareness of one's own culture as well as the cultures of others. Such interactions can generate not only gains and growth, but also present certain challenges that need to be considered and overcome. Intercultural communication in the workplace is one of the biggest challenges for diversity management in globalised organisations. Therefore, it is useful to see how globalisation affects corporate culture in a multicultural team. The table below compares multiculturalism and interculturalism in the context of managing a diverse team.



Table 1. Differences between multiculturalism and interculturalism

Comparison category	Multiculturalism	Interculturalism
Interaction between cultures	Occurs rarely	Sustained, open, regular
Foreign cultures (groups)	Passively tolerated, rarely appreciated or accepted	Full tolerance, good relations are valued
Attitude to diversity	Perceived as a threat, justifies discrimination	Seen as a catalyst for social, political and economic development
Emotional commitment	Negative	Positive
Mutual contacts	Forced	Frequent, cooperative efforts
Social relations	From the perspective of the groups	From the perspective of both groups and individuals
Dominant trends	Insulation	Integration
Conflict resolution	Struggle and subordination	Negotiation and compromise

Source: Mróz, 2012, p. 316.

Managing diversity in such a globalised world is also key in virtually every company operating internationally. Modern companies with employees of different nationalities and cultures must learn to embrace different ways of thinking and show respect for diversity in order to build harmonious relationships between employees and to realise their potential.

Multicultural human resources management

In managing multicultural human resources, understanding and effectively managing cultural diversity is key. Differences in culture, communication styles, values and approaches to work can present both challenges and opportunities for organisations. The table below outlines the main aspects of multicultural human resource management with examples of challenges and recommended strategies.

Table 2. Challenges for interculturalism and multiculturalism

Management aspect	Challenges	Strategies
Communication	Language barriers, differences in communication styles, e.g. direct vs. indirect communication.	Training in intercultural competence, promoting open communication.
Cultural values and norms	Differences in hierarchy, approach to time, individualism vs. collectivism.	Adaptation of management styles, flexibility in approach to norms and values.
Conflict resolution	Misunderstanding of cultural differences can lead to conflicts within the team.	Cultural mediation, conflict resolution training.
Talent management	Difficulties in attracting and retaining talent from different cultures.	Introduction of mentoring programmes, diverse career development programmes.
Integration and Social Inclusion	Potential exclusion of workers from cultural minorities.	Creating an inclusive organisational culture, equality and diversity policy.

Source: Gross-Golacka, 2024; Gross-Golacka, 2018.

In today's globalised business environment, the management of multicultural teams is, therefore, becoming an integral part of the functioning of multinational organisations. In this context, strategies that enable the effective integration of employees from different cultural backgrounds and minimise the risk of conflicts arising from differences in values, norms and communication styles is key. The first area that requires special attention is communication. In global companies, teams often consist of employees speaking different languages, which can lead to misunderstandings and disruptions to effective collaboration. To counter these problems, organisations are implementing strategies that include the introduction of common working languages. The most common is English, which is recognised as the international standard for business communication. In addition, offering intercultural communication training is becoming an increasingly common practice that aims not only to improve language skills, but also to increase awareness of cultural differences, resulting in a more effective management of teams. Managing talent in a multicultural environment is another challenge that requires



appropriate strategies. Organisations that effectively manage cultural diversity often introduce mentoring programmes. As part of these programmes, more experienced employees who are familiar with the organisational culture support new team members in adapting to the new work environment. These programmes are particularly valuable when new employees come from other countries and have to adapt not only to their new job responsibilities, but also to a different cultural environment. Another, but equally important, aspect of multicultural human resource management is inclusion and integration. Promoting an inclusive culture can include the implementation of policies that ensure equal access to promotion opportunities and that eliminate barriers related to cultural differences (Gross-Gołacka, 2024). In practice, this means implementing policies that eliminate barriers related to cultural differences and promote equality in the workplace. Such policies may include, *inter alia*, transparent recruitment processes, support programmes for employees from minority groups and initiatives to increase diversity in management positions.

The 2020 pandemic also brought changes in business strategies for employee diversity. The new corporate culture during the pandemic required greater investment in employee health and wellbeing (Gilshan, 2020). The pandemic presented an opportunity to re-evaluate corporate values, creating conditions in which companies had to reassess their perspectives on the mental and physical health of their employees (Lorezno & Sibillo, 2020). Interestingly, in individualistic cultures, more attention was paid to the values transmitted by companies than in collectivistic cultures. In individualistic cultures, people were more focused on themselves and their own values than on social and team values. The pandemic has positively influenced these countries to be more concerned with ethical practices regarding the wellbeing of each team member as a whole (Kaczmarek et al., 2021). Implementing a code of ethics as a tool to manage relationships in multicultural teams is an effective solution to support employee diversity and inclusion (Moon & Williams, 2000). A case study of seven multinational companies conducted by H. Asshidi and A. Bartel-Radic in 2017 showed that systematic ethics training for all employees helps to overcome cultural barriers to a certain extent, as the

common principles of the corporate culture apply throughout the organisation. The study also showed that employee support is key in the smooth running of the organisation and adherence to ethical principles. Collecting feedback from both local and expatriate employees can help managers improve corporate culture and better address the concerns of employees from different cultures (Asshidi & Bartel-Radic, 2017).

Challenges for intercultural and multicultural human resources management

Globalisation, as a process that brings together people and cultures from different parts of the world, introduces new challenges for diversity management in organisations. In the context of globalisation, intercultural and multicultural management becomes crucial to achieving success in diverse teams. Organisations must not only deal with cultural differences, but also integrate them in a way that promotes efficiency and innovation (Mróz, 2012). Intercultural management requires the active promotion of dialogue and cooperation between cultures, which becomes particularly important in a global environment. Multicultural management, on the other hand, prioritises the preservation of cultural distinctiveness, which can be challenging in a rapidly changing global marketplace. Managing diversity in such a globalised world also is key in virtually every company operating internationally. Modern companies with employees of different nationalities and cultures must learn to embrace different ways of thinking and show respect for diversity in order to build harmonious relationships between employees and to realise their potential.

Table 3. Challenges for interculturalism and multiculturalism

Aspect	Intercultural Management	Multicultural governance
Communication	The need to develop intercultural communication skills and to resolve potential misunderstandings arising from cultural differences.	Provide multilingual communication to enable understanding between different groups.
Integration of employees	The challenge is to create a cohesive team while respecting cultural differences and promoting shared values.	Striking a balance between supporting cultural distinctiveness and integration within the overall organisational culture.
Conflict resolution	Managing conflicts that may arise from cultural misunderstandings requires active dialogue and mediation.	Avoiding conflict by creating a space where different cultures can function in parallel without much interaction.
Employee involvement	Motivating employees to engage in intercultural initiatives and integration with other cultural groups.	Keeping employees engaged while respecting their cultural distinctiveness and traditions.
Company policy	Implement policies that promote cooperation and intercultural dialogue, which may require changes to the organisational structure.	Ensure that company policies respect diversity but do not force integration or changes in separate cultural identities.
Shaping organisational culture	The challenge of building a shared organisational culture that is both inclusive and open to diversity.	Creating an organisational culture that allows different cultures to coexist without imposing common values.
Training and development	Need for regular training in intercultural competences and development of skills to work together in a diverse environment.	Organising training that increases cultural awareness but does not necessarily promote intercultural integration.

Source: own elaboration based on Porter, 2020; Paresashvili, Okruashvili, 2021.

The table outlines the key challenges that organisations managing diversity may face in an intercultural and multicultural approach. Intercultural management requires actively promoting dialogue and cooperation between cultures, which may involve difficulties in integration and communication. Multicultural management, on the other hand, challenges maintaining a balance between respecting diversity and creating a cohesive organisational culture.

Globalisation, multicultural teams in organisations

In the age of globalisation, when organisations operate on an international scale, the social and environmental consequences of corporate activities take on crucial importance. The evolution of corporate culture is becoming an integral part of business strategies, especially in the context of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Not only do contemporary companies recognise the need for ethical behaviour and responsibility towards society, but they are also increasingly integrating these values into their day-to-day operations and growth strategy. CSR, understood as the voluntary integration of social, economic and environmental interests into a company's activities, is a response to growing stakeholder expectations and changing market conditions (Gerland et al., 2014).

Companies have begun to view CSR not only as a tool to build a positive external image, but also as a key element in attracting and retaining talent within the organisation. Today's employees increasingly expect their employers to represent values that are in line with their own beliefs, which influences their commitment and loyalty to the company. In this context, multiculturalism and social inclusion are becoming important elements of CSR strategies to build an inclusive working environment that promotes diversity and supports the development of all employees. The social and environmental consequences of globalisation are significantly influencing the evolution of corporate culture. Large companies feel the need to build social responsibility strategies that include all key business stakeholders and promote ethical business conduct. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the voluntary integration of society's interests into a company's activities. A socially responsible company acts in accordance with the principles of social responsibility and implements comprehensive programmes with social, economic and environmental outreach. Such activities are systemic, linked to the company's mission and business development strategy and aim to meet the needs of the company's stakeholders.

CSR has become part of a larger organisational strategy to attract and retain talent and compete in the marketplace. Traditionally, organisations implemented CSR as a way to build a positive image in the eyes of customers, but



over time companies have begun to target CSR strategies at their own employees. Kelman, for example, found that psychological employee engagement has three dimensions: compliance, identification and internalisation (Kelman, 1958):

1. Compliance means that the employee adopts certain attitudes and behaviours in order to receive rewards;
2. Identification occurs when an employee feels proud to be part of a group and respects its values and achievements, without necessarily adopting them as their own;
3. Internalisation occurs when the values of the employee and the organisation are completely compatible.

Today's employees want to work for organisations whose values resonate with their own. In this context, multiculturalism and social inclusion within CSR are becoming important elements of a company's strategy (Starostka-Patyk et al., 2015). Deutsche Post DHL, for example, promotes employee diversity and inclusion as part of its CSR activities. DHL employs people of different genders, ages, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Harnessing the potential of diversity and promoting inclusion in the workplace is one of the main tasks of the company's diversity management. The cultural diversity of DHL's employees reflects the diversity of its customers, suppliers and investors.

Another example is the corporation Danone, which seeks to provide employees with the opportunity to 'be themselves'. As of Danone (2018) has introduced an international HR organisation that represents and implements a coherent strategy to manage diversity, change and talent development (DeLancey, 2013). From 2021, the implementation of the diversity and inclusion strategy is sponsored by members of the brand's Executive Committee (Danone, 2021). According to R. DeLancey's study on multiculturalism and workforce diversity, 77.44% of 173 respondents indicated that team multiculturalism contributes to increased motivation and engagement at work. Furthermore, diversity and multiculturalism are seen as assets that enhance survival and competitiveness in an era of economic globalisation (Giddens, 2006). Respondents also emphasised that the presence of multiple cultures in a company is a positive development that promotes openness, tolerance and enriches employees.

Conclusions

Globalisation has introduced new challenges and opportunities in managing cultural diversity in organisations. As the world becomes more globalised, the importance of effectively managing multicultural teams is increasing, becoming a key element of organisational strategies. Multiculturalism and interculturalism offer different approaches to managing this diversity – the former focuses on maintaining cultural distinctiveness, while the latter promotes active dialogue and intercultural integration. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, but in a complex and dynamically changing global world, the intercultural approach, which focuses on cooperation and mutual enrichment of cultures, seems to be more effective.

At the same time, organisations need to be aware of the risks of both over-homogenisation and over-attachment to cultural differences. The key challenge remains to strike a balance between these two approaches in order to maximise the benefits of diversity while minimising potential tensions and conflicts.

Faced with these challenges, it is essential to develop intercultural competencies among managers and employees, as well as to introduce policies that promote inclusivity and openness to diversity. Well-managed cultural diversity can become a source of innovation, creativity and competitiveness, which is particularly important in a global business environment. As such, the future of diversity management will largely depend on the ability of organisations to adapt and implement strategies that combine the best elements of both approaches - multiculturalism and interculturalism – in a way that fosters harmonious coexistence and mutual growth.

Considering the above factors, it can be deduced that intercultural communication is practically inevitable today. In the current environment, organisational management must adapt corporate culture to dynamic changes. This places the cultural element among the key factors promoting the development of the economy and society. Each organisation chooses how to manage cultural differences. For example, cultural differences can be ignored, minimised or exploited. In small companies operating only in the local market, foreign



partners are often expected to adapt to their culture. In contrast, for large companies or those operating internationally, knowledge of the cultures of the countries with which they work is essential. The same applies to companies employing people from different cultural, religious and ideological backgrounds. Ignoring or minimising cultural differences in multinational companies will result in increased tension and conflict in the workplace, which in turn can reduce motivation levels and negatively affect productivity. Therefore, during the process of shaping organisational culture, it is advisable to foster a positive image of the organisation as open and tolerant towards other cultures. In addition, managers should encourage the integration of people from different cultures and use simple language so that communication can be understood by all members of the team, creating an intercultural team in which different cultures are integrated and work towards common goals.

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