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Research on Impact Mechanism and Power System of Urbanization in West China

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Abstract Based on the current situation of urbanization development in West China, this paper analyses main factors responsible for sluggish urbanization in West China as follows: impact of environment factor, impact of population quality and quantity, lagging of public product service, stagnancy of technological development, backwardness of slow growth, and rigidity of system building. And then this paper analyses the restriction mechanism of urbanization in West China; at the superficial level, the constraints of urbanization in West China arise from the shortage of capital; at the profound level, the backward culture contributes to the constraints of urbanization in West China. The thread of resolving restriction mechanism of urbanization in West China is put forward from system, economy and culture. On the basis of this thread, we construct the power system for the development of urbanization in West China. The power system for urbanization in West China should be propelled by "four forces", namely, pull of external forces, cohesive strength of regional market environment, expansion power inside countryside, traction of industrial structure adjustment. Innovation is the engine of impetus for urbanization in West China; spatial clustering and modernization of industry is the major driving force for urbanization; the government behaviour, driving of foreign investment, great projects and other forces are supplementary power. Via the main power, we should take the market as medium to achieve the role of power in promoting urbanization.

Key words West China, Urbanization, Restriction mechanism, Power system, China

Under the condition of maintaining rapid economic growth and properly confronting increasingly severe domestic and international development environment, urbanization is not only the main task and focus of development in West China, but also an important means and condition for expanding domestic demand and stimulating economic growth^[1]. At the same time, urbanization is a social and economic phenomenon affected by economic factors, and system factors and socio-cultural factors have a profound impact on urbanization, thus the power mechanism of urbanization is complex^[2-4]. The research on impact mechanism and power system of urbanization in West China can make us accurately grasp the law of regional development, and guide the development of urbanization in West China. By sorting and analysis of realities, experience and lessons of the development of West China, coupled with characteristics of the times and task of urbanization development in West China at present, we systematically summarize the related factors influencing the development of urbanization in West China, initially build the power system for promoting the development of urbanization, and formulate it, in order to make beneficial exploration and contribution to follow-up research and development of academic disciplines.

1 Definition of range and overview of urbanization in West China

With implementation of the large-scale development strategy for the western region, by formulating the Eleventh Five-

Year Plan, it has formed the zoning pattern of "four blocks". West China includes 12 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions (Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Inner



Fig. 1 Range definition of East, Central, West and North-east China

Mongolia) (Fig. 1). Taking division of "four blocks" as the fundamental basis, we refer to relevant stipulations of China's administrative divisions and economic zoning, coupled with specific spatio-temporal category pertaining to this study, and determine that West China researched in this paper still use conceptual scope of 12 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions of West China. The land area of West China is about 5.45 million km², accounting for 56.78% of China's land area. As of 2007, there was a total population of about 365.054 million in West China. The major statistical results of indicators

concerning urbanization of West China in 2007 can be seen in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the average urbanization rate of West China is about 36.64%; the urbanization rate of Inner Mongolia is the highest, reaching 50.20%; the urbanization rate of Tibet is the lowest, only 19.90%. Gross domestic product is about 4745.464 billion yuan, accounting for 19.25% of gross domestic product of China.

West China is located in the border areas, with poor natu-

ral conditions, weak economic foundation, and backward concept of development, resulting in increasing marginalization of economic growth, social development, status and ideas in West China, showing prominent marginal spatial characteristics-ecological conservation area, backward socio-economic area, and border trade area, with clear characteristics of clear heterogeneity, association, commonality, intermediary, front edge, hierarchy, *etc*^[5].

Table 1 Statistics of main indicators regarding urbanization of West China in 2007

Provinces (cities and autonomous regions)		Population			GDP	
		Total population × 10 ⁴ people	Urban population × 10 ⁴ people	Urbanization rate // %	Total value × 10 ⁸ yuan	Share in China's GDP // %
Inner Mongolia		2 405.06	1 206.14	50.20	6 018.81	2.44
Northwest China	The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region	2 095.19	820.27	39.20	3 494.42	1.42
	Gansu Province	2 617.16	826.76	31.59	2 699.20	1.09
	Shannxi Province	3 748.00	1 522.44	40.60	5 369.85	2.18
	The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region	603.73*	191.00*	31.64*	834.16	0.34
	Qinghai Province	551.60	2 21.02	40.07	760.96	0.31
Southwest China	Sichuan Province	8 127.00	2 893.2	35.60	10 505.3	4.26
	Chongqing City	2 816.0	1 361.35	48.30	41 11.82	1.67
	Guizhou Province	3 975.48	1 122.68	28.20	2 710.28	1.10
	Yunnan Province	4 514.00	1 426.4	31.60	4 721.77	1.91
	The Tibet Autonomous Region	284.15	56.55	19.90	342.19	0.14
The Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region		4 768.00	1 728.00	36.24	5 885.88	2.39
Total (average)		36 505.37	13 375.81	36.64	47 454.64	19.25

Note: Data are from 12 provinces, cities and regions in West China, *Statistical Communique on China's National Economy and Social Development* in 2007, *Statistical Yearbook of China's Cities* in 2007; * are the data in 2005.

2 The main factors responsible for sluggish urbanization in West China

2.1 Impact of environment factor The process of urbanization is the process of human increasingly tapping and developing natural resources. Whether this kind of development and utilization is rational or not, is closely related to the ecological environment. The impact of environmental factor on the development of urbanization in West China has the following characteristics. First, the environmental problems brought by the development of urbanization in rural areas of West China show strong nature of lagging. Only after a very long time can the major ecological impact loom in the process of development, thereby affecting the development of towns and delaying the process of urbanization. Second, the development of urbanization in rural areas of West China can break through carrying capacity of the environment, it is possible to form a daunting vicious cycle. A large number of rural residents swarming into towns, in conjunction with objective contradiction and conflict between cities with disorderly development and relatively limited environmental carrying capacity, will inevitably affect the development of urbanization in rural areas of West China if handling improperly.

2.2 Impact of population quality and quantity In West China, the backwardness of economy and lagging of urbanization interact and mutually restrict each other, but the reason of backwardness lies in low quality of the population. The major manifestation of low quality of population in West China is as follows: the level of technology and culture; the decision-making ability is not strong; the level of management is not high. Taking the population and the educational level of labour forces

as an example, the ratio of illiterates and semi-illiterates to people who are aged 15 and above in West China is 2 times that in East China or Central China; the proportion of students in college and university, technical secondary school, secondary school, and vocational school is lower than 18%. Consequently, a large number of surplus labour forces need to be transferred into small towns and big cities, while the low quality and lack of absorptive capacity of urban population, make it difficult to achieve such transfer, which becomes an important factor considered when working out the urbanization strategy in rural areas of West China.

2.3 Lagging of public product service Affected by historical factor, national development strategies, regional development conditions and other factors, the development of transportation, science, education, culture and sanitation in the regions of West China lags behind to much extent, which largely limits the economic and social development and progress in the region. The overall development of West China is still in a state of closeness and backwardness, needing to further accelerate the pace of progress.

2.4 Stagnancy of technological development The West China is in a period of transformation from traditional agriculture to modern agriculture. Since the West China has stepped into civilization for not a long period and the traditional agriculture is the majority, the level of production technology is extremely low, and it is the extensive growth of agriculture. Meanwhile, considerable enterprises in West China, especially large and medium-sized enterprises, are equipped with technology at intermediate and primary level in the same period, and these technologies rarely play a leading role in China. The role of city

is limited in regions, resulting in internal differences.

2.5 Backwardness and slow growth China divides the process of economic development into the eastern region, the central region and the western region, respectively in high-gradient zone, medium-gradient zone and low-gradient zone. The "highness" of high-gradient zone lies in its high degree of industrial structure and technology structure, and the high-gradient zone is in a period of continuously updated process of innovation and development, the core of which is to keep a kind of innovative activity; the "lowness" of low-gradient zone lies in its low degree of industrial structure and technology structure, the key of which is lack of vitality of promoting the structure. The technology transfer has obvious characteristics of moving from the central area to the city belt, and then to the vast backward area. This gradual process can not reverse the situation of vast backward regions, resulting in "vicious cycle of poverty" that backwardness leads to poverty, poverty leads to further poverty.

2.6 Rigidity of system building Most of the policies, laws and regulations guiding the economic development in West China are basically the intact issuing and piracy of the central, and provincial policies. In addition, it is devoid of formal systems formulated by provincial, municipal and county governments on the basis of local economic development, thus the actual work appears to be too macro, with not strong operability. And many systems are mere formality, fueling the formalism and bureaucracy.

3 Analysis of the restriction mechanism of urbanization in West China

3.1 The restriction mechanism of urbanization in West China

3.1.1 At the superficial level, the constraints of urbanization in West China arise from the shortage of capital.

3.1.1.1 Dearth of material capital stock directly influences the urbanization process and leads to unsustainable development of urbanization. On the one hand, the lack of capital makes the urban construction including the building of urban public infrastructure seriously lag behind, therefore, the capacity of city absorbing population is extremely restricted. On the other hand, the shortage of means of production as capital, leads to poverty and backwardness in rural areas. In the case of a large number of farmers swarming into the city, the consumption level per capita will decline significantly, making it difficult to achieve long-term healthy development of urbanization.

3.1.1.2 Shortage of human capital brings down the people's quality as the main body of supporting urbanization, impeding further development of urbanization. The population is the main body of urbanization development, and population quality, especially the stock of human capital will directly play a positive role or sluggish role in the process of urbanization. West China is the region with the least stock of human capital in China, and this status quo has caused structural shortage of population in further development of urbanization, that is, there is a shortage of high-quality personnel to adapt to the need of urban development.

3.1.1.3 Insufficient social capital stock will affect the urbanization

process of West China. In terms of work of information exchange, information network building and other aspects with the central government, the cities in West China lag far behind the similar cities in eastern and central regions. The existing groups on behalf of urban interests in West China not only have a relatively small number, but also has little say and insufficient influence, so that the stock and structure of human capital in West China show relatively simplification trend, affecting assembling and utilization of materials needed by urbanization of West China, and formulation and implementation of policies and systems concerning urbanization in West China.

3.1.2 At the profound level, the backward culture contributes to the constraints of urbanization in West China.

3.1.2.1 "Corn Culture" in West China is extremely powerful, easily pitting itself against the urban culture. The traditional culture of West China lasting for thousands of years is rooted in the culture of agriculture. This traditional culture which is called "Corn Culture" by Mr. Fei Xiaotong, is based on kinship and social custom. Thus the traditional ideas of family and clan are very stubborn, which have sheltered small peasant economy, excluded modern urban lifestyle and become a great obstacle to large-scale modernization production.

3.1.2.2 Lack of modern culture in West China will hamper the development of urbanization. Currently, the typical modern urban culture has not taken shape in the cities of West China. On the one hand, as unit person, the original inhabitants in the city have long been dependent upon the work unit, difficult to have basic conditions of independent urban residents. On the other hand, in the context of too powerful agricultural civilization in the West China, the geographical residential location of new urban residents changes, but it lags behind in terms of psychology, culture and lifestyle.

3.2 The thread of resolving restriction mechanism of urbanization in West China

3.2.1 System level: preferential supply and favorable system is the basic prerequisite for great development of urbanization in West China. First, the reform of old system will help the urbanization process in West China. The reform of old financial system, resources and population binding mechanism will clear the way for further development of urbanization. Second, the preferential supply of new system provides formal guarantee at system level for urbanization process. By making and implementation of system with the color of preference, it will ensure that limited resources flow into West China, directly reversing distinct disadvantage of cities in the political and economic distribution. It should activate the potential of official on behalf of economic interests of West China, civil social organizations and communication networks in West China, and channel the remaining resources in other areas into West China, so as to make it become the power source of urbanization in West China.

3.2.2 Economic level: late-development advantage and pull becomes the direct momentum for the development of industrialization and urbanization in West China. The urban development in West China is a typical late-developed urban model, with certain advantages. First, in the process of urbanization in

West China, it abounds in urbanization experience of East China, Central China and foreign countries as reference and lesson, which can avoid detours, and save unnecessary material cost and opportunity costs. Second, in the capital market, the remaining capital flows into West China. Meanwhile, it can introduce advanced technology, to improve the technology base for urbanization power of the region. Again, the economic orientation of the common regional development becomes the direct stimulation power for urbanization process.

3.2.3 Cultural level: the incentive mechanism of transforming frustrated pressure into momentum is the deep-rooted momentum for the development of urbanization in West China. In terms of number, size and structure of cities, level and quality of urbanization, exertion of urban function in West China, it shows clear backward trend, and this state of lagging is reflected in social culture, that is, the local governments and the masses in cities of West China show anxiety, frustration, and sense of loss in development concept of city and social psychology. This negative social psychology, in the context of implementation of the key state support policies, can be converted to internal drive power, which can be extremely beneficial to the urbanization process of West China, provide good social and cultural atmosphere, and be as the impetus for the development of urbanization.

4 Construction of power system of urbanization in West China

4.1 Power factors of urbanization in West China In terms of power problem of urbanization development, it should not just blindly rely on the government power, namely a kind of top-down political push power. More importantly, it should have the adaptation to industrialization and modernization process, and a kind of resulting systematic power mechanism released^[6]. The power system of urbanization in West China should be driven by "four forces". The so-called "four forces" are pull of external forces, cohesive strength of regional market environment, expansion power inside countryside, traction of industrial structure adjustment.

4.1.1 Pull of external forces. The endogenous strength of urbanization in West China is at the stage of formation and gestation, and the spontaneous power appears inadequate. Therefore, the acceleration of urbanization construction needs the pull of external forces, namely the support of the central government policy and the inflow of external factors. The preferential regional economic policy in China is a major factor affecting the urbanization in West China at any moment. With the process of globalization, West China's opening-up to domestic regions and foreign countries will enter a new stage of development. Participating in international and domestic division of labour through comparative advantage, attracting inflow of external factors, and integrating rich natural resources within the region and labour forces, will form pull of external forces.

4.1.2 Cohesive strength of regional market environment. The key of role of exogenous forces is to break low-level equilibrium within the region, and activate the internal factors within the re-

gion by the injection of external forces, in order to create conditions for the formation of endogenous forces. Endogenous forces are mainly reflected in the capacity of regional market in combining, optimizing and allocating various factors, namely the vitality of market, which is just what the West China lacks. In order to enhance the cohesion of the market environment, the local government is first required to change its functions, and the core of this change is that the local government changes from the power subject of urbanization to the power subject creating conditions for the market development and operation, fostering the urbanization, which gradually reduces the market substitution of the local government and the inhibition on the market.

4.1.3 Expansion power inside countryside. Within the rural areas of West China, there is strong expansion of urbanization. On the one hand, the existence of a large number of rural surplus labour forces and the rapid growth, are beyond the effective carrying capacity of arable land; on the other hand, the gap between urban and rural areas, especially the widening income gap, stimulates the labour forces to flow into non-agricultural industries and urban areas. However, due to existence of a large number of unemployed people, transforming this impulse into real push of urbanization can not be completely achieved through the expansion of modern urban sectors, and we have to strive to promote the rural non-agricultural construction and small town construction, so as to achieve convergence and integration of urban and rural economy in development.

4.1.4 Traction of industrial structure adjustment. The typical "unlimited supply of labour forces" exists in West China, and the rural labour forces have strong urge to go to city. In recent years, because of feebleness of industry and structural deviation, the demand of non-agricultural industries for labour forces abates, inhibiting the process of urbanization. In the rapid development stage of urbanization, the traditional industrialization is no longer the main driving force, and the tertiary industry replaces the secondary industry to become the major driving force of urbanization, because the new industries represented by the tertiary industry, especially the service industry, absorb more rural surplus labour forces, and promote the rapid development of urbanization^[7]. For the time being, the traditional industries in West China are mired in predicament, thus it is necessary to further orientate technology and industry option for industrial development, that is, follow the principle of comparative advantage, and participate in market competition according to the conditions of factor endowments.

4.2 System construction An important manifestation of urbanization is the rural population transforming into urban population and the agricultural labour forces transforming into non-agricultural labour forces. It is required to have high agricultural productivity to produce agricultural surplus labour forces, in order to provide possibility for migration and transformation of population. Based on this analysis, in view of high-class modern industrial structure and emergence of a large number of emerging industries, the spatial aggregation of industries and modernization is the major driving force for urbanization, and

there is no need to have the force to promote urbanization via any other media.

In addition to the role of the major driving force, urbanization is also driven by many other forces, and these forces are classified as the supplementary power of urbanization-achieve the role of the major driving force in promoting urbanization via the market as medium. The main way to break through the current binding mechanism of urbanization is innovation, and only through the power engine of innovation can the urbanization in West China enter into the normal power track. Therefore, we can make a framework of power system of urbanization in West China (Fig.2)^[8].

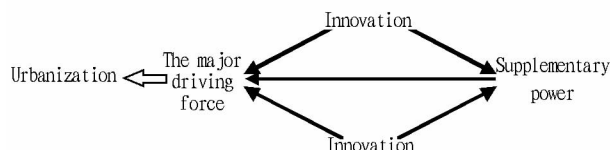


Fig.2 Power system of urbanization in West China

4.2.1 Innovation is the engine of impetus for urbanization in West China. West China's long-established top-down urbanization weakens the role of major driving force and supplementary power system. To strengthen this role, so that the urbanization power is brought into full play, we must rely on innovation, and incorporate urbanization in West China into integrated bottom-up urbanization track. At present, the innovation urgently needed in West China mainly includes system innovation and technology innovation. Under the traditional system, China's low-level urbanization is mainly controlled by top-down system arrangement of the central government. Nowadays, with rapid process of urbanization in China, we need to carry out a series of system innovation, specifically including the employment system, the household registration system, land transfer mechanism social security system and so on. In addition, the innovation of the administrative system includes the establishment of local functional framework under the conditions of market economy, and establishment of standardized financial transfer payment system, and adjustment of the administrative zoning conducive to the concentration of production factors. The technology innovation, one of power sources for the development of urbanization, has profound impact on the development of social productive forces. The aggregation of industries, the evolution of industrial structure and urban spatial interaction, all reflect the significant role of technology innovation.

We should emphasize the role of innovation, and also be aware that innovation needs basis and conditions. In the process of urbanization in West China, it should have a period of concentrated input of considerable capital, to improve the investment environment in West China (transportation, municipal facilities, modern communication, etc.) through great capital input, so that the accumulation of all factors in West China reaches the threshold stock. Only in the operating environment of sufficient elements can the innovation effectively have multiplier effect and power amplification mechanism effect.

4.2.2 Constitution of the major driving force system. According to the properties of industry, the major driving force of ur-

banization can be divided into agricultural modernization and non-agricultural modernization. The modernization of non-agricultural industries, not only includes the modernization and agglomeration of the traditional secondary industry and tertiary industry, but also includes informatization or modernization of higher-level industries. The operating mechanism of the major driving force can be seen in Fig.3^[8].

The modernization of non-agricultural industries, in essence, requires concentration and continuity of production, advanced technology and products for the market, and this will necessarily require the concentration of the economic process in space. This concentration will promote the high-degree combination of capital, human resources, other resources, technology and other production factors in the limited space, to propel urbanization. In addition, due to maturity and gestation of the advanced culture, the lifestyle is changed fundamentally, playing a significant role in leading and attracting the rural areas, resulting in a great pull force. The improvement of agricultural labour productivity ensures the food supply for people across the country, produces a lot of surplus labour forces, and forms huge push coupled with pull, to achieve the transfer of labour forces and urbanization. Meanwhile, the release and transfer of the agricultural surplus labour forces provide better conditions for further aggregation and modernization of agriculture, so as to promote the agricultural productivity, forming a kind of causal and cumulative push effect.

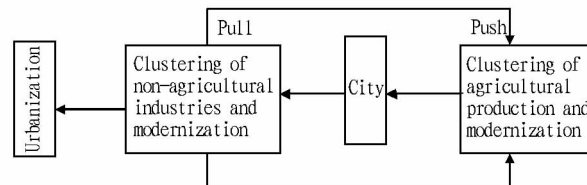


Fig.3 Operating mechanism of the major driving force

4.2.3 Constitution of supplementary power system

4.2.3.1 Government behaviour. The marketization process in West China is far behind that in the developed eastern regions, and unsound market mechanism makes the allocation of resources factors and economic operation fail to realize Pareto optimization. The current government's public policy is no longer to fully meet the needs of urbanization development strategy, and we should carry out reform, conducive to urbanization, on the household registration policy, employment policy, public housing policy, social security policy and other policies^[9]. In Development of the West Regions, the first problem we confront is west-moving of factors and rational allocation of factors. Clearly the current market mechanism can not effectively accomplish this mission, and thereby the role of government becomes more prominent. From the history and reality, the common factors of government behaviour promoting urbanization are as follows. First, the role of special military and political purpose. For example, "third line building" is the government's behaviour of promoting west-moving of factors for the purpose of politics and military. Since the setting of industry is too decentralized, so it cannot form economic aggregation effect, and

it can hardly promote the urbanization in West China and regional economic development. Second, the role of government management level and policy preference. For example, the local governments in the Pearl River Delta, Jiangsu Province and Zhejiang Province, fully utilize the preferential policies offered by the central government for the development of eastern regions, strengthen the management level, and conduct various forms of effective system innovation, to greatly promote the process of urbanization. Third, the role of change in the administrative center and change in urban management policy. The essence of change in administrative zoning or administrative center is the result of implementation of the government policy. Adjusting the location of the administrative center or zoning setting, and changing the city level or regional growth pole, will have a significant impact on urbanization. For example, after Chongqing City rose to municipality directly under the central government in 1997, the growth rate of urbanization was greatly accelerated. Fourth, the role of resource development. The most outstanding example in West China is Panzhihua City of Sichuan Province. Under the system of planned economy in the 1960s, the city is a medium-sized iron and steel industrial city organized by the state, through centralized investment and resources development.

4.2.3.2 Driving effect of foreign investment. In industry or the economy with higher form, the capital has a pivotal position. The development of a region is heavily dependent on the amount of capital input. Inflow of foreign capital will undoubtedly have an impact on a variety of structures in the region. West China's Sichuan, Shaanxi and other places will make every effort to attract world-renowned companies and take it as key work to promote regional economy and the level of urbanization. This is undoubtedly correct. However, when attracting and using foreign investment to promote urbanization, it should grasp the direction, facilitate reasonable introduction, and resolutely refuse to accept the industrial projects that are washed out in developed regions or countries.

First, when West China uses foreign capital, it should strengthen unified planning and rational implementation, which can be conducive to strengthening regional comparative advantage. Taking Shaanxi Province as an example, the industry with comparative advantage in Shaanxi Province is the fruit industry, high technology industry, defense industry, and so on, and if we channel foreign capital into these fields, it will be bound to further strengthen this kind of comparative advantage and provide greater economic power for realization of cluster economy. Second, through system innovation, we should channel the foreign capital into weak infrastructure in West China. The flow of foreign capital is dominated mainly by profit maximization, thus enabling the foreign investment in infrastructure of West China through system innovation to get long-term stable profit is the key to solving this problem.

4.2.3.3 Driving effect of great projects. In the process of urbanization, the construction of large-scale projects will often have a profound impact on one region. The construction of large-scale national-level or provincial-level projects will often

improve the level of local urbanization, forming new cities or new centers. For example, in the 1950s, Baotou City was wasteland, but because the state invested in the construction of Baotou Steel Plant, so as to promote Baotou to become an important base of heavy industry in North China, with urban population exceeding 1 million. In Development of the West Regions, the construction of various levels of large-scale projects will be bound to adjust regional industrial structure and promote the process of urbanization.

4.2.3.4 Human as the main body. Emphasizing the role of human as main body is to emphasize the dynamic role of human in social issues. The process of urbanization is essentially the transformation of human, including the migration of rural residents to the cities, the transformation of rural lifestyle into urban lifestyle. The work that can not be ignored in West China is to vigorously develop education, especially the basic education. The enhancement of the population quality and the cultural values, hinges on the power of education in the final analysis. Only through vigorously developing education can we improve the population quality in West China, and change conservative and backward ideas, to meet the requirements of urbanization.

4.2.3.5 City as an economic powerhouse. The city, as a dynamic open system, is in communication with the outside world all the time, and this communication is primarily the material flow, capital flow, information flow and so on. One of the important features of the city is diffusion and radiation. By radiation, it can have a effect of driving the surrounding areas, to promote urbanization of the surrounding areas.

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