


## SUSTAINABILITY IN THE JUDICIARY OF TOCANTINS: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the insertion and development of sustainability practices in the Court of Justice of the State of Tocantins (TJTO), in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda. Using the content analysis of 37 institutional documents, including minutes, reports and strategic plans, the research investigates how sustainability principles were integrated into the TJTO's strategic planning in the 2015-2020 and 2021-2026 periods. The main results point to a strengthening of the role of sustainability in the institutional agenda, evidenced by the Sustainable Logistics Plan and the creation of socio-environmental centers. It is concluded that the policies implemented reflect a growing commitment to sustainable governance within the Tocantins Judiciary.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Judiciary, Court of Justice of Tocantins, 2030 Agenda.

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## INTRODUCTION

This article aims to analyze how the Court of Justice of the State of Tocantins (TJTO) incorporates the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda in its strategic planning and institutional practices. The problem that guided this study lies in the adequacy and integration of the principles of sustainability in a public institution such as the TJTO, questioning to what extent the global guidelines of the SDGs are adapted to the specificities of the Tocantins Judiciary and how its actions contribute to the promotion of sustainable development in Brazil.

The concept of sustainable development was consolidated from the 1960s onwards, gaining notoriety with the Stockholm Conference in 1972, which alerted the international community to the environmental risks generated by increased consumption and the degradation of natural resources (Amado, 2018, p. 28). Since then, global conferences, such as Rio-92 and Johannesburg in 2002, have broadened the perspective of sustainability, including social, cultural, economic and political dimensions. The UN defines sustainable development as that which meets present needs without compromising the needs of future generations, covering several dimensions of action (United Nations, 2022).

In this context, the Brazilian legal system, particularly the Judiciary, has progressively incorporated the concept of sustainability into its practices. At the Court of Justice of the State of Tocantins (TJTO), sustainable development has become an integral part of strategic planning for the 2015-2020 and 2021-2026 periods. The TJTO seeks to align its institutional objectives with the precepts of the 2030 Agenda, implementing actions aimed at reducing environmental impact, promoting social inclusion, and strengthening administrative transparency (Scotto, Carvalho, and Guimarães, 2007, p. 8). In this context, institutional documents, such as the Sustainable Logistics Plan, play a key role in defining guidelines and actions that guide the TJTO towards environmentally responsible management.

To investigate this problem, content analysis applied to 37 institutional documents was used, including minutes, reports and strategic planning of the TJTO. This methodology allows us to describe the insertion of sustainability practices and assess the compliance of the Court's actions with the principles of the 2030 Agenda. In the end, it is expected to highlight the role of the Tocantins Judiciary in promoting sustainable development and identify the advances and limitations in the incorporation of the SDGs into its strategic planning (Bardin, 2016).

## **LAW AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The law plays a central role in promoting sustainable development, as it establishes the normative framework that guides policies and practices for environmental preservation and rational use of natural resources. In this context, sustainable development stands out for seeking a balance between economic growth and environmental protection, without compromising future generations. As pointed out by the World Commission on Environment and Development, linked to the United Nations, sustainable development is that which "meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations, 2022). To operationalize this definition, it is essential that the concept of sustainability involves processes of change that integrate social, cultural, ecological, territorial and political aspects, as observed by Sachs (2002).

Historically, discussions about the environment and sustainability emerged with greater force from the 1950s onwards, driven by environmental tragedies, such as acid rain in London and contamination in Minamata Bay, Japan (Lima and Araújo, 2020). These concerns gained a formal dimension with the creation of the Club of Rome in 1968, an initiative that brought together scientists and thinkers from different areas to discuss the global environmental crisis and propose alternatives for sustainable development. In its 1972 report, entitled *Limits to Growth*, the group warned of the incompatibility between population growth, consumption patterns, and the sustainability of natural resources, advocating economic, population, and ecological stabilization as a response (Wedy, 2018).

From these initial reflections, the concept of sustainable development evolved and was consolidated through international conferences, such as the Stockholm Conference in 1972, which highlighted the importance of rethinking the use of natural resources on a global scale. Later studies, such as the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP), developed by sociologists Dunlap and Liere, reinforced the need for a development model that rejected the anthropocentric view and promoted a sustainable balance between human needs and environmental preservation (Wedy, 2018). This new paradigm began to emphasize the interdependence between economic development and environmental preservation, proposing the inclusion of fundamentals such as the rejection of human exceptionalism and the awareness of the limits of growth (Wedy, 2018).

Documents such as the Stockholm Declaration (1972), the World Conservation Strategy (1980), the World Charter for Nature (1982) and the Brundtland Report (1987) were fundamental to consolidate the concept of sustainable development. The Brundtland

Report, in particular, in introducing the concept of intergenerational sustainability, highlighted that "sustainable development is the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising environmental stocks for future generations" (Brundtland, 1991). In addition, the report criticizes development models that, by neglecting the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations, aggravate environmental degradation and widen social inequalities, making the adoption of global sustainable policies urgent (Brundtland, 1991).

The introduction of sustainability in the Brazilian legal field had as its starting point the Law and Development movement, in the United States, in the 1960s. This movement emphasized the role of law as an instrument for institutional improvement and economic development, proposing the revision of environmental laws to ensure a more effective protection of natural resources and affected populations (Barral, 2005, p. 48-49). In Brazil, the Federal Constitution of 1988 explicitly incorporated the right to an ecologically balanced environment as a right of all, imposing on the government and society the duty to preserve it for present and future generations, as provided for in article 225 (Brasil, 2023).

Thus, it is observed that the law has an essential function in the implementation of sustainable practices, not only establishing rules and regulations, but also promoting the social and environmental responsibility of institutions and companies. In the international context, sustainable development also has the support of treaties and agreements that impose environmental obligations on signatory countries, reinforcing legal action as a means to achieve the sustainability goals proposed by the UN. In this way, the law is configured as a central instrument to promote and ensure sustainable development practices, both at the domestic and global levels, supporting the construction of policies that integrate the social, environmental and economic dimensions.

## **ADOPTION OF THE 2030 AGENDA BY THE BRAZILIAN JUDICIARY**

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the international community, through the United Nations 2030 Agenda, represents a collective commitment to sustainable global transformation. This pact has mobilized governments, organizations, and institutions to align their practices with the principles of sustainability, promoting actions aimed at eradicating poverty, protecting the environment, and ensuring decent living conditions for all people. In Brazil, the Judiciary is an active part of this movement, seeking to incorporate these objectives into its guidelines and practices, as a mechanism for institutional improvement and the promotion of social justice (Monteiro, 2012).

The main normative framework that drives the insertion of the SDGs in the Brazilian Judiciary is Ordinance No. 133/2018 of the National Council of Justice (CNJ), which established an Interinstitutional Committee with the responsibility of integrating the SDG goals and indicators into the strategic planning of the Judiciary. This ordinance also establishes guidelines for the implementation of environmental protection policies and sustainable governance practices in Brazilian courts, promoting an institutional culture that values the rational use of resources and environmental preservation (CNJ, 2018).

Among the main initiatives instituted by Ordinance No. 133/2018 is the creation of specialized environmental courts, with jurisdiction to judge cases related to environmental crimes, licensing, and protection of the rights of local communities. These courts not only increase the efficiency of the judicial system in environmental matters, but also reflect a commitment to socio-environmental justice, incorporating the principle of intergenerational equity and ensuring that the right to an ecologically balanced environment is respected in all spheres of power (Bodnar, 2020).

In addition, the CNJ has encouraged the training of judges and civil servants in environmental matters, offering courses and training that strengthen the technical and ethical competence of Judiciary professionals. According to Resolution No. 709/2021, the development of socio-environmental skills is essential to promote judicial action in line with the principles of the 2030 Agenda and the precepts of environmental responsibility, contributing to the creation of an institutional culture guided by sustainability (Brasil, 2021).

Another relevant aspect in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda by the Judiciary is the strengthening of cooperation networks between courts and environmental agencies, such as the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) and the National Water Agency (ANA). This cooperative effort aims not only at the effective management of environmental resources, but also at the exchange of knowledge and good practices that improve the quality of judicial decisions in environmental matters, strengthening governance and institutional accountability (Moura, 2016).

In addition to specialized courts and training, the 2030 Agenda in the Brazilian Judiciary also covers the creation of environmental committees in the courts, which have the function of monitoring and guiding the implementation of sustainable measures. These committees ensure that lawsuits aimed at environmental issues are treated as a priority and that the Judiciary operates with transparency, efficiency, and commitment to sustainability principles. In this sense, Resolution No. 30 of the Court of Justice of Tocantins highlights

the creation of the Coordination of Socio-Environmental Management and Social Responsibility, which acts as a strategic nucleus to consolidate sustainable practices in the institution (TJTO, 2021).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the Federal Constitution of 1988, in its article 37, establishes the guiding principles of Public Administration — legality, impersonality, morality, publicity and efficiency — which should guide all institutional actions of the Judiciary. However, in the current context, these principles cannot be seen as merely rhetorical commitments, but as guidelines that direct the daily performance of all bodies of the Brazilian Judiciary. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda reaffirms the Judiciary's commitment to ethical, responsible, and sustainable action, strengthening the role of law as an instrument for promoting sustainable development and social justice (Bodnar, 2020).

### **INSERTION OF THE 2030 AGENDA IN THE JUDICIARY OF TOCANTINS**

The integration of the 2030 Agenda in the Court of Justice of the State of Tocantins (TJTO) represents an institutional effort to adapt to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), seeking to align judicial practices with global sustainability goals. As a federative unit, Tocantins faces specific challenges in terms of social inequality, natural resource management, and economic development, which makes it even more relevant to implement a sustainable agenda that considers local particularities. Thus, the TJTO has made an effort to incorporate the SDGs into its strategic planning, adapting the guidelines of the 2030 Agenda to the reality of Tocantins and establishing a relationship between sustainability and governance within the Judiciary.

The Sustainable Logistics Plan (PLS) is one of the main tools that enable the insertion of the SDGs in the administrative and judicial practices of the TJTO. This plan establishes guidelines aimed at saving resources and efficient management, promoting practices such as reducing the consumption of energy, water and materials, in addition to encouraging the use of clean technologies. The adoption of sustainability measures in the PLS reflects the TJTO's commitment to contribute to the global objectives of the 2030 Agenda, while promoting responsible public management aligned with regional needs (Scotto, Carvalho and Guimarães, 2007, p. 8).

To consolidate this insertion, the TJTO has structured its actions based on internal documents and rules, such as the 2015-2020 and 2021-2026 strategic plans, which incorporate sustainability as an institutional value and one of the pillars of its vision of the

future. These plans emphasize sustainability not only as an administrative guideline, but as a central element that guides the Court's strategic decisions. In the current planning, for example, the TJTO defines specific goals related to sustainability, such as the creation of specialized units for environmental monitoring and the increase in energy efficiency and waste reduction rates (TJTO, 2021).

In addition to internal management goals, the TJTO promotes actions aimed at raising awareness and training its employees, with the aim of disseminating an institutional culture of socio-environmental responsibility. The implementation of sustainability training programs has been an effective strategy for magistrates and civil servants to understand the importance of the SDGs and adopt more conscious practices in the performance of their duties. In this way, the Court not only aligns its operations with the precepts of the 2030 Agenda, but also encourages a change in posture that can positively impact Tocantins society (Bodnar, 2020).

Another important point of the TJTO's strategy is the development of partnerships with other institutions, both at the state and national levels. These partnerships strengthen the reach of the Court's actions and promote the exchange of experiences and best practices in the area of sustainability. Cooperation with environmental agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations expands the possibilities of TJTO's action, facilitating the implementation of integrated socio-environmental policies adjusted to local demands. This collaborative approach reflects the Court's commitment to effectively contribute to the SDGs, using its institutional position to influence and support sustainable development initiatives in the state of Tocantins (Moura, 2016).

In summary, the insertion of the 2030 Agenda in the TJTO shows a continuous effort to adapt and innovate in the Court's judicial and administrative practices. The PLS, the strategic plans and the awareness and partnership actions are examples of how the TJTO seeks to consolidate sustainability as a guiding principle. This integration reinforces the role of the Tocantins Judiciary not only as an agent for the promotion of justice, but also as an institution committed to sustainable development and the construction of a more equitable and responsible society.

## **METHODOLOGICAL NOTES**

To carry out the analysis on the insertion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the strategic management of the Court of Justice of the State of Tocantins

(TJTO), this study adopted a qualitative approach, based on the content analysis of the Court's institutional documents. Content analysis, according to Bardin (2016), consists of a set of techniques that allow describing and interpreting textual messages in a systematic way, revealing explicit and implicit aspects in the content of the documents. This method is suitable for the research in question, since it makes it possible to identify the sustainability guidelines and practices adopted by the TJTO in the context of the SDGs.

The documentary corpus of the study was composed of 37 institutional documents, including minutes of meetings, performance reports, ordinances and strategic planning for the periods 2015-2020 and 2021-2026. These documents were selected because they represent the Court's main administrative and operational guidelines and for providing detailed information on actions aimed at sustainability and governance. The documentary selection followed the criteria of relevance and comprehensiveness, with the objective of covering as many aspects as possible related to the integration of the SDGs in the planning and institutional practices of the TJTO.

The collection of documents was carried out based on the Access to Information Law (Law No. 12,527/2011), which ensures transparency and the right to access public information. A formal request was sent to the TJTO to obtain specific documents, including reports of the Sustainable Logistics Plan (PLS), minutes of Strategy Evaluation Meetings (RAE), ordinances and resolutions. This procedure ensured that data collection was systematic and consistent, covering documents that record the Court's commitment to sustainable practices.

For the purpose of organizing and categorizing the data, the documents were analyzed and grouped into thematic categories, based on the strategic dimensions identified in the TJTO's planning and the macro challenges defined by the National Council of Justice (CNJ) for the implementation of the SDGs in the Judiciary. The categorization allowed us to identify patterns and highlight the alignment between the Court's institutional actions and the principles of the 2030 Agenda. The main categories included resource management, training of civil servants, the creation of specialized units in sustainability and the development of partnerships with other institutions.

In addition, a chronological analysis was carried out, which allowed us to observe the evolution of sustainability practices over the periods studied. This chronological resource contributed to identifying changes in the TJTO's institutional policies and priorities, evidencing the progressive incorporation of the SDGs as a central part of its strategic

planning. At the end of the analysis process, the information was systematized in a summary table, facilitating the visualization of the advances and limitations in the adoption of the SDGs by the TJTO.

In short, the methodology adopted in this study provides a comprehensive and detailed view of the insertion of the SDGs in the management of the TJTO, allowing a consistent analysis of the Court's commitment to sustainable development. From this approach, it is expected to offer a significant contribution to the understanding of sustainable practices in the Judiciary and to the debate on the role of public institutions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## **RESULTS: THE APPLICABILITY OF THE SDGS IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING OF THE JUDICIARY OF TOCANTINS**

The results obtained through the content analysis of the institutional documents of the Court of Justice of the State of Tocantins (TJTO) reveal a growing incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its strategic planning. This incorporation highlights the TJTO's commitment to aligning its administrative and judicial practices with the principles of the 2030 Agenda, promoting a management model that prioritizes sustainability, social inclusion, and efficiency in the use of resources.

To illustrate the main documents analyzed and the content addressed in each type of institutional record, Table 1 is presented. It offers a summarized and structured view of the data collected, facilitating the understanding of the key elements of the research and the depth of the TJTO's commitment to the SDGs.

Table 1 – Summary of Institutional Documents Analyzed for the Applicability of the SDGs in the TJTO

| DOCUMENT TYPE                   | QUANTITY | MAIN CONTENT  |
|---------------------------------|----------|---|
| Meeting Minutes (RAE)           | 10       | Discussion and approval of strategic guidelines related to sustainability and the implementation of the PLS, including the creation of efficiency goals and resource reduction. |
| Performance Reports (PLS)       | 5        | Annual assessment of sustainability indicators (e.g., energy consumption, paper use, waste disposal) based on SDG targets.  |
| Strategic Planning              | 2        | Structuring of sustainability goals for the 2015-2020 and 2021-2026 periods, including sustainability as a core value of TJTO's management.                                     |
| Internal Ordinances             | 8        | Establishment of committees and coordinators to monitor and execute the Sustainable Logistics Plan (PLS), with direct responsibility for environmental and social goals.        |
| Resolutions                     | 4        | Regulations that establish inter-institutional partnerships and guidelines for sustainability training actions for civil servants and magistrates.                              |
| Other Documents (Miscellaneous) | 8        | Documents that record environmental awareness initiatives, training and workshops aimed at raising awareness of civil servants regarding the SDGs.                              |

One of the main results is the integration of the concept of sustainability into the Sustainable Logistics Plan (PLS), which establishes clear guidelines for saving resources and the responsible use of materials and energy. The PLS has guided the implementation of sustainable practices in the TJTO, such as reducing paper consumption and encouraging the use of clean technologies, directly contributing to the achievement of goals associated with the SDGs. This practice represents a significant advance in the state public sector, considering the positive impact of the rationalization of resources within the Judiciary (Scotto, Carvalho and Guimarães, 2007, p. 8).

In addition, the study revealed that the TJTO has included sustainability as an institutional value in its strategic plans, such as those of 2015-2020 and 2021-2026. This choice reflects the Court's intention to adopt the SDGs as guiding principles for its management, using the concept of sustainability to define goals and objectives that guide both administrative operations and strategic decisions. Through this alignment, the TJTO promotes an organizational culture of socio-environmental responsibility, reinforcing the importance of the SDGs as a guide for sustainable development in the Tocantins Judiciary (TJTO, 2021).

Another relevant aspect identified in the research was the creation of committees and units specialized in sustainability within the organizational structure of the TJTO, which

work in the monitoring and implementation of socio-environmental policies. The Coordination of Socio-Environmental Management and Social Responsibility, for example, plays an essential role in the execution of the PLS, monitoring compliance with sustainability goals and promoting awareness programs among civil servants and magistrates. This structure strengthens the Court's internal governance, ensuring that institutional practices are in line with the precepts of the 2030 Agenda and with the guidelines of the National Council of Justice (CNJ) (Moura, 2016).

The training of civil servants and magistrates on topics related to sustainability has also been an effective strategy for the internalization of the SDGs in the TJTO. Through courses and training, the Court seeks to disseminate the importance of the SDGs, raising awareness among employees about the positive impact of sustainable practices in their daily activities. These training programs have contributed to the formation of an institutional culture that values sustainability and encourages the active engagement of all TJTO members in favor of the goals of the 2030 Agenda (Bodnar, 2020).

Finally, the survey found that the TJTO has invested in the development of strategic partnerships with other institutions, such as universities and environmental agencies, aiming to expand the reach of its sustainability actions. These partnerships facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, promoting the implementation of public policies that favor sustainable development in the state of Tocantins. Inter-institutional collaboration stands out as a relevant mechanism to strengthen the TJTO's performance in relation to the SDGs, allowing the Court to fulfill its institutional role in a manner aligned with global goals (Moura, 2016).

In summary, the results indicate that the applicability of the SDGs in the TJTO has advanced significantly, consolidating sustainability as a strategic pillar of management in the Tocantins Judiciary. The initiatives implemented by the TJTO, such as the PLS, the specialized units, the training of civil servants and inter-institutional partnerships, demonstrate the Court's commitment to sustainable development, contributing to the construction of a fairer, more inclusive and responsible society.

## **DISCUSSION**

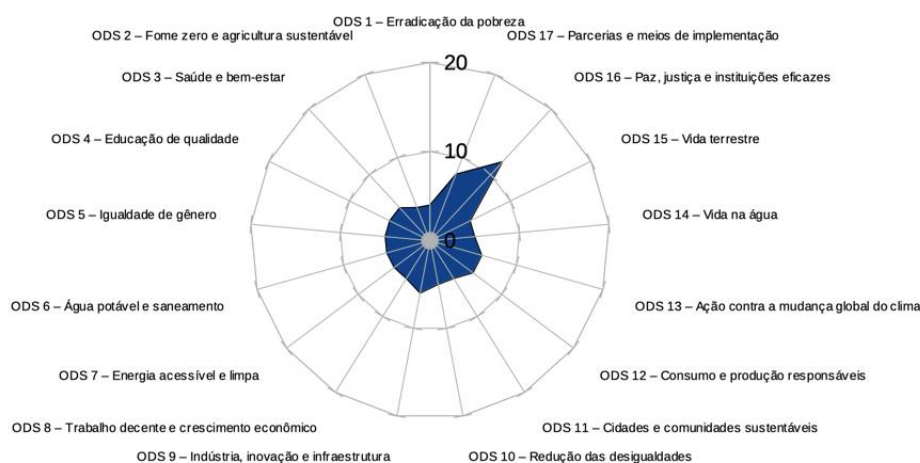
An organization's Strategic Planning says a lot about its worldview and future desires. It also deals with the perception of its members about the impacts that it can produce in the environment in which it is inserted, in addition to its transformative role. In

the case of the Court of Justice of the State of Tocantins it was no different. From the analysis of the documents previously listed and the analysis of their content, it was possible to identify strong clues about the current stage of institutional maturity and to project new attitudes regarding sustainability. Based on the analytical categories presented, the change in importance that the theme acquires over time is clear. Changes in nomenclatures, links in the context of the organizational structure and the roles and actors involved indicate, a priori, a change not only forged by the institutional belief in the role of sustainability in bodies linked to public administration. It is also perceived that exogenous forces, especially those emanating through documents of the National Council of Justice, served to adopt new positions.

Another important issue refers to the agents involved in the processes related to the issue of sustainability. One name appears in practically all the documents that bring light to the issue, that of Judge Pedro Nelson de Miranda Coutinho. The documents showed that, at a certain point, the presidency of the Management Committee of the Sustainable Logistics Plan is occupied by Judge Ângela Prudente, but the judge remains as its member. One piece of information deserves to be highlighted, even if it is not related to the objective of this research: on September 18, 2020, the then judge is elected and sworn in as a Judge of the TJTO. In the Strategic Planning for the period that would follow, prepared that year (period 2021-2026), the 2030 agenda and the UN SDGs are evident as the backdrop for all the actions developed by the Court, that is, all the institution's projects and processes take place under the aegis of the 17 sustainable development goals. Finally, it is worth mentioning the adoption of the SDGs (2030 agenda) in the presentation of institutional documents, both in the PLS – in its 2020 edition, and in the upcoming Strategic Planning (2022-2026), which is the culmination of this documentary analysis.

In order to illustrate such notes, a map is presented below, which demonstrates that the 17 sustainable development goals are contemplated with one or more projects listed in the set of macro challenges and strategic objectives of the TJTO Strategic Planning.

Figure 1: List of the strategic objectives of the Court of Justice of the State of Tocantins and the UN Sustainable Development Goals – 2030 Agenda.



Obviously, the largest number is related to SDG 16, which deals with peace, justice and effective institutions, notably reflecting the role of the institution.

It takes shape, expands and presents itself as a beacon that illuminates the next steps of the institution, serving as a compass for the projects that are developed in the present time. The role of decision-makers, as presented by the documents, is of paramount importance. Strong and active leadership, concerned with the precepts that underlie sustainability, is vital. Perceiving the change in the status of the subject in the daily life of such an important body suggests possibilities and the adoption of such precepts by other institutions.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The topic of sustainability is increasingly incorporated into the day-to-day life of Brazilian society. It is inserted in the discussions of the corporate world, but it does not escape the actions and projects of the State agencies. Understanding this phenomenon, as well as its impacts, is essential. The present research serves to shed light on such changes within a secular institution. It also serves to show its maturity, in addition to projecting that it serves as a reference not only for the counties spread throughout the State of Tocantins, but also for other institutions that, in a process of becoming aware, realize the need to incorporate such practices into their daily lives.

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