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Zagreb Trade Fair as an Impetus for the Novi Zagreb Centre Development

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Abstract

The construction of the Zagreb Trade Fair started in the late 1950s with the intensive building of its pavilions. An incomplete urban-planning concept was a common feature of both the Zagreb Trade Fair and Novi Zagreb (“New Zagreb”) itself. Zagreb Trade Fair has significant spatial potential that allows for a functional and partly a structural transformation of its areas and buildings.

Keywords: Center of Novi Zagreb, Novi Zagreb, South Zagreb, Zagreb, Zagreb trade fair.

1. Novi Zagreb Historic and Spatial-urban Context

Spatial development of Zagreb in the late 19th and the early 20th century was prompted by accelerated industrialisation and commerce, along with a consequent increase of population. It was characterised by longitudinal expansion of the town eastward and westward from the city centre. The development was defined on the

southern slopes of Zagreb Hill, and south of the railway built-in 1862. The area south of the railway and north of Sava River was mainly used for agriculture.

The railway became an obstacle and the divider between the southern part of Zagreb’s residential areas (built between the late 19th and the early 20th century) and Trešnjevka, Trnje, and Peščenica areas that were planned for the expansion of the town [1]. In the same area,



Fig. 1. Aerial photography of the Zagreb Fair from the late 1950s [47]

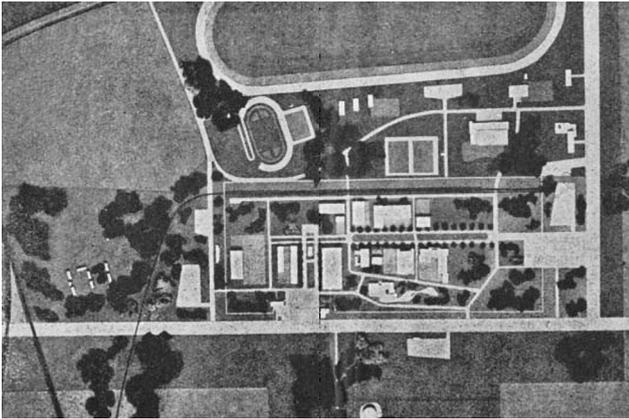


Fig. 2. Marijan Haberle: Scale model of the urban-planning concept of Zagreb Trade Fair from 1955 [20]

mostly alongside existing suburban roads, unplanned substandard construction of family housing was gradually developing, which soon became an obstacle to the urban planning of the southern part of the town's periphery [2, 3].

For the areas of Trešnjevka, Trnje, and Peščenica, the General Regulatory Plan for the Town of Zagreb from 1936 planned the incorporation of older constructions and infrastructure, as well as partial new development into the continuously built-up urban tissue. The same plan from 1936 also encompassed Sava River and the area south of the River, wherein sports facilities were planned. The WWII halted the implementation of the 1936 plan. The change in the socio-politic system, following WWII, prompted the development of the Directive Regulatory Basis of Zagreb in 1953, which encompassed a substantially wider area than that of the General Regulatory Plan for the Town of Zagreb from 1936, including a larger area south of Sava River, which thus also became the town's divider. A significant boost to the expansion of Zagreb to the right bank of Sava River was also the visionary decision of then-Mayor Većeslav Holjevac [4] to construct the Liberty Bridge (Most slobode) over Sava River, which was opened to traffic in 1959 [5]. Up to that point in the mid '50s, the construction of the Naval Institute, the first housing development of Novi Zagreb [6, 7] and Zagreb Trade Fair [8, 9, 10] had already started as a significant impetus to the development of the area south of Sava River [11, 12]. The construction of Zagreb Trade Fair prompted more rapid urbanisation in a way that it accelerated the development of overall infrastructure – from electricity, water supply, and sewage systems, to corresponding roads required for the access to Zagreb Trade Fair, which was utilised in the development of the entire area.

2. Zagreb's fairs area through history

Trade fair exhibitions in Zagreb have a tradition dating back to the first royal fairs in the late 11th century [13],

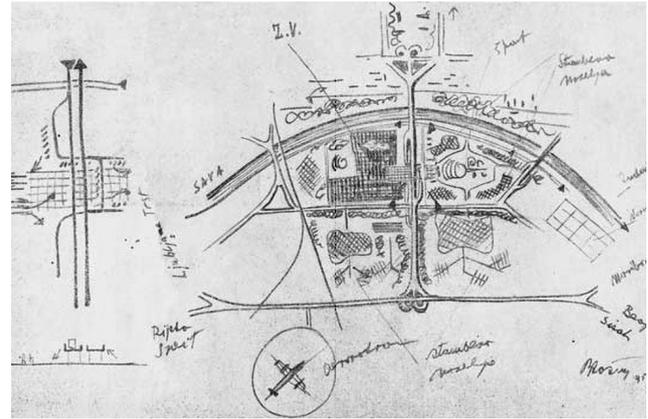


Fig. 3. Božidar Rašica: Sketch of the urban-planning concept of Zagreb Trade Fair from 1957 [19]

followed by the first fairs on St Mark's Square in the 13th century. Fairs were held on main squares of Gradec and Kaptol until the mid-17th century; when the attacks of the Turks no longer presented a threat, as they moved to the area of Harmica (today's Ban Josip Jelačić Square). The fair was subsequently relocated to the New Square (today's Nikola Šubić Zrinski Square), then to the Fair-ground Square (today's Republic of Croatia Square) in the mid-19th century, to the area of present-day Martićeva Street in 1895, and Heinzelova Street behind the Town Pound in the 1930s.

A significant event in the context of trade fair exhibitions in Zagreb is the Great Croatian-Slavonic Economic Fair, which took place in 1964 by the Market Square, on which the Croatian National Theatre was built later [14]. Zagreb Assembly was the name of the international economic exhibition and holding company that operated in Zagreb from 1909 until 1946 as a predecessor to the Zagreb Trade Fair. The first exhibition (trade fair) at Zagreb Assembly was organised in 2011 by the Fair-ground area in Martićeva Street. The WWI halted the holding of Zagreb Assemblies, which resumed in 1922 as the First Great Fair of Zagreb; from 1936 onwards, the exhibitions of Zagreb Assembly took place at the new exhibition space on Savska Road, at which the of Zagreb University Student Centre is located today [15]. Zagreb Assembly was renamed to Zagreb Trade Fair in 1946 and relocated in 1956 from Savska Road to the area south of Sava River [16] – the present-day Novi Zagreb.

The fairs were being relocated to new sites that were typically placed peripherally in relation to the city, thereby stimulating the development and emergence of new urban areas. Based on the example of Zagreb, we can follow the relocation of fairs mainly towards the south and Sava River. The construction of the Zagreb Trade Fair south of Sava River prompted a significant expansion of the town to the hitherto practically non-constructed southern area of Zagreb, which will soon become Novi Zagreb.

3. Zagreb Trade Fair in Novi Zagreb

With the beginning of the construction of the new Trade Fair, the political leadership saw the possibility to also demonstrate the stable development of the economy beyond the state's borders and to initiate a significant international fair in the south-eastern part of Europe. The management of the Zagreb Trade Fair and the City of Zagreb as the state's leading industrial centre recognised the relevance and potential of organising a large-scale international fair and enabled its implementation in the area of Novi Zagreb within a short period. The Zagreb Trade Fair was the only international fair that was equally visited by exhibitors from all countries (capitalistic and socialistic states), with particular emphasis on Non-Aligned countries, which were becoming a relevant market at the time. The inadequate number and size of the Fair's exhibition spaces very quickly presented a limitation to the exhibitors, who sought to display their products in the best way possible [17]. The construction of the pavilions of the new Fair began in 1956 [18] upon the decree of then-Mayor Većeslav Holjevac, in the non-constructed area south of Sava River according to the urban-planning concept of Marijan Haberle [19, 20] from 1955 [21, 22]. The Fair's spatial matrix is characterised by a sequence of pavilions alongside three longitudinal lines from east to west, while the urban-planning design was pushed into the background concerning projects of individual exhibition Halls due to short deadlines for deliberation and construction. Such an approach has resulted in inconsistent spatial relations as a whole and between the individual Halls [23]. The urban-planning concept of Zagreb Trade Fair by Božidar Rašica [24] from 1957 sought to integrate the Trade Fair with the entire area of Novi Zagreb, and highlight the central axis from north to south, with Zrinjevac (Nikola Šubić Zrinski Square) as the starting point.

As part of Zagreb Trade Fair, a significant number of architecturally valuable pavilions were constructed,

from the "West Germany" pavilion by Ivan Vitić (today's Pavilion No. 40) [24, 25] and "Machinery" by Božidar Rašica [26, 27] (today's Pavilion No. 36) [25, 28], to the "Tourism" pavilion by Zdravko Bregovac [29] and "Đuro Đaković Pavillion" by Miroslav Begović (today's Pavilion No. 28) [25, 28].

One of the first exhibition halls, "named" as the Hall Number 40, was built according to the design prepared by an architect Ivan Vitić and civil engineer Kruno Tonković. They, within an incredibly short time, devised the original concept that was on par with the most celebrated architectural creations of the mid-20th century [30]. Most of the pavilions were built in the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s, whereby the financial resources were merged with the ones of the exhibitors, who constructed the pavilions and exhibited in them for a certain period, after which they entrusted them to Zagreb Trade Fair. This period saw exceptional expertise, organisation and collaboration between architects and civil constructors [31] who, in spite of numerous limitations and short deadlines, successfully developed projects and constructed pavilions that are comparable with the most significant works of architecture at the time.

During the 1970s, a few more pavilions were built with no significant architectural value, while the overall construction was completed in the late 1980s, including the southern entrance to Zagreb Trade Fair in 1987 according to the project by Đivo Dražić and Edvin Šmit [32]. The spatial concept of Zagreb Trade Fair has been developing from its beginnings until the present day [33], starting from simple linear sequencing of pavilions along the axis extending from east to west, to intended northward expansion of exhibition Halls and roads towards Sava River, with the purpose of highlighting the central urban axis from north to south with Zrinjevac as the starting point. From today's perspective and compared to other projects, Zagreb Trade Fair was a platform that reflected the state of the architectural scene at the time,

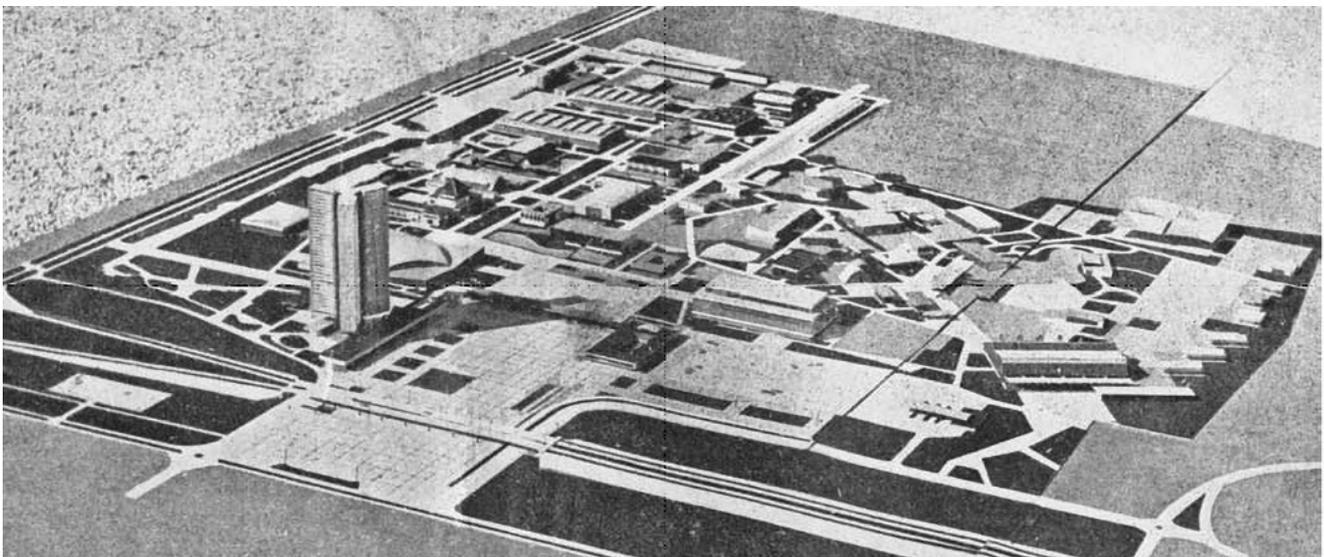


Fig. 4. Božidar Rašica: Sketch of the urban-planning concept of Zagreb Trade Fair from 1957 [19]

i.e., it can also be regarded as a laboratory for new architectural forms and viewpoints [34].

The space of the Zagreb Trade Fair has been protected by the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments as a cultural asset and entered in the Register of Protected Cultural Assets, while some pavilions are under special protection as constituent parts of the building fund of monumental value: 1. “Machinery” by Božidar Rašica, 1957 (today No. 36); 2. Hyperbolic Paraboloid by Božidar Rašica, 1964 (today designated as K 3. Chinese Pavilion by Cheng Sung Mao, 1957 (today No. 11); 4. “Vitić’s Pavilion” by Ivo Vitić, 1956 (today No. 40); 5. The German Democratic Republic by Božidar Rašica, 1964 (today No. 35); 6. USSR by J. Abramov, 1956 (today No. 9); 7. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic by Josef Hruby (today No. 20), 1956; 8. Italy, by R. Contigiani, G. Sambito, 1962 (today No. 15) [35].

Since then, for nearly twenty years, Zagreb Trade Fair has seen investment only in the maintenance of existing edifices and infrastructure. While taking into account, the necessity of creating needed spatial and infrastructural conditions for contemporary trade fair exhibitions, the City of Zagreb has opted for the construction of a new Trade Fair Centre, which in 2007 prompted the preparation of the Programme for Urban and Architectural Development of the Zagreb Trade Fair. The program initiated the construction of the new part of the Zagreb Trade Fair is planned east of the current location [36]. New exhibition Halls were planned with the approximate total area of 60,000 square meters of gross exhibition space with underground parking structures, while the pavilions would be connected by the fair’s enclosed avenue, with which the revitalisation of Zagreb Trade Fair would be implemented in its entirety [37].

4. Centre of Novi Zagreb

The area of Novi Zagreb was also interesting for foreign architects. Jakob Bakema, one of the most significant Dutch architects in the 20th century [38, 39], believed that the future ‘heart’ of the city should be created around the wide-open space next to the Sava River [40]. In 1965 he proposed a concept for the centre of Novi Zagreb based on the European architectural theory and practice at the time. The centre was designed and organised as a junction point from which everything is further distributed and grouped. The traffic and access of vehicles to parking lots are clearly defined and enable a quick and efficient separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, which, together with parking lots, becomes invisible to the centre’s users. Sites intended for gatherings of residents are located in several places, which enables the division into cultural, public, and commercial contents. Another feature of this simple concept is the possibility of connecting the Sava River to the city. The concept’s simplicity also opened up an array of options for further

extensions without having to intervene in the concept’s basic idea, substantially.

In 1982, six teams of Zagreb’s urban planners developed Studies of Central Urban Space of Trnje, Novi Zagreb, and Banks of the Sava from the Railway Bridge to Youth Bridge, which also encompassed the centre of Novi Zagreb [41, 42]. These studies were ambitious, albeit theoretical concepts that gave incentive to new deliberations and postulates for the development and design of the town. Then, in 1985, a Call for Tenders was issued for a concept of a commercial and conference center with a hotel on the east side of the Zagreb Trade Fair, and office buildings of INA Commerce and Exportdruvo. The result is the construction of the INA Commerce building, designed by Velimir Neidhardt on the east side of the Zagreb Trade Fair, northwest of Većeslav Holjevac, and Dubrovnik Avenues intersection [43]. The area east of the Zagreb Trade Fair, alongside the central city axis, was ideal for the reassessment of connections between old and new parts of the city along the line that was of exceptional importance for growth and definition of the city. The significance of the building of INA Commerce lies in the fact that this was the first large-scale business edifice built in Novi Zagreb [43] outside of the enclosed area of Zagreb Trade Fair.

Following the Call for Tenders issued in 1991 for the East Entrance to Zagreb Trade Fair and World Trade Centre with a hotel, the two top-ranked bidders were projects by authorial groups comprised of Velimir Neidhardt, Zvonimir Krznarić, and Davor Mance [43], and Marijan Hrzić, Tomislav Odak, and Branko Siladin. The submitted projects planned the centre of Novi Zagreb with two lines divided by an access road parallel to Većeslav Holjevac Avenue. A sports centre with a garage, followed by World Trade Centre, East Entrance to Zagreb Trade Fair with an entrance square, and an office building connected to the Trade Centre, and the garage was planned on the line alongside Zagreb Trade Fair, from north to south. The line alongside Većeslav Holjevac Avenue was defined by the proposed hotel on the north, and by the existing building of INA Commerce on the south. Furthermore, a park with a large square, south of the hotel and

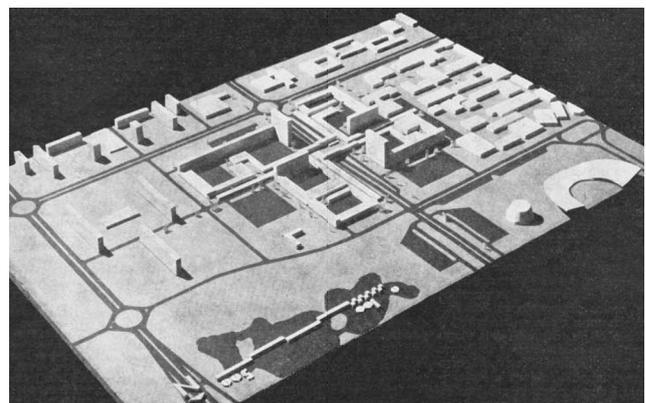


Fig. 5. Jakob Bakema: Third stage of the construction of the centre of South Zagreb from 1965 [40]

west of the WTC, was planned, too. The Call never saw its implementation, as was also the case with the study by architects Bach and Stoecker from 1997.

In the first decade of the 21st-century, construction of the Museum of Contemporary Art (designed by Igor Franić) was opened (2009) by the northeast corner of Većeslav Holjevac and Dubrovnik Avenues intersection. The Avenue Mall, a commercial centre on the southwest portion of the intersection of Većeslav Holjevac and Dubrovnik Avenues, designed by the architectural office Plan d.d., and opened in 2007 [44]. The business and residential complex Bundek Centre, authored by Branimir Medić and Pero Puljiz, has been built since 2008 southeast of the intersection of Većeslav Holjevac Avenue and Bundek Street. The edifices built and initiated in the centre of Novi Zagreb reflect the fifty-year

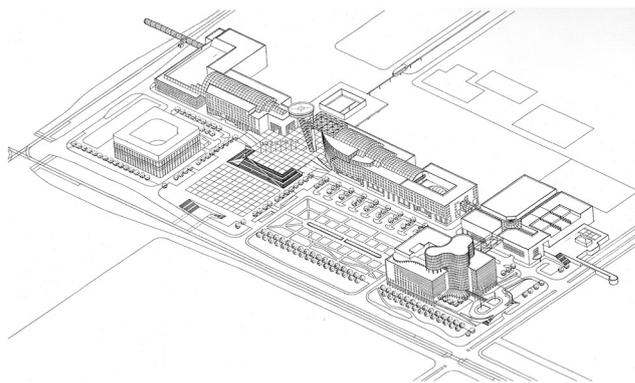


Fig. 6. Velimir Neidhardt, Zvonimir Krznarić and Davor Mance: Submitted concept for the East Entrance to Zagreb Trade Fair and World Trade Centre with a hotel from 1991 [43]

planning of the area of Novi Zagreb and the potential new centre of the city.



Fig. 7. Zagreb Trade Fair on the orthophoto map of Zagreb [35, 48]: 1 Pavilion 1, Božidar Rašica, 1976; 2 Pavilion 2, Božidar Rašica, 1976; 5 Light Industry I, Marijan Haberle, 1956; 6 Light Industry II, Marijan Haberle, 1957; 7 Austria, Božidar Kolonić, 1969; 7a Pavilion 7a – extension, Đivo Dražić, 1987; 8 Federal Republic of Germany, Peter Pixis, 1960; 8a Pavilion 8a – extension, Božidar Rašica, 1969; 8b Pavilion 8b – extension; 9 USSR, J. Abramov, 1956; 10 Federal Republic of Germany, Buderich, 1968; 10a Pavilion 10a – extension, Đivo Dražić, 1990; 11 Chinese Pavilion, Cheng Sung Mao, 1957; 11a Pavilion 11a – extension, Božidar Kolonić, 1971; 12 Wood Industry, Dubravko Radošević, 1970; 13 USA, F. Bornemann, 1967; 14 Pavilion 14, Ivan Vitić, 1957; 14a Marles, Ludvik Sedonja, 1976; 15 Italy, Contigiani and Sambito (construction), 1961; 16 Slovenijales, Božidar Rašica, 1964; 18 German Democratic Republic, Richard Paulick, 1957; 19 Romania, Ressu, 1956; 20 Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Josef Hruby, 1956; 22 Pavilion 22, Marijan Haberle, 1956; 23 Lesnina, Pavel Göstl, 1970; 24 Vaso Miškin Crni, Lujo Schwerer, 1961; 25 Light Industry III, Marijan Haberle, 1961; 28 Đuro Đaković, Miroslav Begović, 1961; 29 Craftsmanship Pavilion, Drago Korbar, 1958; 31 Rade Končar, Zvonimir Marohnić and Drago Korbar, 1957; 32 Energoinvest, Zdravko Gmajner, 1960; 33 Greece, Vlasta Jakovac, 1959; 34 USA, Ivo Geršić, 1958; 35 German Democratic Republic, Božidar Rašica, 1964; 36 Machinery Hall, Božidar Rašica, 1957; 36a Machinery – extension, Božidar Rašica, 1958; 39 USSR, B. S. Vilensky, 1967; 40 Vitić's Pavilion, Ivan Vitić, 1957; A Administration Building – extension, Marijan Haberle, 1956 / Zrinka Andrijević, 1965; C Customs – Intereuropa, Edvin Šmit and Đivo Dražić, 1990; H Hyperbolic Paraboloid, Božidar Rašica, 1964; K Conference Centre, Božidar Rašica, 1969; S Customs Storehouse and Workshops, Marijan Haberle, 1956; U Southern Entrance, Edvin Šmit, Đivo Dražić, 1990; W Public Washrooms and Toilets, Marijan Haberle, 1956

5. Conclusion

By analysing the development of the city of Zagreb, sites can be traced at which fairs were located – starting from St. Mark's Square, Ban Josip Jelačić Square, Republic of Croatia Square and the Student Centre to Zagreb Trade Fair – which prompted urbanisation and modernisation of town areas. The fairs changed locations in town at which they were held, and ultimately developed from local markets to an international trade fair. With the construction of Zagreb Trade Fair, all necessary infrastructure that enabled the development of this part of the town were brought to the area of Novi Zagreb; hence, the latter once again played an important role in the development of the new part of Zagreb in the late 1950s [45], which can be considered a strong stimulating element to the city's expansion to non-constructed, free areas.

The basic function of Zagreb Trade Fair is contemporary trade fair exhibitions, which is not fully possible due to the urban-planning and architectural concept that is more suitable for the period in which it was built than for the present time and needs. The system of individual fair pavilions and open surfaces is being increasingly replaced by large, enclosed, flexible spaces that enable quick transformation according to the fair's programmes.

The existing spatial, functional and structural potential of Zagreb Trade Fair is today an appropriate location for a new transformation of the city. The contemporary spatial and traffic requirements for trade fair exhibitions direct Zagreb Trade Fair to a new location that will stimulate further urbanisation and modernisation of the city's marginal area.

The threat to the area of Zagreb Trade Fair is posed by the lack of a clear vision regarding the development of this urban area and the city as a whole, but also by partial interests that also increasingly stimulate the design or modification of plans, as well as implementations that permanently restrain the development of the city, which results in a certain level of chaos and disharmony in the urban-planning, architectural and sociological sense [46].

The common feature of Zagreb Trade Fair and Novi Zagreb is the disconnected and incomplete urban-planning concept that was adapted to contemporary needs over time and to a certain extent. Today, the area of Zagreb Trade Fair is a spatial divider of Novi Zagreb, for which it is increasingly difficult to keep track of the contemporary needs of the city, but also of contemporary trade fair exhibitions. Zagreb Trade Fair represents a great urban potential for a functional and partly a structural transformation that began with the construction of the Museum of Contemporary Art alongside this exceptionally attractive and valuable urban space.

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