

2% for more or for less: the order of the [danced] factors does change the [improvised] product

2% para mais ou para menos: a ordem dos fatores
[dançados] altera o produto [improvisado]

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ABSTRACT

29% of this paper intend to discuss issues regarding artistic research, 25% approach improvisation as a dance composition strategy and the other 36% do not fit in the abstract. This research does not discover something innovative, it only proposes to play with qualitative and quantitative data, which does not mean that the numbers described here are true. The paper points out paths of *scientificization* that *numerification* is able to achieve.

Keywords: Choreographic composition. Artistic research. Creative processes.

RESUMO

29% do trabalho pretende discutir questões sobre a pesquisa artística, 25% aborda a improvisação como estratégia de composição em dança e os outros 36% não cabem no resumo. A investigação não descobre algo de inovador, apenas propõe um jogo entre os dados quali e quantitativos, o que não significa que os números aqui descritos sejam verídicos. O trabalho aponta caminhos sobre a *cientificização* que a *numerificação* é capaz de atingir.

Palavras-chave: Composição coreográfica. Pesquisa artística. Processos de criação.

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Submitted: 06/11/2017

Accepted: 30/04/2018

Research presentation

This text approaches the first considerations about a research in arts that is being carried out at an academic institution, approaching the following main themes: improvisation in dance, choreographic composition strategies, contemporary dance and tensions between qualitative and quantitative research, as well as reflections about the characteristics of artistic research.

Investigation has started in March 2017⁴, in Pelotas (RS, Brazil), instigated by discussions regarding the comprehension about artistic research and by some hypothesis the three researchers had. These hypothesis have served to arouse the creation of movements and choreographic sequences: 98% of the people have an artistic block when they start to compose in dance and 100% of the people who don't do it don't know how it is to do it.

Before long, we realized that researching in dance requires 100% of movement and that 97% of the world's population use percentage as number data that assure scientificity to academic work. That is a conclusion we got to at the very beginning of the process that moves us towards researching.

Due to many concerns about the relations of practice-theory-practice that surround our daily lives⁵, we risk playing with data *numerification* – from different sources, such as news or the collaborators' creative imagination. Because of that, it is important to highlight that the numbers presented here are not 100% true (Figure 1). The intention is to make this text playful, just like improvisation dance, which, among so many possibilities, potentializes the capacity of playing and the artists' and writers', as well as viewers' and readers' imaginations.

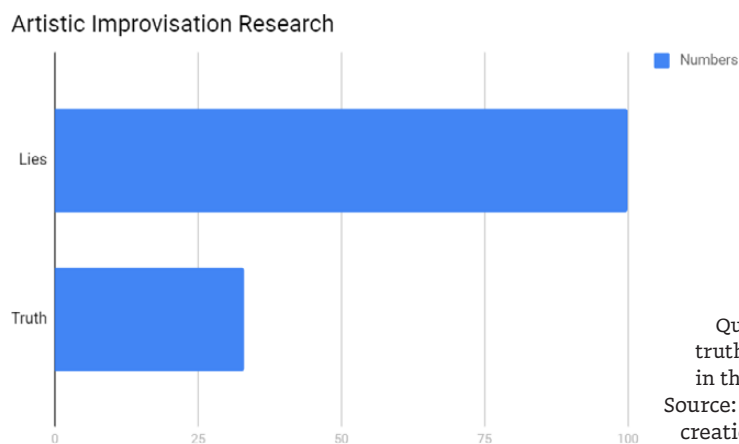


Figure 1.
Quantity of truth and lies in the article.
Source: authors' creation, 2017.

This research started with ideas, *Whatsapp* texting, coffees and after-class meetings – sometimes having wine as we dis-

4. We believe that 72,38% of the artistic experiment happened during 2017 in Pelotas (RS, Brazil), while the rest of it happened in previous life experiences, since we agree with Xavier and Meyer (2016), when they state that “your composition process has already started in this not-knowing knowing. The pre-reflection composition plan has already started and there is almost no way back and it takes your time in its own time, at any time. A cultivation and engagement work is needed in this territory that inaugurates, still hazy, its own existing mode. Your not-knowing is a good start.” (p. 274) [our translation]

5. It should be noted that the three authors are university professors at a Dance course.

cussed – and also from our eternal need to create, as well as from our difficulties to find the time to meet for it. It is a territory that started to be cultivated to finally culminate in creation, in choreography itself, in the body moving in space, in the rehearsal room and in the not-knowing, in the feeling of being lost walking around the room and talking about numbers, percentages and sentences brought from lived experiences.

The authors studied for this investigation were Zamboni (2012), Abib (2016), Martins (2003), Xavier and Meyer (2016), among others. Next, we report the methodological path we are tracing with the research in detail.

*Methodological path:
quali-quantitative-theory-practice-life-death tension*

As university professors, we live the expectation of presenting objective results to problems that take place in the different kinds of research, as in scientific method “what is not quantifiable is scientifically irrelevant” (SANTOS, 2012, p. 28).

However, for Zamboni (2012, p. 44), the process of artistic research “[...] is permeated by innumerable non-rational factors that are not controlled by the artists’ intellect and thus may need less direct ways to the needed maturation of solutions made objective by the artist.” [our translation]

Because we believe in this idea and also because we work as artists, professors and researchers, we noticed that our work cannot be quantified, because there is no logical path, nor a way of placing our “productivity” into graphs (Figure 2), since “numbers do not eat, numbers do not date, do not work, do not feel anger. Numbers do not have a name, people have names. Any person.” (ESTA NÃO É A SUA VIDA, 1991, 2m51s).

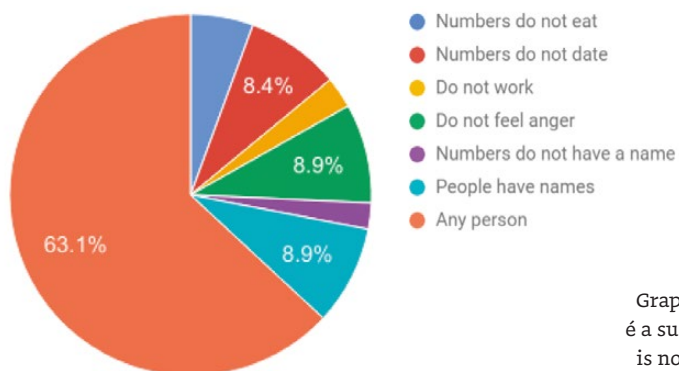


Figure 2.
Graph “Esta não é a sua vida [This is not your life]”.
Source: authors’ creation, 2017.

As we understand that the world's complexity is what makes artistic creation and production of new knowledge possible, we do not agree with a strict idea of scientific research as the one presented by Santos (2012). We understand that such kind of research overrates quantitative investigation methods and denies alternative approaches as the ones motivated by artistic creation.

The evidence we find in the creation process in dance show a counterpoint: if we took authorship into consideration regarding innovation and scientific novelty, a number itself could never be a valid data. The way towards the number validates new knowledge. But we can say that the number does not cover humanity and all the complexity that makes a human being a creator. Creation tends to the infinite.

Thus, we made a choice of writing a text as we go through our creation process in contemporary dance, understanding that different materialities feed each other. In this process, triggers are *numerification* and life's instantaneity. We use improvisation as a strategy because it takes on the speed of contemporaneity and also because we feel the need for freedom to open up for creation at the present moment, potentializing its instantaneous-ephemeral feature in different moments when the scene shall be presented.

The freedom we are talking about is the one of combining restrictions and non-restrictions. Improvisation is a tool that precisely alters the dosage of freedom in movements arrangements between restrictions and non-restrictions. The number of these arrangements is very high and can satisfy an exponential function. Each time something is combined with something else, the whole system must be reconfigured, creating a high number of variables. (MARTINS, 2003, p. 1) [our translation]

This way, as in the exponential arrangements of improvisation, this research does not follow a "traditional" methodological order, which is usually considered "correct". Herein, combinations of selecting and reading sources, defining a theoretical basis, reports, field research and data analysis follow a random order, not the one presented in this sentence. Because the order of factors does change the product, and the product, in this case, does not have to be "correct", but has to make one think and to move 130% of our bodies. Cordeiro (2016) discourses about the importance of research that comes from dance itself, as a body moving in space:

It is not about denying knowledge from other epistemological fields, which are *a priori* seen as extrinsic to the dance thinking. It is about decelerating the use or the evidence of arrogating theories that have been legitimized by sciences as the only resource to sediment artistic thinking. In short, confronting practical knowledge implicates in creating conduction lines for local theories, that are within the scope of autonomous proposals, instigating artists, along their activities, to get in touch with problems they create. (p. 124-125) [our translation]

So, we ask ourselves: *How will we do it? This is not the way to start, we need a direction.* We chose not to appeal to what we already knew (at least not in the beginning) and we risked towards the unknown. Researching took us out of our comfort zone. “In this moment, we gave the ready recipes up and faced uncertainty.” (HELLER, 2016, p. 44) [our translation]

This choice of looking for the unexplored also brought difficulty to establish a methodological path with a beginning, a middle and an end, going for what Zamboni (2012, p. 56-57) states as the work process in research in arts:

[...] it is not something linear, it is a process of coming and going, of intuition and reasoning that interposes in the way of representative reconstruction of reality. It is an eminently creative stage, that gives a material and organized shape to several ideas and facts collected from a certain reality. Although it is not the most characteristic moment, it is the most important moment of developing a research in arts, because it is exactly when ideas materialize. [our translation]

When we came across the studies by Zamboni (2012), we had a confirmation of the idea that it was necessary to have an experimental creation period in our research, to materialize into processes the ideas that sometimes showed as conflicting and out of order. Then, we slowly began this corporal and written adventure, amongst numbers, that came and still come to us as waves, taking us back and forth and side to side. It is a balance that makes us go towards known and unknown strategies of creation, calling upon and accessing memories, experiences and embarking in the unknown ocean of choreographic composition. We knew we could not go back where we started and that our choices could only allow us to invent different new beginnings.

To contextualize, in the place where this research happens, the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, 78% of choreogra-

phies are created in winter and spring. Such fact definitely influences, in a determinant way, the conception and the development of artistic ideas. For Silva *et al.* (2000, p. 730):

[...] the best conditions for creation [...] would be a temperature between 13 and 18°C, relative humidity of 60 to 70%, wind speed from 5 to 8 Km/h, fertile ground, free from parasites and bacteria [...]. Temperature, relative humidity and solar radiation in 30° latitudes in both North and South hemispheres are usually far from the ideal comfort zone for the optimum point for creation [...].⁶ [our translation]

Still regarding the region of Pelotas, located in the South of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, the same author writes about the high air humidity, which is a characteristic of this place:

Statistics analysis allow to conclude that relative humidity is higher during autumn and winter (from May to August), with a peak in July. Since relative humidity is higher than 70% in every month of the year, the region is considered very humid. (p. 734) [our translation]

So, the air humidity influenced 70% in the creation moment, once the work has been carried out in Pelotas. However, other elements were important as well, like: 13% of *Google voice*⁷; 29% of objects that were in the place; 37% of soundtracks used for warming up and in scene; 40% of previous experiences and 76% of chance.⁸ The first public presentation of the choreographic composition called *2% for more or for less* happened at the Coreolab⁹ Exhibition, an event that took place at Federal University of Pelotas on May 5th, 2017.

As we agree with Silva (2000, p. 730) that the “[...] creator must study the means to modify the environment’s impact over productivity [...]” [our translation], we propose to think about the creation comfort zone and the fertility of the grounds with which we related during the process.

Our process: improvisational Lattes life

We think the work is the way and that we are guided by movement research and we know that the joy of being together is imperative to better dance with life. We are actually opposed to lies... and we are the opposite of truth... We are married to dance, but we openly relate with... theatre... literature... philosophy... words...

6.

Even though we know the author does not use numbers to refer to artistic creation, we think that if researching somehow took us to this article, we can use it to help us to think and to invent new ways of writing and researching. But, as we know, in arts there are no truth nor lies, and we understand that the sentence can evoke innovative movements in dance.

7.

The “Google voice” is the voice we hear when we *google* for translations. Available at: <<https://translate.google.com.br/?hl=pt-BR>> We played with creating sentences containing percentage to be pronounced by the “Google voice” in order to make numbers sound even more mechanic or standardized.

8.

Here, we turn to Cunningham, with a strategy to compose from chance, which results into: “[...] the openness to possible yet unexplored movements.” (GIL, 2004, p. 29) [our translation].

9.

The *Coreolab Exhibition* is an event that takes place each semester, carried out by the *Coreolab Extension Project* at the Arts Centre of Federal University of Pelotas. The exhibition gathers choreographic works by students of the university’s Dance School, aiming to show them to a non-academic audience in Pelotas (RS, Brazil).

music... and with silence... and that is what has been teaching us how to dialogue with our "I"s (*Berê Fuhro Souto*)¹⁰.

In the perspective we have chosen to carry this research out, it was necessary that artistic practice triggered theorizing, which we believed was 50% likely to work out right, in methodological terms. Situations of our stage of life had made us willing to research. We understood that nothing in our *Lattes* boards¹¹, regarding academic production, such as titles received, or articles published, was more important than living the experience¹² of being in scene. This experience does not go through reason only, as Zamboni states:

[...] just like any other human activity, research, as a process, is not merely rational; what is rational is the conscience about the desire, the will and the predisposition for it, not the research process itself, which intercalates rational and intuitive, in search for solutions to something. These concepts work for Science and for Arts too, as research is the will and the conscience to find solutions, in any area of human knowledge. (2012, p. 43) [our translation]

Our search intends to discuss research in arts and for this, we have organized our work process around improvisation in dance, having as a theme for the research of movements percentages and their relations (numbers, graphs, tables etc.). In the first meeting of three professors-artists-researchers (us, the authors of this work), with each one collaborating with elements that could motivate artistic creation, we have idealized and put into practice creation labs, in order to build a choreographic narrative that was non-linear and open to interference by new stimulation at any time.

Usually, investigation about creation in dance starts from analysing the choreographic result. For this work, we chose to theorize from the creation moment, understanding theory as 89% of the text we present here. That means, in each creative meeting, we had a computer and while two artists danced, one kept typing impressions, considerations, ideas for future experimenting and sentences said by the others during improvisation.

To complement writing, we made the text available as a document at *Google Drive*¹³, as a strategy of easy access. With this possibility, we started to write in moments we found relevant or inspiring and in different places. From the dance practice room, writing continued at our homes, at the university corridors, in trips we took during that time.

10.

Berê Fuhro Souto was a choreographer that worked in Pelotas, RS, Brazil and influenced many generations of dancers in the city. She passed away recently (March 2017) and left an important legacy for the arts in Rio Grande do Sul, especially for improvisation in dance. She was disgusted by "academic" issues, so we prefer to refer her as she liked to be called and not by her last name, as scientific works require.

11.

In Brazil, "The Lattes CV has become the national standard of registering previous and current lives of students and researchers and today it is adopted by most of the institutions for development, universities and research institutes in the country. Due to its rich information and increasing reliability, it has become indispensable and mandatory element to analyse quality and competence of the demands for funding in science and technology." [our translation] So the Lattes platform works with a database in which it is possible to search for academic background of Brazilian researchers. Source: <<http://lattes.cnpq.br/web/plataforma-lattes/o-que-e>> Access on May 15th, 2017.

12.

Experience "is what passes by us, what happens to us, what touches us." (BONDÍA, 2002, p. 21) [our translation]

13.

Google Drive is an online storage resource which allows to store and share files with friends, with options to edit and view texts and other file types. It can be accessed through the internet and thus one can work with documents stored in any online computer. For more, access: <https://www.google.com/intl/pt-BR_ALL/drive/using-drive/>

With this, we noticed that the reflexive detachment that this individual writing provided allowed the “incubation” of thoughts related to what had been created before and that, in the following meeting, allowed new choreographic ideas for the work in progress.

Choreographic composition and text have embraced chance and ephemerality as their main characteristics. Among the inspiring moments for writing, many parts of this text come from articles randomly found, lyrics of songs we remembered because there was a link with the research, sentences said by people we considered as influencers of this work. In the next topic we will discourse on the process of choreographic composition, having improvisation in dance from the approached theme (%) as a reference.

O que será que será? *Improvisational Choreography*

O que será que me dá
 Que me queima por dentro, será que me dá
 Que me perturba o sono, será que me dá
 Que todos os tremores me vêm agitar
 Que todos os ardores me vêm atiçar
 Que todos os suores me vêm encharcar
 Que todos os meus nervos estão a rogar
 Que todos os meus órgãos estão a clamar
 E uma aflição medonha me faz implorar
 O que não tem vergonha, nem nunca terá
 O que não tem governo, nem nunca terá
 O que não tem juízo
 (Lyrics of song *O que será* - *À flor da pele* - Chico Buarque)

We believe that composing is not only selecting parts and gathering them together as something external to the creator. When one composes, one takes a position, composition goes through us and moves everything that is inside of us and everything we are. The artist’s whole life is imbued in the moment of the creation, and also defines it, although we may not be fully conscious about it. The same way, composition constitutes the artist (ABIB, 2016). We assume this from Xavier and Meyer’s definition of composition:

the comprehension of what a composition is shall not be restricted to the act of put movement, words, sound and image into scene,

but it gets to an ethical position, in a “put oneself with” or so to say, to take position with the other: with+position (2016, p. 261) [our translation]¹⁴

So, in the proposal we present here, we believe in choreography as an unfinished gesture (SALLES, 2006), which, in the moment of creation, includes exploring several corporal drafts and does not refer to the elaboration of one single writing. This is our position, from life experiences and from our current moment, in which we do not allow ourselves to make definitive decisions and rather remain open to present situations that may contribute to a choreography.

If we could compare choreographic composition to a written text, there is a default sequence that could be like some writing with a beginning, a middle and an end, even if these stages are not figuratively visible to viewers (anyway, the creator knows the path that can lead the work to conclusion). On the other hand, in dance improvisation such parallel can be thought of as the creation of many drafts that can overlap, annul, define new ways, gain volume or elements. With this, it becomes also hard to finish this text, as we are always opening a blank page and leaving it for ideas, sentences, quotes and paragraphs that are kept for the next conclusion moment.

So, we consider the work with improvisation as a *Real Time Composition*, even though our research is not aligned with the ethics of João Fiadeiro, who created and named *Real Time Composition*. Inspired by Fiadeiro and Caspão (2016), we can state that things do not remain with us, they pass by and do not stay. Xavier and Meyer (2016) understand the experience of Real Time Composition as a knowledge that happens in the experience of making itself, thus, it is less of a mode of knowledge and more of a knowledge of a mode. For us, to use this kind of composition is like opening ourselves to listening and not to enforce things to happen, but to be aware of what happens.

This way, opened to what it instantaneous, we had other two co-workers who joined us into scene in the moment of performing – something quite unusual, since they did not take part in the creation labs. This way, from three people in creative meetings, we became five at the premiere. We are not sure about how this happened, but we suspect that the “open” proposal may have insinuated that this kind of superposition could happen. We asked ourselves if we had ever made any direct invitations, but it seems more appropriate to think that the scenic insertion of these other people came as consequence

14.

In its original, the text refers to the word *composition* in Portuguese, *composição*, formed by preposition *com* (*with*) + *posição* (*position*).

of different comprehensions about improvisation each one had. For us, to welcome this kind of “chance” was not something simple, but necessary in the moment it happened, and that made us think about how we were treating our research or how our research was achieving people. And that has made us re-think the process.

We chose improvisation as the main composition creation strategy because we considered that it assures the instantaneity of the present. Improvisation allows to access that which disturbs our sleep, which shakes us, which makes us nervous, that which our organs claim for. For Corrêa *et al.* (2016, p. 53-54) “[...] to improvise is to vent new corporal discoveries, trying, in an immediate way, to express something or some sensation through the body.” [our translation] From this strategy, we have launched into scene our corporal backgrounds, which are uncontrollable for us, that will only come up in the movement’s present moment.

Those who improvise do not improvise from nothing, from the void, but from years of organic evolution, encoded somewhere inside of us, as we also work with our archetypes. We improvise from what is registered in our bodies from our perceptions, sensations, memories and all kinds of relations with the environment. (LOBO; NAVAS, 2008, p. 119)

We can consider that using improvisation is also an act of courage because there is not only risk, but also the fact that, as we listen to our body, it is possible that we access memories that are hidden and that sometimes we do not wish to move with. In our process of a poetic search, other than improvisation, we added several elements and context to compose the scene. Situations, actions, gesture, voice, music, light and costume also had an important role in creation. We tried to let space and time emerge beyond choreography.

Little by little, the work which aimed at a dance improvisation from stimuli from the process started to show us the need to make previous agreements about some aspects, as the elaboration of a soundtrack, tracing the space in which each dancer would design her scene, the need of specific light points and for costumes that were coherent with the proposal. Regarding the danced movement, during the creation labs we have organized some choreographic sheets, which we could play with in scene according to interference from the environment and the moment, something that could never be repeated.

Because of all that, although the process tends to a geographic predetermination in which each dancer could rehearse and memorize the action they are to present, we are at a moment of defining some aspects, leaving space for the unexpected, since we do not want to abandon the risk of improvisation. “It is possible to understand that a repeated scene will never happen the same way it did before, but also that a predetermined choreography does not have the same liveliness as improvisation.” (CORRÊA *et al.*, 2016, p. 53) [our translation]

The artistic process liveliness of 2% *for more or for less* is on the table – where rules are only the starting point for creation. With the uncertainty of an unfinished process, we meet the views of Martins (2003, p. 1) about improvisation in dance:

[...] improvisation disestablishes the system and dialogues with its determinations. However, the system battles not to be disestablished; systems want to remain. For this, they need to use survival mechanisms or so to say, to impose their habits and re-propose assemblages within evolutive restrictions. [our translation]

To deal with the system that insists to remain, we are ready and feel the need to abandon certain composition elements, restructure others and add new things. One of the changes we are headed to concerns the song *Leãozinho*¹⁵, used as a soundtrack. It was important as a creation impulse, but now we feel the need to change. Transformation is urgent because movement does not cease, not even with death.

15.
It is possible to find the song *Leãozinho*, by Caetano Veloso, at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1WDI3vmbVI>>

99% - Considerations

Finally, we assume that openness to the process is not only about the creation in contemporary dance through improvisation, but also about the daily academic pace we live in.

There are gaps that cannot be filled and/or concluded in this artistic work, such as: the incompatibility of our schedule and the continuous search for rehearsal rooms at the university; the theoretical discussions and the transitory definitions of what *academic* means; the non-stop explanations about why making art in an academic environment; the association with partners during the work process; among many other aspects that can also configure openness to the new instigated by our daily lives.

Because of that, the choice for improvisation as a creative

process, starting from our comprehension of daily life, from sharing doubts and from the incompleteness of the research in art, is for us also a pedagogical-artistic way of thinking about creation in dance. When we take these risks, we experience new discoveries along the way.

This work, does not aim, at any moment, to underestimate quantitative research and we clearly understand the relevance and the need for each kind of research in their knowledge area. However, we believe that our role as artists is to propose new ways to know and perceive the world, ones that move away from scientific quantification. We notice, in the experience of this investigation, a way of creating, a way of speaking about artistic research that has quantitative data as a guiding theme. We tried to produce knowledge through art, especially in academic environment, finding space for daily invention, because we believe that the world is a constant improvisation and keeps changing all the time.

Our research, then, can be considered emergent, as methodologies were little by little incorporated in artistic making, what we consider likely to produce knowledge. We searched to connect, along our text, different kinds of writing – including fiction – to allow readers to not only contemplate experiences of those who built it, but also to find space for their reflections.

Since our proposal bets on improvisation as a way to compose, we feel more able to face new situations that show up in the process. We leave it to time and still we are exchanging with the environment and with new situations, allowing changes and searching to keep the work open and possible to change. We can consider that improvisation also allows different strategies of choreographic composition to emerge in the singularity of each creation process. In other words, each choreographer ends up inaugurating new creative possibilities when they explore movements. This aspect of artistic creation – singularity – is what researchers emphasize in research in art, since, as Zamboni (2012, p. 52) states:

In art, one may consider that there is no replicated research and as research becomes a work of art, it becomes impossible to repeat it. That causes that it is not very important to formally write the definition of the research object. Usually, when one does that, it is more to meet academic and/or bureaucratic requirements than because of a work rule that is needed or established by the artist-researchers. [our translation]

We believe that authorship, as a signature, is what makes people different from others. To put such differences into numbers is relevant to mankind, but it is important to highlight that is just as important to recognize the distinction among women, men and other animals and the possibility we, as humans, have, to create new and unthinkable worlds through art.

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