

# Management as an Actional Transdisciplinary Approach of Human Beings. Application to the Management of Education

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**Abstract:** After con-damning the “modern” science for its limits and breaks to new knowledge, I do consider that the disciplinary Cartesian model of science-making is still useful only in order to have a (historical) basis for creating postmodern inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches. I already proposed not to use the word “science” anymore in the recent research but to replace it by “trans-disciplinary approaches” that ensure a broader, multilateral and comprehensive way of getting knowledge. In this respect, the old modern and unuseful dilemma if management is a science or an art is solved... Management is no more a (simple) science; it is a transdisciplinary approach, a synthetic theory of (good) human thinking, feeling and acting. Management is about establishing ends (objectives, goals, purposes, targets, aims etc.), choosing (i.e. collecting, combining and consuming) the right/ adequate means able to attain the proposed ends, and finally to establish simultaneously and continuously the level of adequation between proposed ends and the chosen means. To use the old names of (some) disciplines, I am defining the three dimensional area of managerial thinking as the geometric place of the intersection of politics (establishing ends), economics (choosing means) and ethics (end-means balancing). This 3D vision on management (or the continuum politics-economics-ethics) is intersected with another 3D actional dimension and definition of management as the thinking, feeling and acting (or the simultaneously human action based on thinking, feeling and doing). I'll demonstrate that also managerial thinking should take into consideration continuously and simultaneously other con-textual 3D realities (time, space, and existential structure).

## Introduction

Management jobs are typically complex and require a range of (very) different skills. Certainly, it is crucial that managers are able to communicate, to motivate and develop their staff successfully because human beings are - quite literally - the organization's most important resource. In my opinion the real process of management is about people that will transpose the managers' decisions. Even when many of us are talking about information

management, sales management, time management a.s.o., we have in our minds the idea that all these “things” are done with people or for them. Sometimes, managerial process is seeing very technically and mechanically although it is about leading people and management comes to be a part of humanities and social disciplines.

Probably, from this very reason professor Adizes proposed not to use the term of management anymore and to replace it by “leadership”. He demonstrates that initially, at the beginnings of the industrial era the most used term for conducting people and things was “administration” but the overuse of it emptied it of any content. The replacing term was management, but nowadays it is also overused and needs to be replaced by “leadership”, says Adizes. As a principle, I do agree the necessity to use a new coined term for top leading people and it seems that leadership underlines better the essence of the managerial human processes. Till then, I already redefined the management as a transdisciplinary approach of human actions, and put an equal between management and End Means Methodology. So, management is thinking, feeling and acting/ doing, i.e. management is clearly establishing – by thinking and feeling - **ends** (objectives, purposes, targets, aims, desires etc.) and is acting in function of the existing **means**. Management is better defined if we are going across, between and beyond many disciplines. This new approach is a transdisciplinary one. For example, information management is *thinking* about the essence and usefulness of information, *feeling* the necessity of adapting to new IT & C and *acting* for implementing the rational and emotional decisions. Of course, the other contributions to the management theory and practice are welcome and useful.

Managers/ leaders may also be charged with designing and overseeing production or service delivery systems, ensuring that organizational processes are efficient, effective and produce goods or services of the highest quality possible. A conversation between three scholars is published under the title „Management as a Design Science Mindful of Art and Surprise” (\*\* 2006, JMI). Herbert Simon coined this term (management as „design science”) in his book of 1969 when engineers were asked to make projects and to manage industries and factories. Nowadays this term may be took in a metaphorical sense, i.e. the true managers are working by projects that are designed as future actions to do (ends to be fulfilled). I am happy to find out that my „old” (1978) End Means Methodology is (indirectly) used or applied in different ways in management teaching. So, Anne Huff conceives management as an „<artful> blend of resources and action” (\*\* 2006, JMI, p. 413) and EMMY says that economics is about „collecting, combining and consuming means/ resources”. Combining or blending is, finally, consuming resources for a specific end/ purpose. To do it rationally and emotionally is management, and to do it better and better means an improved management. As a conclusion to this introductory part of this paper I propose to encourage the permanent (re)definition of management and (re)coining new names for it. This is not only useful but also necessary for the practice of management in a very dynamic and changing world.

### **From teaching (even with cases) to training with games**

Change (even the terminological change) is the only certainty in a global and highly competitive (new) economy where developments in information technology have arguably rendered geographical distance irrelevant, so sensitivity to the environment and the ability to manage change are also key competencies in the managerial portfolio. The adaptive skills are good both for top managers and executives. These changes enlarged massively the spectrum of managerial competences. The old 5-6 functions of the managerial processes are a too narrow domain for managers. A good manager needs to perceive the psychological, sociological and anthropological (humankind level) dimensions of the human existence in order to be able to take good decisions. In order to take/ make good decisions managers need to “translate” and “interpret” a lot of signs, sometimes invisible ones...That is why I do suggest (future) managers to be accustomed with semiotics, hermeneutics,

discourse analysis etc. Intuition may better serve the manager than his/ her brains... Sometimes, a real good manager needs rapid info, rapid connections and Internet is not always near to him... His memory should help him/ her to make interesting and seductive dialogues. But not any kind of knowledge stuffed in the manager's brains is a good solution for being a convincing and credible leader... A lot of information apparently not connected with the managerial theory is often needed to organize and make effective a team, to select and generate good organizational climate, but in this respect you need special feelings and special actions... Who is deciding the curricular content of an educational process, and utmost the content of management lessons?

The management courses should aim to equip students with an in-depth understanding of the various aspects of managing organizations in the context of a new millennium, so as to better prepare them for careers in management. I think that the ethical dimension of the managerial processes are more and more recognized, respected and even imposed in order to prevent conflicts or damages. I already demonstrated that management is, at last, ethical behavior of leaders and of the executives in the common process of obtaining more benefits, more sustainable development, less conflicts and preventing commercial wars. Management people are not only to practice and to promote competitiveness, but to make a mix up of cooperation and competition (co-opetition). End Means Methodology (EMMY) was proposed many years ago (Drugus, 2008) to replace the present Management courses, but insufficient dialogue and fear of change didn't permit a serious SWOT analysis of EMMY. I am still waiting that this proposal will receive the critical attention of some colleagues no matter what part of the world.

Although there are no easy answers in management jobs, my objective is to develop special skills of students so that they are capable of analyzing and deciding how to deal with complicated organizational situations. My educational philosophy therefore focuses on encouraging students to develop a questioning stance aspect of their learning, as we consider reflexivity to be one of the most essential skills a manager can possess. My teaching/ training/ coaching also emphasizes the ethics of managing, the balance between the bottom line and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in terms of diversity management and non-discriminatory decision making, relations with the local community and with the wider society and keeping in mind the environmental concerns. That is why I do consider that business ethics is not a philosophical-ethical problem but essentially a managerial problem and it needs to be offered by experienced managers to the managed people. Not only moral duties or responsibilities are to be "lectured" and learned "by heart" by management students, but the very complex cognitive and decision process are to be exercised and experienced by the future managers/ leaders.

All these short descriptions of my personal lack of satisfaction concerning the modern way of doing the management of management education suggests that this is impossible to be done in the present disciplinary or even interdisciplinary structure of modern education system. I am in favor of a postmodern, holistic, (truly) transdisciplinary, triadic and new system of preparing the future leaders of companies or administrative structures. Talking about the reform of management education I am offering a proposal for a thorough education reform in a very practical sense and dimension. A kind of Waldorf educational system for adults is proposed here and waiting for severe criticism or improvement... No semestrial or annual examinations, and no diploma final exam is needed, just because people/ students are applying EMMY in a very narrow and strict sense: if the end/ purpose is to have a diploma, then I'll buy one, or I'll buy the exams necessary and previous obtaining a diploma. Instead of subjective (and often corrupted) exams I propose a new way of teaching and training. Games, cases, exercises, paradoxes, conflict resolution and mitigation are to be largely used in this new vision on (management) education. It is quite necessarily to underline that I think this EMMY (general management theory and practice) is needed to be offered to young pupils even since the grammar

school or before...Of course, pedagogical experts will have something to say in this respect. Waiting for their (counter) arguments...

## **The Prisoners' Dilemma**

There is a huge literature on logical and managerial games, but the Prisoners' Dilemma is the most well known. Obviously, there are hundreds of variants and interpretations. It is important not only to present the large spectrum of alternative Prisoners' dilemma but to extract a lot of possible learning from this "game". This exercise is quite significant for any market analysis, for international and intercontinental political relations, and for any cooperation or conflict situation. Starting from a simple ancient story scholars developed a game based on a logical structure that is not only a deductive one or based on the "tertium non datur" logic. The story tells us about two citizens (A and B) of an ancient Greek polis. Here it is: they broke the social rule and were arrested by the polis armed people (police). They are imprisoned together in the same room (this is different from the classical story) and waiting to be judged. Everyone has EXACTLY the same HUMAN way of thinking. Of course, this is a forced generalization, but it is needed for our purpose. One important feature is that, generally speaking, three important behaviors could happen and this story contains all of them. First, it is the non-cooperative attitude of the two prisoners, second is cooperative behavior and third is cooperation followed by treason (defection). In any managerial situation we may find, more or less, one of the three behavioral attitudes. I may add here that psychology is fundamental for both management theory and management practice. The attitudes are reflections/ reverberations/ vibrations of thinking and feeling, and we may summarize that management is attitude plus action. So, the three managerial positions of the two imprisoned people are simply attitudes generated by interests (ends) and available resources (means). Finally, the Prisoners' Dilemma is a concrete application of End Means Methodology and I may say that old Greeks very well applied EMMY... Let's say the prisoner A has the following managerial model, i.e. his thinking, feeling and acting are as follows: "Oh, foul of me, I was stupid enough not to pay attention to those guards who caught me up! Now, I am in prison together this guy of low human quality... Of course, if I could have trust with him it would be a possibility to cooperate and to try to have a common strategy to escape...But I couldn't...". Exactly in the same way was thinking and feeling (i.e. managing his daily life) the other imprisoned guy. The very result of this lack of trust was non-action and the stagnation in the same bad situation of imprisonment. In this respect both of them are losing (time, chances, opportunities, i.e. some points in the general table of winning and losing). That is why I afforded them minus 20 points, i.e. non-cooperative attitude costs them 20 units of penalty. It is a loose-loose model. This is the 1st behavioral/ managerial model based on non cooperative attitude. It is the worst one. But, after a while, A is thinking as follows: If I'll continue to be suspicious about my colleague I'll have no chance to escape. I am transforming him in another guard who shall prevent me from escaping. So, I think (and feel!) that it is better to try to cooperate with him and to increase my chances and opportunity to be a winner. Exactly in the same way is thinking the citizen B. So, after a while they make dialogue and begin to cooperate and make a plan of escaping. They generated the second managerial behavioral model based on cooperation. This is marked in our game with +10, i.e. everyone is winning something. It is a win-win model. It is interesting to observe that the amount of gains (as a result of a pure non-cooperative managerial model) is smaller than the amount of lose (as the result of a cooperative model). This is true in real economic life: gains are created little by little, but lose are coming abruptly and in great dimensions. Of course, after experiencing two models of thinking and feeling, the two prisoners try to apply their managerial project, and it works! By cooperation, they succeed to fool the first guard and here they are on the prison wall. In

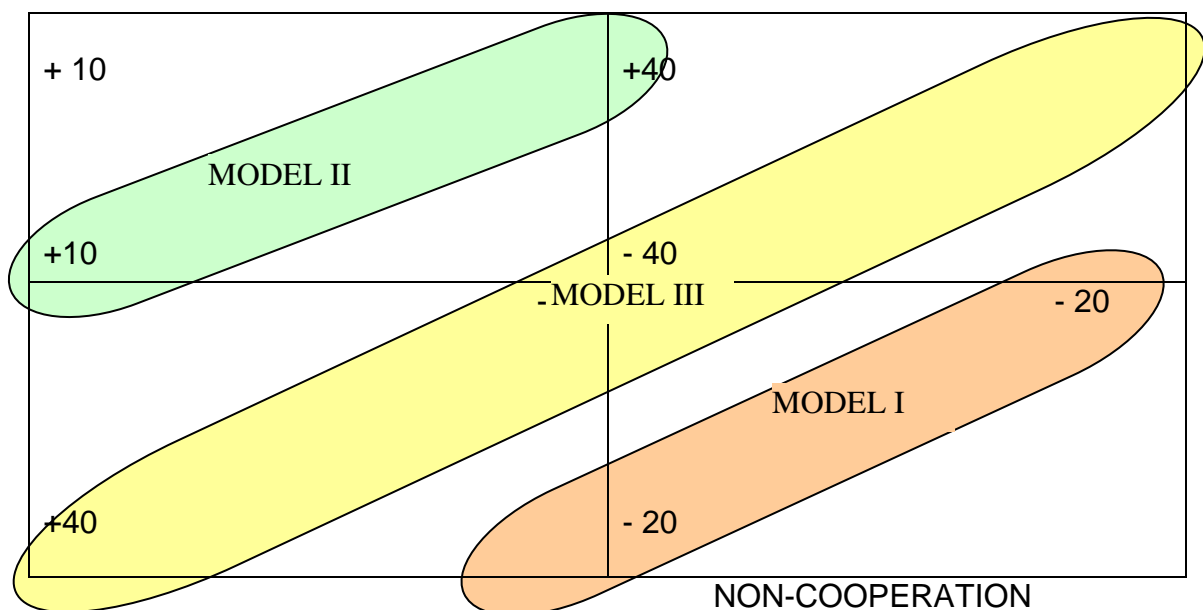
this very place that is separating the free world by the lack of freedom world, both of them are intensively thinking and highly emotionally feeling on their chances to improve the score, to grow their gains at any price! Here is their rationale: if we'll run together our chances to escape is diminishing. Even more, if I'll push back the other guy, I'll increase dramatically my gains, no matter my colleague will lose a lot. By pushing him back I'll attract the guards' attention to him and my chances and benefits will grow a lot! But if both of them are thinking in the same way the question is: which one will gain? Evidently, those one who will ACT first! To the speed of thinking and feeling the speed of acting is now added. This means that cooperation is over, the treason appear and the strange conclusion comes: to defect (and even to defect as soon as possibly) is recommended as an efficient way of life. We are obliged to offer the traitor a very high level of gain: +40, and to punish the other with -40. This is the third managerial model based on cooperation followed by defection and acute competition. The convention is not respected and any moral aspects disappear in the hard fight for getting more and more profit... Is this model to be followed? Some could say yes, but this may be right only on a very short term. After years, B will be freed from prison and will apply the sad lesson he learned from his prison mate A. In his turn, A will increase his chance to be fooled just because people fear a former prisoner, and even one who defected and gained his freedom with the price of lying and making worse to another human being....After a while all mature people learn to defect as soon as possible... and the only thing to be aimed at will be to increase the speed of defecting...In such an impossible world the social dimension is broken and death become preferable to life...Solution? A new society is possible by changing this mentality and educating people to cooperate, to gain steadily and sustainable. This third model comes to be worse even than the first (non-cooperative) model...

The prisoners' fundamental behavior models are as follows in function of the degree of cooperation: I. non-Cooperation, II Cooperation, III. Cooperation followed by treason.

Prisoner A

COOPERATION

COOPERATION FOLLOWED BY TREASON



The Prisoners' Dilemma is a very much applied game in business life and in political life as well. Two quite clear situations of applying this game are: Cold War solution (1989) – at the political global scene and post communist economic processes in Romania

after 1990 – at the economic local scene. For short, these two case studies are as follows:

**1. The Cold War solution.** The two principal global actors in the Cold War period, USA and USSR, tried to gain benefits from different strategies and managerial models. USA strictly applied Prisoners' Dilemma by obtaining a high trust from new installed Gorbachev government. The promise was to give up the bad essences of the two confronting systems (capitalism and communism), i.e. to lack of (economic) freedom in Soviet empire and to military menace from the American policy, and to merge together towards a third way model that took from both the best features (cooperation and competition but in a new third way called co-opetition). The accord was "signed" and the Great Transformation took place: the Berlin wall disappeared, the Eastern markets opened for Western products etc. The proposed inclusion of Russian Federation into the European common market was a simple illusion and soon Russian government took another direction, that of considering that USA didn't respected the rules and that it has the right to choose another political global track. So, after a period of non-cooperation (during the Cold War) – model I, the two actors begun to cooperate – model II, but this was for a short (historical) time and, nowadays the two actors are experiencing the third model, and things seems to go to the first non cooperative model.

**2. The Romanian case:** The Romanian Communist policy and ideology was – theoretically – based on cooperation, reciprocal aid and respect of the other. After 1990, some people tried to apply capitalist market rules and some new private firms appeared, but just because the capital was so small the owners cooperated in creating the new firms. This was model I. Soon, model III appeared and generalized. No trust – no credit, big inflation and negative economic growth were the characteristics of Romanian economy for aprox. ten years. Only after 2000 the trust was rebuilt, cooperation began to work and Romania experienced the longest and highest economic growth in the region. So, Romania is nowadays (in 2008) in the second model of Prisoners' Dilemma. The management is based on the rule of law and ethical principles are more and more promoted. Business ethics is still missing as a teaching subject in many faculties from Romania.

A lot of other applications of the Prisoners' Dilemma managerial model could be finding out and used instead of long explanatory texts. The only risk of using these behavioral patterns is that students may take it as a joke and not to be deeply implied in finding out solutions or places to use these models. If we simply consider education as a dyadic model (with only two actors: professor and student), then the three behavioral models from the Prisoners' Dilemma could be applied. The ideal model is Model I, a win – win situation when teacher/ professor and pupil/ student get satisfaction from their work. Things get worse when professor is boring the student and student is stressing the professor. This is the second model, a non cooperative one. Here is the place to intervene and to find out a solution. But the worst situation is when parents are paying money for their children, the children do not come to school, they do not learn anything, professors lack their sense of utility, then the parents help their children to pass the exams and to obtain a diploma by corrupting professors, so finally we have: parents with a worse financial position, graduates without knowledge and professors without dignity and sense of utility. And this happens in Information Era, in the Knowledge based economy and Knowledge society. It is more than clear that this suggests the need for a radical reform in the education system.

### **The management of education reform**

If management is (1) establishing the ends, (2) choosing the most adequate means and (3) testing permanently and continuously the real level of adequation, then the management of the education system should answer the following three questions: 1. what are the real ends of teachers, students, parents, employers and other implied institutions; 2. what are the real present and future possible means (resources) to be used; 3. who and

how are to observe the degree of adequation between ends and means in the educational system in Romania. In this case we have three principal actors (students, professors and employers), so it is about a trilemma not a simple dilemma with three possible models. In trilemma there are many more possibilities and alternative models to choose. Probably, this trilemmatic aspects maintains the Romanian education system unreformed. Applying EMMY to education reform in Romania (and any elsewhere) is to be done. For the sake of this paper I'll describe the real situation of the education system in Romania and some radical solutions to be applied.

***The most principal directions for reform in education system are, in my opinion, as follows:***

- The entire education system (especially the academic education is not to be based anymore on fear: of professor, of tasks, of examinations and of marks. The adult learner (over 18) is really self motivating his or her desire to know, to have skills or to be able to manage things and people in difficult situations. In this respect, I do propose to eliminate classical exams based on memorization of facts & figures, data and phrases that are immediately forgotten after examination. Also, no diploma or certificate is necessary to proof the level of intelligence, the reproductive capacities or the degree of obedience to professors. The only examiner should be the employer, not the professor. As a direct consequence, the bachelor degree, the graduation examination, diploma exams and dissertation exams are to be eliminated. Even doctorate is not to be based on a lot of examinations, but on dialogue, cases, games, and any other stimulus for a better training could be imagined. Those who need a very qualified person should address to professors/schools that can recommend
- The employer is nowadays not clearly formulating his/ her needs and the expectations from the university system, but wait from university a very good specialist/ expert. The lack of dialogue between academic system and the society real needs is the big problem for both parts.
- Also, we need to make a difference between the compulsory and non compulsory education. Only the compulsory education may use some impulses and as higher as possible exigencies to determine the young and not willing to learn person to accumulate knowledge, a big part of it (s)he never will use...
- The open dialogue is sometimes entirely missing from the academic educational process and the reading of some texts written by him/ her or by any other person is offered as higher education/ teaching...This is a very good reason to prepare future teachers/ trainers to be creative themselves in order to stimulate an generate creativity for the future graduates.
- Elimination of all exams at the level of non compulsory education is a very good solution to eliminate corruption from university, selling exams, dissertations or simply diplomas...The present system for obliging students to write a dissertation is an excellent means for promoting plagiarism or mimic of creative writing. More than that, the noncompulsory education based on compulsory exams is a contradiction in itself, is not logic and rational at all. The present education system is canceling any sense of the education process as a stage for preparing and entering the knowledge economy.
- After the presenting the structure of the course/ discipline, and inviting students to critically appreciate it, to even improve it the most frequent questions are: "What about examination criteria and style? Is it based on grill system or is with questions? Do we need to make reports? Do we need to read all recommended books? Is it a difficult exam?" The students are not interested of knowledge but of exams and diploma/ certificate they will receive...

- Education is a market where the demand is, unfortunately, not based on a certain level of knowledge/ education, but on diplomas and certificates. The students have the right of not participating to lessons, so many of them are coming directly to examination, looking for solution to obtain a passing mark...Also, the professors are not objective automatic machines for establishing levels of knowledge and competence, but subjective human beings, influenced by interests, psychic and temperamental attitudes etc.
- If universities are interested to have as many students as possible, if subjectivity is inherent, and the performance is established by number of graduates, all these are simply waste of time and money, psychic pressure for students and stimulus for corruption.
- Professors need to be suppliers of knowledge, skills and competencies for the demands of a very dynamically changing labor market. But if the professors are the organizers, the providers and the controllers, then happens as in a factory where workers are establishing the quality standards and they are executing the control to see if the standards are respected. This lack of real contact with the labor market was observed for many years ago, but solutions are still to be found. I think that one serious step to finding a solution is that professors to give up the examiner position and this examination to be made by those who demanded a certain type of preparation at the graduate or master level. In such a case, professors will concentrate themselves for finding new methods for training and coaching, students will realize (by the market pressure) and not the exam, mark and diploma are important but their real level of knowledge and preparedness for the market demands, for real life. As a result, students will choose to directly and permanently participate to lessons and meetings with their trainers. They will realize that it will be more important for them to train for the market demands and not to prepare for obtaining a good mark. Learning by doing and by sharing is the real market command! Training and coaching should be the answers of the knowledge suppliers.
- Some concrete solutions may appear: interested firms may ask the faculties to prepare a number of high school graduates to be prepared in the higher school in order to receive a list of skills and competencies. The firm may pay for these services and recover the spent money from the higher profit obtained as a result of a targeted training.
- From the conceptual point of view I'll just mention here some proposals for changing attitudes towards modern, Cartesian, disciplinary way of understanding knowledge and to replace it by a postmodern/ transmodern, non-Cartesian, transdisciplinary way of understanding and using knowledge as a sustainable (trans) development factor. For many years I do not use anymore the word "sciences", just because I was in favor of "science" as a unified corpus of knowledge. There was only one compact science/ knowledge but, unfortunately, people cut and divided it in thousands of small pieces without links and communication among them. It is exactly like in a society where every individual is developing his/ her own living without any kind of communication and exchange of info, views or reciprocal help. That is why I proposed to Develop Research Units Generating Unified Science, but this needs efforts at continental level. Nowadays I am not using at all the word "science", but only the word "knowledge (The science is dead! Long live knowledge!). The epistemic economies were the modern economies were based on disciplinary science, on scientific management and scientific decision making. The post epistemic economies are the contemporary postmodern economies based on transdisciplinary knowledge. So, scientific approach is dead, knowledge approach is alive!

## Concluding remarks

The need for change is a permanent one and there are a lot of possible solutions for improvement. Most important is to obtain better and more sustainable results, for a bigger number of people. Here EMMY is very useful just because any decision taken within this system needs to be tested simultaneously and continuously at the three levels: micro, macro, mondo (global), i.e. at the every individual level, at social (group) level and at global (humankind) level. This is compulsory now when the globalizing forces are working with bigger force and impact. I suggest that a soft may be created to calculate the huge costs of not applying this holistic, triadic, transdisciplinary and postmodern thinking, feeling and acting model called EMMY. As I previously proposed EMMY may take the place for all social and humanistic disciplines taught at schools and faculties, saving a lot of time and preventing tensions in the system. If EMMY does not sound well for a subject to be learned at school, we may call it simply: management. So, this is a quite synthetically corpus of knowledge about real life, about thinking, feeling and acting both as an individual, a group or humanity. Unfortunately, no counter arguments appear, except, of course, those that claim it is difficult for professors to learn a new model. In this case appears more clearly that students are quite motivated not to learn anymore...

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