

**TRANSFORMATION OF WORKING MODELS BEFORE AND AFTER THE COVID 19  
OUTPUT PROCESS: THE REMOTE WORKING MODEL**

AFRO EURASIAN STUDIES - VOLUME: 11 / ISSUE: 1 pp. 40-55

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**Received:** 06.07.2022

**Accepted:** 15.10.2022

**Cite as:** Bulbul, Y. (2022). Transformation of Working Models Before and After the Covid 19 Output Process: The Remote Working Model, *Afro Eurasian Studies*, 11 (1), 40-55 DOI: 10.33722/afes.1148521

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## COVID 19 SALGIN SÜRECİ ÖNCESİ VE SONRASINDA ÇALIŞMA MODELLERİNİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ: UZAKTAN ÇALIŞMA MODELİ

### ÖZ

Dünya Sağlık Örgütü'nün Mart 2020 yılında pandemi ilan etmesinden bugüne salgının yayılım hızını önlemek amacıyla küresel çapta uzaktan çalışma modeline geçiş yapılması zorunlu hale gelmiştir. Bu durum salgın öncesinde de var olan ancak, salgından sonra birçok sektörde kullanılmaya başlanan uzaktan çalışma modelinin rutin hale gelmesiyle geleneksel çalışma modeli tartışılır olmuştur. Evden çalışma modeli birçok sektör için geçerli olmaktadır ancak bazı sektörler sadece yüz yüze çalışabilmektedirler. Uzaktan çalışmaya hızlıca geçiş yapmak zorunda kalan birçok firma hem işverenler hem de çalışanlar adına çeşitli avantajlar ve dezavantajları ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu avantaj ve dezavantaj değerlendirmeleri, işçilerin evden çalışmaya alışması, ancak kendilerini izole hissetmeleri ve ofiste sosyalleşmenin ortadan kalkmasıyla 2021 yılından itibaren ev - ofis dengesini sağlamaya yönelik olan hibrit model hayata geçirilmeye başlanmıştır. Şu anda küresel düzeyde pek çok firma hibrit modeli desteklemekte, bir kısmı geleneksel model ile ofis çalışmasına devam etmekte, bir kısmı ise uzaktan çalışma modelini uygulamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Covid – 19, Çalışma Modelleri, Uzaktan Çalışma, Hibrit Çalışma, Pandemi Çalışma

### TRANSFORMATION OF WORKING MODELS BEFORE AND AFTER THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC PROCESS: REMOTE WORKING MODEL

#### ABSTRACT

Since the World Health Organization declared a pandemic in March 2020, it has become mandatory to switch to a global remote/teleworking model in order to prevent the spread of the pandemic. This situation has become the traditional working model as the remote working model, which existed before the pandemic but started to be used in many sectors after the epidemic, became routine. The working from home model is valid for many sectors, but some sectors can only work face-to-face. Many companies that had to quickly switch to remote work have revealed various advantages and disadvantages for both employers and employees. With these advantages and disadvantages assessments, workers getting used to working from home, but feeling isolated and socializing in the office disappeared, the hybrid model aimed at maintaining the home-office balance started to be implemented as of 2021. Currently, many companies at the global level support the hybrid model, some continue to work in the office with the traditional model, and some continue to use the teleworking model.

**Key Words:** Covid – 19, Working Models, Teleworking, Hybrd Working, Work in Pandemic

## **Abstract**

There has been a global change in people's lives in the fields of social, health and education, while working life has also had to be transformed due to social distance requirements since the World Health Organization declared a pandemic in March 2020. There were solutions which have been sought due to the uncertainty of the future of the epidemic, in the period when the virus first appeared, especially since the beginning of 2020. These search for solutions is related to almost every area of our lives, but most of all, they are closely related to trying to organize business life. There were factors such as the development of technology and easy access to the internet have also helped in the transformation and change of working models, so working from home has become the 'new normal' during the epidemic period and it is interiorized by people.

A lot of companies have brought new regulations to business life as quickly as possible, as they foresee that the worldwide epidemic will affect business continuity. However, the distinction between home and work environment has disappeared in this process. Besides that, since quarantine processes are also running in order to prevent the spread of the epidemic in countries, work has become too involved in the lives of employees and isolates themselves from the outside world. Employers and companies have sought some measures to increase the motivation of the employees and prevent the decrease in productivity. This is reflected in the attitudes about the role of the office in business life, albeit out of necessity. Therefore, the way things are done is structured. However, this structuring or remote working did not meet the same expectations for every employee. Employees who had difficulties in terms of productivity had difficulties in adopting the process (Boland, Smet, Plater and Sanghvi, 2020).

It seems that unlikely that the working from home system will return to its pre-epidemic level. This working model is becoming established, and even the hybrid working model, which makes it possible to work from both home and office, has the potential to be permanent. Spreading of working from home suddenly and the fact that employers are both inexperienced and inflexible on the subject show the results of the necessity in working life, however show that we have come to an important turning point globally in terms of the transformation of working models (Berastagul, 2021).

The advantages and disadvantages of remote working have also shown themselves in the process for both employees and employers. There are some advantages emerged, such as the elimination of the employees' transportation problems, reduction in office expenses, and less absenteeism. The epidemic process has been more difficult for people who work insecure or informally and have to work face to face. Many people have faced job loss. There are other reasons for the transition to remote working. These reasons are possibility of being completely isolated, general-

ly sedentary, difficult to maintain a quiet environment at home during the epidemic period, and the fact that there is too much imbalance between work and life due to a process stuck in the virtual world, and the risk of working more due to the problem of not being able to disconnect while working virtual disadvantages also emerged (Stevens, 2021).

It shows that working life can now be evaluated in different ways as the pre-pandemic period and the post-pandemic period. However, when the pandemic is completely eliminated, the final results will begin to become more evident on a global scale in the process. For this reason, it is important for the study to understand and analyze the transformation and process in working models. In this study, the changes that the covid-19 epidemic process brought to the working life, the turning points created by the epidemic in the working models are mentioned in the direction of current data and information.

The research questions sought to be answered in this study are: Firstly, what is the general effect of the pandemic on working models, and secondly, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the home working model, which has been applied globally during the pandemic period, and what is the validity of working from home for every employee in every sector. These research questions will be examined and evaluated with current available information in the study.

### **Globally Accepted Working Model Before the COVID-19 Pandemic Process**

Before the COVID-19 process, the full-time working model from the office was the most adopted working model, while part time working, remote working, etc. which are outside the traditional working model. The flexible working model, which includes working models, was applied by lots of countries on a global scale with the support of Neoliberal policies. However, it was less adopted than in the pre-pandemic period. Traditional working models began to be questioned and working styles and work habits began to be formulated accordingly along with the epidemic process. According to the statistics, 14% of employees were working remotely 10 years before the epidemic, this rate increased to 56% in 2020. As a necessary consequence of these conditions, employees define themselves as remote workers now (Sava, 2022).

It was seen that the remote working model became the most widespread during the epidemic. The remote-home working model rates remained almost stable in the 10 years before the epidemic, especially in Europe. In fact, this meant that many employees experienced remote work for the first time during the epidemic (European Commission, 2021, s.1). The flexible and remote working was common in many countries in the world before the epidemic, but it was partially applied in some sectors due to preference rather than necessity. When we look at these prevalence rates according to the OECD report, the situation that was slightly different from today was that they differed proportionally from country to country. To give an

example of this is that while Italy only applied a 25% remote working model before the pandemic, this rate was doubled in countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands in the same years (OECD, 2020).

On the other hand, the OECD, mentioned that with the pandemic, remote working has been implemented out of necessity in different sectors through public policies. OECD has mentioned that not every employee can accept their work in a way that adapts to this working model after the pandemic. Although a lot of companies which did not need regular technological infrastructure and were not equipped in this field before the pandemic provided partial remote work, they were not technically developed as much as the pandemic period. It was important that there was no necessity here and that face-to-face work could be performed when necessary. The remote work was most prevalent in knowledge-intensive industries prior to the pandemic. In sectors such as health and social work, traditional full-time and face-to-face work was seen, not remotely due to the nature of the work. In addition, manufacturing and jobs that require factory production were among the sectors that did not implement remote working. Among workers, remote working was more common among skilled workers (OECD,2020).

While many employees stated that they had never experienced remote working before the pandemic, only one in five people stated that they worked from home before the pandemic and were subject to the traditional working model before. According to research by the Pew Research Center, 71% of these workers started working from home permanently in 2020. This is a very significant rate compared to the pre-pandemic period. At the same time, it has been found that high-income workers adapt to working from home more quickly than middle- or lower-income workers. This has shown that the income level is also very important in terms of adapting the workers to the changing working models. In terms of motivation, young workers stated that they had difficulties during the pandemic period, and 53% of those between the ages of 18 and 29 stated that they could not adapt at home as they worked in the office (Parker, Horowitz and Minkin, 2020).

As can be seen that the necessity brought by the epidemic has created a turning point for working life in the world suddenly. Therefore, while the transformation to change in working models spread rapidly globally, different difficulties, conveniences and expectations have emerged regarding the working lives of both employers and workers.

### **The Global Expansion of Remote Working with Flexible Working During the COVID-19 Epidemic Process**

The pandemic process has affected many areas from social life to working life. Thus, many sectors had to switch to a work-from-home model. This has also affected people's social life, order, economy and many areas of life. At the same time, depending on this, the epidemic process has changed working more dependent on

technology, the way the work is done, the way the work is controlled (Long, 2022, p.217 -218). The changing working models actually refers to flexible working models in general terms during the epidemic. There are working models such as part-time working and remote working within the flexible working model. These working models are quite different from traditional working hours in terms of production, being in a certain center or working hours. For example; People who are working part-time do not have a full-time job during the week, work less than full-time employees, and are paid less than full-time employees due to the hours they work. The remote working is also describing decentralized working. This actually means flexible working (ILO, n.d.). Actually, the flexible working model started to become widespread in the late 1980s, with the impact of the developments in technology and the internet, and in the neoliberal globalization process, where capital became unlimited (Mahiroğulları ve Korkmaz, 2018, p.19). Actually, the existing flexible working model has been integrated into the sectors that it could not integrate with the epidemic. It has led to a transformation in business models, new applications and various advantages as well as disadvantages, from working hours to the way the work is done and the blurring of the distinction between private and business areas in many sectors with the effect of the epidemic.

The research conducted by Dingel and Neiman in the United States includes the experiences of workers in this process and examined how working from home (remote) is distributed according to occupations and sectors. It has been seen that 37% of the works can be performed from home nationwide according to the research (Dingel ve Neiman, 2020, s.1). According to OECD research, the working model, which is called ‘tele-working’ and is formed with technology tools and devices included in flexible working, has shown the increase in digitalization in working life of people. The remote working has become more common in large firms than in smaller firms, and lots of skilled workers are more likely to use this system. For example; According to OECD data, the rate of teleworking among people with master’s and doctorate degrees in the USA was five times higher than that of other least-qualified workers (OECD, 2021 p.2).

According to a survey conducted on 415 white-collar workers, 58.3% of whom work in the private sector, in different regions of Turkey, it was revealed that 67.2% of the participants considered working from home as a necessity. In addition, it was determined that the workload of more than 80% of the employees increased or remained at the same level. According to the data, 68% of the employees have not experienced remote working before. The majority of the employees stated that they do not suffer from the opportunities provided for working from home. The important point in the research is the relationship between the education level of the employees and the adoption of the remote working model. Employees with higher education levels adopted the teleworking model more than those with lower education levels.

Many leading companies in Turkey aim to work remotely and make the hybrid model permanent as similar. For example; Koç Holding, which has 90 thousand employees, stated that 35 thousand of them are now working remotely. In addition, large holdings such as Sabancı, Doğuş, Yıldız, and many banks and telecommunication companies are trying to make the remote and hybrid working model permanent (The Economist, 2022; Başol and Çömlekçi, 2021, p.772).

The distinction is important that OECD data makes between working models and sectors according to the teleworking model. According to the data, tourism, accommodation, transportation, health, social care, construction etc. sectors have experienced very difficult and uncertain times in the pandemic regarding remote working. According to OECD data, it has been observed that the private sector, rather than the public sector, can use more digital systems in the world (OECD,2021, p.3). Cafe-restaurant-style places that serve face-to-face were also closed by governments in many countries in order to control the epidemic, so consumers had to spend time at home. Thus, while their work life is integrated into the home, the social life of millions of people has also been suspended and the sectors that have to provide face-to-face services have been involved in an uncertain and difficult process on their behalf (Tooze, 2021). As a result, the fact that in some sectors the work cannot be carried out remotely or the disadvantages of working remotely cannot be ignored have led many companies to the hybrid model. Hybrid working has actually been expanded to reduce the isolation of employees without making a sharp distinction between home and office.

The hybrid model is part of the remote working and actually offers more flexibility to employees. The flexible hybrid working can also be separated in itself. Hybrid work can be divided into several models that can be separated in itself. These models are: Flexible hybrid working where employees choose their own working place and hours, office priority hybrid work, where they work from home some days of the week and some days from home, fixed hybrid work with no options for working days and hours in the office, remote priority hybrid work, where employees come to the office occasionally, often working remotely. In general, the advantages and disadvantages of hybrid working types are parallel to the remote working model. It is more convenient for those who work outside the office in terms of time and transportation, but it has been seen that hybrid work, which does not take the office as a priority, can cause isolation and problems that may be experienced in the workplace. In general, it is seen that it is a working model that offers flexible options to employees, that large companies have started to prefer, and that can be valid in the future (Webex, n.d.).

Therefore, it can be said that the hybrid working model is perceived as the new normal when we reach 2022. Also, this model, which supports remote working to a considerable extent, shows that it can actually be a more acceptable model, espe-

cially for employees, since it does not completely remove it from the office. For the individual can flexibly determine the place where people will work in hybrid work, IBM and Microsoft researches have shown that employees are now willing to work not only from home, but also in different places. However, employers should also determine which team, job or organization the hybrid model can be applied to more (Hastie and Roberts, 2022). As a result, due to the adoption of new working models, both employers should analyze the process well, especially in the post pandemic period, and implement the practices as a result of the analyses.

### **Sectors Most Affected by Changing Working Models During the Epidemic Period**

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), with the pandemic, the loss of working hours in full-time – traditional working models globally has been important for almost all sectors. For example, while losses in Southern Europe were 5.3%, losses in Western Europe were 4%. It has been observed that many governments have brought regulations on supportive income and jobs in order to prevent the collapse of economies from the uncertain period created by the pandemic, and accordingly innovation and flexibility have been tried to be implemented (ILO,2020, p.5 - 13).

Before the epidemic, it was quite common for home maintenance, cleaning, etc. The epidemic period was also very risky for people who are generally employed in a precarious way in return for their activities. Since this type of work is more common among women, women are more affected economically and socially in the context of domestic work and domestic production. This has affected lots of workers globally, whether formally or informally, doing similar jobs. Since domestic work cannot be an activity to be carried out remotely during the epidemic process and it is not possible to carry out the work due to social distance rules, many people have experienced that this common working model can suddenly become invalid in a process of epidemic. Especially in 2020, the year the epidemic started, according to the data of the ILO, while the rate of domestic workers was 49.3% in March 2020, this rate reached 72.7% in May 2020 (ILO, 2020, p.1).

The companies producing in many factories in different countries became unable to produce during the epidemic. Besides that, it could not be integrated into the working models during the epidemic period in sectors and regions with a large immigrant population and employing low skilled workers. Essentially, the inability to work remotely in every sector has triggered risks in terms of labor income and unemployment during the pandemic. This means that the risk of creating an imbalance or inequality among employees. For example; A lot of people who are working in the agricultural sector have experienced difficulties during the pandemic process. Many employees had to leave for unpaid leave, and as the pandemic process lengthened, the layoffs over time became wearisome in the face to face sectors. Lots of busi-



nesses had to close in the process. This affected the poorest countries the most. This effect has been important in terms of both health and economic factors. This carries the risk of deepening inequality between countries (CEPR, 2020).

The informal workers have been the most affected during the epidemic, because they are not protected by law and work insecure. The informal workers do not only correspond to a particular sector and can work in different fields. They are generally employed in the fields of construction, cleaning, repair, maintenance and restaurants. This is a similar situation in that in many countries it also has to do with the way things are done. (European Commission, n.d.) Because of the informal workers were not subject to any law, they could not access the economic or social support provided by governments during the epidemic period. When we consider that 11.6% of the total employees in the European Union countries are not declared in the private sector and approximately 15% of the GDP is unregistered, the fact that even in Europe many employees cannot access the financial support provided by Turkey emerges. This situation points to a very economical picture for the employees. Also, lots of self-employed people employed in small businesses do not have access to financial support (Williams and Kayaoğlu, 2020).

The sectors negatively affected by the process, and especially the number of employees is quite high globally. The fact that not every job can be carried out by teleworking and the problems that arise for the informal sectors open this aspect of the teleworking model to discussion. It shows that working models also have different effects in terms of class, and this is also seen as one of the disadvantages of working remotely.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Transformation in Working Models**

It is mentioned that the problems experienced by employees in commuting to work are eliminated by the remote working in the report titled Healthy and Safe Remote Working, that describes the emergence of remote working models published by the World Health Organization and ILO. People do not waste time on the road and do not have to use the traffic. This is also seen as one of the advantages provided in order to prevent air pollution, since it means using less vehicles. In addition to this, higher productivity is achieved in some sectors compared to the past, and many companies or companies have the opportunity to reduce their expenses. However, in addition to all these, while working remotely may cause the balance between work and life to deteriorate, at the same time it carries risks such as working at home for a longer period of time. At the same time, the employee's inability to be in a quiet environment and lack of access to a private job at home can also have negative effects on the employee. At the same time, breaks to spare time for physical activities should be given regularly, and technological devices which workers will use for their work should be provided to them (ILO, 2021).

On the other hand, The European Commission emphasized that the advan-

tages of the flexible or remote working, as well as the disadvantages, and discussed the disadvantages. The most important of these is that employees have to work longer hours when they work from home. The employees who can finish their work in the office and go home cannot experience the same feeling of quitting at home. This means that the work is spread and intertwined with the time spent at home. In addition to this, if the employee uses their personal technological devices for work, this may make it difficult to separate the private and work areas, reduce their concentration, and may not feel comfortable. On the other hand, one of the disadvantages is the high probability of employees not having a separate place to work at home (European Commission, 2022). One of the situations that can be seen as an advantage for people working remotely is that in cases of illness or feeling unwell, both absenteeism from work decreases and people can spend time at home. Also, parents can find the opportunity to spend more time with their children when they work from home. In addition to this, employees can find the opportunity to fit small household chores into their lunch breaks when they leave the office and go home. However, while doing all these, employees are likely to feel quite isolated from life, so working from home for a long time can tire people out psychologically. Especially, making regular online meetings and planning together and staying in touch can be important to reduce the idea of isolation. The organization of the employer is important here. In addition to this, it can be difficult to monitor the performance of employees remotely. At the same time, for the computers and mobile devices where the information is stored are always at home, remote access to the servers may pose a risk in terms of information security, encryption, backup, etc. measures must be taken in a timely manner. One of the disadvantages of working from home is that employees stay away from team spirit and teamwork as they constantly have to communicate with each other remotely (NiBusinessInfo, 2020).

The World Labor Organization also took the disadvantages of remote working seriously and called for the minimization of health problems. Also, the disadvantages are also mentioned by The World Labor Organization. In the published report, the necessity of ensuring the balance between work and social life was emphasized. The World Labor Organization drew attention to the issues of burnout syndrome, domestic violence, increase in consumption of cigarette and alcohol use, unhealthy weight gain and eye fatigue due to being in front of the screen for a long time, and health problems that may occur in the bone and muscle system. Actually, The World Labor Organization described these as a disadvantage in remote working. (WHO,2022)

### **Forecasts for the Future of Transforming Working Models**

When we look at the advantages and disadvantages, different scenarios have been produced for the period after the epidemic as a result of the transformation and change of the working models with the epidemic process. One of the common

predictions is that remote work will be permanent. The basis of this estimation is the minimization of office expenses and real estate expenses depending on the place of work. Also, it will be effective for employees not to waste time on the way to and from work and to reduce food expenses. The second guess is about technology. Technology will be continuing to take place by increasing its importance in business life as it was during the epidemic period. Habits that have settled in working life during the epidemic, such as video meetings and the transfer of processes to the digital space, will likely continue. The third prediction is that empowering working from home. Employees who are more concentrated in the office environment and do not want to work from home should also be considered. Policies can be produced for those working from home, considering efficiency (Parungao, 2020).

On the other hand, in the process from the beginning of the epidemic until 2022, the implementation of the hybrid model, especially in the process approaching 2022, indicates that this working model may also continue. Hybrid working is generally seen as a sustainable working model as it also provides workers with autonomy and flexibility. It can be observed that this working model can keep the motivation of the employees higher in the future. Especially, the fact that a significant portion of the Z Generation employees adopt the hybrid model in the researches, seems to have the capacity to direct the employers to the hybrid model over time. (Dale, 2022)

A lot of studies indicate that flexibility, that is, working remotely, can be beneficial for many organizations and societies. However, it should not be remembered that this completely depends on the way they are implemented. If this application will be shaped around the hybrid model, new regulations should be made for hybrid work in countries. Hybrid working is likely to become an established working model in the coming years, when flexible working policies become updatable for hybrid working. However, as there will be workers who want to work with traditional working methods, since not every job can be performed remotely or in a hybrid way, organizations should produce and implement policies for various preferences and options. For this reason, policies that bring the employee into focus will be more efficient (Wheatley, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

As a result, mandatory quarantine processes implemented by governments to reduce the spread of the epidemic during the pandemic process have made it impossible to work from the office. Therefore, the remote working model, which was not adopted by every sector before the epidemic process and is not as common as today, and it spread rapidly. A lot of companies and working institutions on a global scale have switched to the remote working. As a result of this, it has been understood that the importance of digitalization and technological infrastructure. Although many workers are in different geographies, they have adapted to the remote work-

ing model over time, especially in terms of people with high education levels and working in large companies. This situation has made many employers and workers from different sectors think about the course of the traditional working model after the pandemic. Thus, this situation has opened the traditional working model to discussion. The working from home, which was not adopted as much as it is today, does not seem possible to return to the period before the epidemic. It seems that working from home will likely continue to exist in many sectors. Today, the remote working model has the possibility of being seen as a working model that is settled in working life rather than being seen as a precautionary measure. According to the conclusion reached here, the first research question has been generally answered, investigating the effect of the pandemic on working models.

The suspension of social life along with the epidemic has led to the closure of areas such as shopping malls, cafes and restaurants. Thus, it has also caused the people working to be unemployed here. It also brings disadvantages, especially psychologically, although the isolation of the employees from social and office life has advantages of the working from home. At the same time, every company has not been able to provide the same level of technical infrastructure. This situation has affected the adaptation processes to the remote working model, depending on factors such as age, income, etc., since there is no environment where concentration will not deteriorate in the home. When reached 2022, the global teleworking model has become controversial this time. A lot of international organizations and companies have both offered solutions and started to prepare for the post pandemic period. At the same time, it has been seen that working remotely is not suitable for every sector.

In order to minimize the disadvantages of remote working in the pandemic and to eliminate the idea of isolation the hybrid model, which aims to be able to work both at home and in the office and to offer options to employees, has started to come to life. The hybrid model is just now rolling out. Probably, it will be able to come to life as a new working model when the pandemic completely loses its effect. Whether it is a remote working model or a hybrid model, it should not be overlooked that companies need to improve themselves in digital infrastructure. Also, it should be noted that remote or hybrid work may not be applicable to every work sector or employee. The legal regulations should also be implemented on important issues such as secure work and insurance for remote/hybrid working models. It is seen that the importance of prioritizing policies that focus on employees is emphasized in the forecasts made for the future. Thus, it has been seen what the advantages and disadvantages of the working from home model are during the pandemic period. It has also been understood that this working model is not applicable to every sector and employee at the same level. Therefore, the second and third research questions were clearly answered in the study.

The data and information should always be included, considering that the subject and situation has spread over a long period of time and will continue to spread in future similar studies on the subject, up-to-date. Due to the home/remote working model expresses flexible working and is more accepted after the pandemic, it should be included whether legal arrangements have been made on the issue of working life, especially in the process after the complete disappearance of the pandemic. In addition to this, similar studies should also be included in the observations of what kind of practices the companies have implemented up to date, and the process should be closely observed together with up-to-date data.

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