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# THE COLOR-BALANCED SPANNING TREE PROBLEM

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Suppose a graph $G = (V, E)$ whose edges are partitioned into $p$ disjoint categories (colors) is given. In the color-balanced spanning tree problem a spanning tree is looked for that minimizes the variability in the number of edges from different categories.

We show that polynomiality of this problem depends on the number $p$ of categories and present some polynomial algorithm.

*Keywords:* spanning tree, matroids, algorithms, NP-completeness

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Suppose a graph $G = (V, E)$ with nonnegative edge weights $w(e)$ for $e \in E$ is given and suppose its edges are partitioned into disjoint categories $S_1, \dots, S_p$. Denote by $\mathcal{T}(G)$ the family of all spanning trees of graph $G$. Now consider the following objective function:

$$f(T) = \max_{1 \le i \le p} \left( \sum_{e \in S_i \cap T} w(e) \right) - \min_{1 \le i \le p} \left( \sum_{e \in S_i \cap T} w(e) \right)$$

and optimization problem

$$\begin{array}{c} f(T) \longrightarrow \min \\ T \in \mathcal{T}(G). \end{array} \tag{1}$$

In the definition of function $f$ we assume that maximum over the empty set is 0.

In [2] it was shown, that problem (1) is NP-complete even if the number of categories $p$ is equal to 2 and the underlying graph $G$ is outerplanar. It is showen there that the spanning tree, matching and path problems considered with the $L_3$ objective function (this function is in fact the same as objective function $f$ of this paper) are NP-complete already on bipartite outerplanar graphs even for two categories, similarly the $L_3$-travelling salesman problem is NP-complete on Halin graphs even for two categories. Some other optimization problems (e. g. matchings, Hamilton circuits etc.) with objective functions similar to $f$ were treated in [3]. For most of functions, they were shown polynomial, if the number of categories $p$ is fixed and NP-complete in general case. Some other problems with categorization of edges and with objective functions using the operators min, max and $\sum$ were treated in [1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8].

More general review of color-balanced problems can be found in [5]. In this paper we show a reduction of problem (1) to problem 1-CCOP which is a special case of problem K-CCOP treated in [5].

In this paper we deal with the following special case of the problem (1): we let all weights of edges be equal, i.e. $(\forall e \in E)\ w(e) = 1$ and we restrict the number of categories to $p = 2$ (Section 2) or let $p$ be constant (Section 3). We show that the problem with constant weights belongs to the class $P$, in contrast to the original problem (1) with arbitrary weights which is $NP$-complete.

## 2. COLOR–BALANCED SPANNING TREE PROBLEM

Let us consider the special case of the problem (1) where $p=2$ and $(\forall e \in E)\ w(e)=1$, i.e. $f(T) = \max\{|S_1 \cap T|, |S_2 \cap T|\} - \min\{|S_1 \cap T|, |S_2 \cap T|\} = ||S_1 \cap T| - |S_2 \cap T||$ and the problem (1) in this special case can be written as:

$$\begin{array}{c} ||S_1 \cap T| - |S_2 \cap T|| \longrightarrow \min \\ T \in \mathcal{T}(G). \end{array} \tag{2}$$

For the sake of simplicity assume for the time being that the graph $G$ is connected. Disconnected graphs will be treated later. Under our assumption, since $T$ is a spanning tree of $G$, $|T| = |V| - 1$ and thus let $|T| = k$. The objective function $f(T)$ attains its minimum possible value if $|S_1 \cap T|$ and $|S_2 \cap T|$ are as close to each other as possible, which occurs if one of them is equal to $\lceil \frac{k}{2} \rceil$ and the other to $\lfloor \frac{k}{2} \rfloor$. Minimum value of $f(T)$ is then either 0 if $k$ is even or 1 otherwise. On the other hand, if one of $|S_1 \cap T|$ and $|S_2 \cap T|$ is equal to $k$ and the other is 0, $f(T)$ attains its maximum, $f(T) = k$. The range of possible optimum values for given graph is then limited to the set $\{0, 1, \ldots, k\}$. If we are able to check for each $l \in \{0, 1, \ldots, k\}$, whether there exists a spanning tree $T$ with $f(T) = l$, as a consequence we will immediately have the desired optimum spanning tree of the problem (2).

The test we need to perform, even in more specific form, is described in the following lemma:

**Lemma 2.1.** (*Check*$(i,j)$) Given a graph $G = (V, E)$, a partition of $E$ to $S_1$, $S_2$ and $i, j \in N$, s.t. $i + j = |V| - 1 = k$, it is possible to find a spanning tree $T_{ij}$ of $G$ with $T \cap S_1 = i$ and $T \cap S_2 = j$ or to determine that such a spanning tree does not exist. In the latter case it is possible to find a maximum cardinality forest $T_{ij}$ of $G$ satisfying $T \cap S_1 \le i$ and $T \cap S_2 \le j$. This can be done in polynomial time.

Proof. Let $M_1 = (E, \mathcal{F}_1)$ be the matroid with the base set $E$ (edges of the graph $G$) and independent sets $\mathcal{F}_1$ being families of edge sets of all acyclic subgraphs of $G$. Matroid $M_1$ is therefore the graph matroid of graph $G$. Let $M_2(i,j) = (E, \mathcal{F}_2)$ be another matroid defined on the same base set $E$ with independent sets $\mathcal{F}_2$ which are defined as follows: $X \in \mathcal{F}_2 \Leftrightarrow X \subseteq E,\ X \cap S_1 \le i,\ X \cap S_2 \le j$. Matroid $M_2$ is thus the partition matroid over partition $S_1$, $S_2$ with limits $i$ and $j$ respectively.

Using the Cardinality Intersection Algorithm (CI-algorithm) described e.g. in [6] it is possible to determine the maximum cardinality intersection $T_{ij}$ of matroids $M_1$ and $M_2(i,j)$. The intersection $T_{ij}$ is, from its definition, independent in both matroids, i.e. it is an acyclic subgraph of $G$ having $T_{ij} \cap S_1 \le i$ and $T_{ij} \cap S_2 \le j$. CI-algorithm runs in $O(m^2R + mRc(m))$ time (see [6]), where $m = |E|$, $R$ is the cardinality of the resulting intersection and $c(m)$ is the complexity of independence tests in both matroids. Clearly $R$ is at most $|V|-1$ and independence tests in both $M_1$ and $M_2$ can be performed in $O(m)$ time giving $O(m^2R+mRc(m)) = O(m^2|V|)$ for the total complexity of CI-algorithm in this case.

Acyclic subgraph $T_{ij}$ of $G$ is a spanning tree of $G$ if and only if $|T_{ij}| = |V|-1$, otherwise it is just a maximum cardinality forest for which $T \cap S_1 \le i$ and $T \cap S_2 \le j$ holds. Since matroids $M_1$ and $M_2$ can be constructed in $O(m)$ time, the lemma follows. □

Now we can write down the algorithm for solving the problem (2):

*Algorithm f-SpanningTree*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Input :** | Graph $G = (V, E)$, partition of $E$ to $S_1$ and $S_2$. |
| **Output :** | $f$-optimal spanning tree $T^{\text{opt}}$. |
| **K0 :** | $T^{\text{opt}} := \emptyset,\ L^{\text{opt}} := \infty$ |
| **K1 :** | **for each** $i$, $j$, s.t. $i + j = \|V\| - 1$ **do** |
| | **begin** |
| **K2 :** | $T_{ij} = Check(i, j)$ |
| **K3 :** | **if** $\|T_{ij}\| = \|V\| - 1$ & $\|i - j\| < L^{\text{opt}}$ **then** |
| **K4 :** | $T^{\text{opt}} := T_{ij},\ L^{\text{opt}} = \|i - j\|$ |
| | **end** |

**Lemma 2.2.** Algorithm $f$-SpanningTree runs in $O(m^2|V|^2)$ time.

Proof. There are exactly $|V|$ possibilities for expressing $|V|-1$ as a sum of two integers $k = |V| - 1 = i + j$ in step K1 of the algorithm, namely $[k, 0]$, $[k - 1, 1], \dots, [\lfloor \frac{k}{2} \rfloor, \lceil \frac{k}{2} \rceil], \dots,\ [0, k]$, thus there are $k+1$ invocations of $Check(i,j)$ in step K2. The total complexity is then $|V| \cdot O(m^2|V|) = O(m^2|V|^2)$. □

## 3. CONSTANT NUMBER OF CATEGORIES GREATER THAN 2

Let us consider a less relaxed case of the problem (1) where edge weights are still uniform (w.l.o.g. $(\forall e \in E)\ w(e) = 1$). The number of categories $p$ is, however, no more restricted to $p = 2$, but it must be constant, i.e. $p$ does not depend on $G$.

The problem (1) in this special case can be written as:

$$f(T) = \max_{i=1,\dots,p} \{|S_i \cap T|\} - \min_{i=1,\dots,p} \{|S_i \cap T|\} \longrightarrow \min \\ T \in \mathcal{T}(G). \tag{3}$$

The problem (3) can be solved using a similar approach as in Section 2. At first, let us show the $p$-partition analogue of $Check(i,j)$:

**Lemma 3.1.** (*Check*$(i_1, \dots, i_p)$) Given a graph $G = (V, E)$, a partition $E$ to $S_1, \dots, S_p$ and $i_1, \dots, i_p \in N$, s.t. $\sum_{j=1}^{p} i_j = |V| - 1$, it is possible to find a spanning tree $T$ of $G$ s.t. $(\forall j)|T \cap S_j| = i_j$ or to determine that such a spanning tree does not exist. This decision can be done and $T$ can be found in polynomial time.

Proof. Let $M_1$ be the graphic matroid defined as in Lemma 2.1 and let $M_2(i_1, \dots, i_p) = (E, \mathcal{F}_2)$ be the partition matroid over the partition $S_1, \dots, S_p$ with limits $i_1, \dots, i_p$ respectively.

Let $T$ be a maximum cardinality intersection of matroids $M_1$ and $M_2$ determined using the CI-algorithm [6]. $T$ is an acyclic subgraph of $G$ satisfying $(\forall j)T \cap S_j \leq i_j$. Using the similar arguments as in Lemma 2.1 the proof of this lemma follows. □

The algorithm for solving the problem (3) is thus straightforward:

*Algorithm f-SpanningTree(p)*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Input :** | Graph $G = (V, E)$, partition of $E$ to $S_1, \dots, S_p$ |
| **Output :** | $f$-optimal spanning tree $T^{\text{opt}}$. |
| **K0 :** | $T^{\text{opt}} := \emptyset,\ c^{\text{opt}} := \infty$ |
| **K1 :** | **for each** $i_1, \dots, i_p$, s.t. $\sum_{j=1}^{p} i_j = \lvert V \rvert - 1$ **do** |
| | **begin** |
| **K2 :** | $T = Check(i_1, \dots, i_p)$ |
| **K3 :** | **if** $\lvert T \rvert = \lvert V \rvert - 1$ & $f(T) < c^{\text{opt}}$ **then** |
| **K4 :** | $T^{\text{opt}} := T,\ c^{\text{opt}} = f(T)$ |
| | **end** |

**Lemma 3.2.** Algorithm $f$-SpanningTree(p) runs in $O(m^2|V|^p)$ time.

Proof. There are $\binom{|V| - 1 + p - 1}{p - 1} = O(|V|^{p-1})$ possibilities for expressing $|V| - 1$ in the form of sum of $p$ integers $|V| - 1 = \sum_{j=1}^{p} i_j$ in step K1 of the algorithm (see e.g. [9]), thus there are $O(|V|^{p-1})$ invocations of *Check*$(i_1, \dots, i_p)$ in step K2. The total complexity is then $O(|V|^{p-1}) \cdot O(m^2|V|) = O(m^2|V|^p)$. □

**Remark 3.1.** The range of $i_j$ in step K1 of the previous algorithm is limited to interval $[0, |S_j|]$. However, as a special case, cardinality of all sets $S_j$ could be as close to $\frac{|E|}{p}$ as possible and thus for $p \leq \frac{|E|}{|V|-1}$ we have $|S_j| \geq |V| - 1$. Therefore $i_j \leq |S_j|$ is of no use in this special case and the number of iterations in step K1 remains $O(|V|^{p-1})$.

## 4. A COMPUTATIONAL COMPLEXITY IMPROVEMENT IN CASE $p = 2$

Let us look closer at the complexity of determining the $f$-optimal spanning tree. The maximum cardinality matroid intersection, which can be performed in $O(R(m^2 + mRc(m)))$ steps, consists of $R \leq |V| - 1$ iterations, of complexity $O(m^2 + mRc(m))$ each. According to [6], each iteration consists of two steps:

*Step 1:* construction of the so-called Border Graph (BG) with complexity $O(mRc(m))$

*Step 2:* determining the so-called Augmenting Path in BG with complexity $O(m^2)$.

Each iteration increases the cardinality of matroid intersection $I$ by 1. In *Step 1* for a given independent set $I$ with $|I| \leq |R|$ and for each $e \in E - I$ independence of $I \cup \{e\}$ is determined and the unique cycle (in the sense of matroid theory) in $I \cup \{e\}$ is found, if it exists. This needs in case of graphic and partition matroids only $O(|V|)$ operations, provided that $|I| \leq |V| - 1$. In *Step 2* a search for Augmenting Path is performed in bipartite graph BG. Vertices of BG are exactly elements of base set $E$ and edges are only between vertices of $I$ and vertices of $E - I$, thus at most $|I| \cdot |E - I| \leq (|V| - 1) \cdot m$ edges are present in BG. Consequently, the search for Augmenting Path in BG can be performed in $O(|V|m)$ time.

The previous discussion summs up to the following lemma:

**Lemma 4.1.** One iteration of CI-algorithm for graphic and partition matroid (as defined in Lemma 2.1) can be done in $O(|V|m)$ time giving the overall complexity of the algorithm $O(|V|^2m)$.

If we take a closer look at Lemma 2.1 and compare two checks, namely *Check*$(i, j)$ and *Check*$(i - 1, j + 1)$, we see that they both operate on the same graphic matroid $M_1$ and two very similar partition matroids $M_2(i, j)$ and $M_2(i - 1, j + 1)$. Therefore it is immediate to try to use the result of *Check*$(i, j)$ in the computation of *Check*$(i - 1, j + 1)$. The complexity improvement that can be obtained in this way is described in the next lemma:

**Lemma 4.2.** Let $T_{ij}$ be the result of *Check*$(i, j)$ (as defined in Lemma 2.1). Then *Check*$(i - 1, j + 1)$ can be performed and its result $T_{i-1,j+1}$ can be found using at most 2 iterations of the maximum cardinality matroid intersection algorithm.

Proof. Let us denote $T^*_{i-1,j+1} = T_{ij}$ in case $|T_{ij} \cap S_1| \leq i - 1$. Otherwise $|T_{ij} \cap S_1| = i$ and there exists $e \in T_{ij} \cap S_1$; in this case let $T^*_{i-1,j+1} = T_{ij} - \{e\}$. Such set $T^*_{i-1,j+1}$ clearly belongs to the intersection of matroids $M_1$ and $M_2(i, j)$. Thus, let us start the intersection algorithm in *Check*$(i - 1, j + 1)$ with the initial intersection $T^*_{i-1,j+1}$. The cardinality of $T^*_{i-1,j+1}$ is at least $|T_{ij}| - 1$ and the cardinality of $T_{i-1,j+1}$ is at most $|T_{ij}| + 1$ from which it is immediate, that we need at most two iterations of intersection algorithm in *Check*$(i - 1, j + 1)$. □

As we can see, the algorithm $f$-spanning tree can be made faster by suitable ordering of *Check*$(i, j)$ calls and by reusing the result of previous *Check*$(i, j)$ calls. If we denote by *Check*$(i, j, T)$ the *Check*$(i, j)$ call where maximum matroid cardinality intersection starts with intersection $T$, we could formalize the faster version of the algorithm:

*Algorithm f-SpanningTree(+)*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Input :** | Graph $G = (V, E)$, partition of $E$ to $S_1$ and $S_2$. |
| **Output :** | $f$-optimal spanning tree $T^{\text{opt}}$. |
| **K0 :** | $T^{\text{opt}} := \emptyset,\ L^{\text{opt}} := \infty,\ T_{\text{left}} := \emptyset,\ T_{\text{right}} := \emptyset$ |
| **K1 :** | **for** $i$ **from** $\lfloor \frac{\lvert V\rvert-1}{2} \rfloor$ **to** 0 **do** |
| | **begin** |
| **K2 :** | $T_{\text{left}} := \mathit{Check}(i, \lvert V\rvert - 1 - i, T_{\text{left}})$ |
| **K3 :** | **if** $\lvert T_{\text{left}}\rvert = \lvert V\rvert - 1$ **then** |
| **K4 :** | $T^{\text{opt}} := T_{\text{left}},\ L^{\text{opt}} = \lvert V\rvert - 1 - 2 * i$, STOP |
| **K5 :** | $T_{\text{right}} := \mathit{Check}(\lvert V\rvert - 1 - i, i, T_{\text{right}})$ |
| **K6 :** | **if** $\lvert T_{\text{right}}\rvert = \lvert V\rvert - 1$ **then** |
| **K7 :** | $T^{\text{opt}} := T_{\text{right}},\ L^{\text{opt}} = \lvert V\rvert - 1 - 2 * i$, STOP |
| | **end** |

Steps K2 and K5 are performed $\lfloor \frac{|V|-1}{2} \rfloor + 1$ times each. The first time they are performed they need $O(|V|^2 m)$ time (see Lemma 4.1) to compute the result of $\mathit{Check}(i, j, T)$, since $T = \emptyset$ in this case. However all subsequent calls of $\mathit{Check}(i, j, T)$ in steps K2 and K5 use the precomputed sets $T_{\text{left}}$ and $T_{\text{right}}$ and thus require just $O(|V|m)$ time (see Lemma 4.2). To sum up, algorithm $f$-SpanningTree(+) needs $O(|V|^2 m) + 2 * \left(\lfloor \frac{|V|-1}{2} \rfloor + 1\right) * O(|V|m)$ time for steps K2 and K5. The remaining steps are trivial, thus overall complexity of algorithm $f$-SpanningTree(+) is $O(|V|^2 m)$.

## 5. FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

It might look promising to use some kind of binary search in step K1 of Algorithm $f$-SpanningTree to determine optimal $i$, $j$ pair instead of invoking $\mathit{Check}(i, j)$ on all possible $i$, $j$ pairs. However, this approach is of no use for finding the optimum spanning tree: after invocation of $\mathit{Check}(i, j)$ for some values of $i$ and $j$ exactly one of the following is true:

1. We have found a spanning tree $T_{ij}$. Thus $L^{\text{opt}}$ is at most $|i - j|$
2. There is no spanning tree $T_{ij}$ s.t. $|T_{ij}| = |i - j|$, implying $L_{opt} \neq |i - j|$. However, it is easy to see that for $L^{\text{opt}}$ we may have $L^{\text{opt}} < |i - j|$ as well as $L^{\text{opt}} > |i - j|$.

The latter case makes binary search unapplicable.

Let us now look closer at the structure of $(i, j)$ pairs for which a spanning tree $T_{ij}$ exists. Let $i_{\max} = \max\{i : T_{ij}$ is a spanning tree$\}$ and $j_{\max} = \max\{j : T_{ij}$ is a spanning tree$\}$. To determine value of $i_{\max}$, it is enough to determine the maximum forest $F^1$ of $G^1 = (V, S_1)$; Since $G$ was assumed to be connected, the forest $F^1$, if not itself being a spanning tree of $G$, must be extendable by edges of $S_2$ to some spanning tree of $G$. $i_{\max}$ then equals to the number of edges of $F^1$ and corresponds to a spanning tree $T_{i_{\max}, k-i_{\max}}$. The value of $j_{\max}$ can be determined in the same way.

The following lemma shows that spanning trees $T_{i_{\max},k-i_{\max}}$ and $T_{k-j_{\max},j_{\max}}$ are sufficient to describe the structure of feasible $(i,j)$ pairs:

**Lemma 5.1.** Let $k-j \leq i$ and $T_{i,k-i}$ and $T_{k-j,j}$ are spanning trees of $G$ having $|T_{i,k-i} \cap S_1| = i$ and $|T_{k-j,j} \cap S_2| = j$. Then for each $l: \ k-j \leq l \leq i$ there exists a spanning tree $T_{l,k-l}$ of $G$ having $|T_{l,k-l} \cap S_1| = l$.

Proof. The statement trivially holds if $k-j=i$. Otherwise let $e$ be any edge from $T_{k-j,j} - T_{i,k-i}$. $T_{i,k-i} \cup \{e\}$ contains a unique cycle $C_e$ and let $f$ be any edge from $C_e - T_{k-j,j}$. Then $T^{(1)} = T_{i,k-i} \cup \{e\} - \{f\}$ is also a spanning tree which has more edges in common with $T_{k-j,i}$ than $T_{i,k-i}$, more precisely $|T^{(1)} \cap T_{k-j,j}| = |T_{i,k-i} \cap T_{k-j,j}|+1$. By repeating this construction we get a sequence $Seq$ of spanning trees $Seq = \{T^{(0)} = T_{i,k-i}, T^{(1)}, T^{(2)}, \ldots, T^{(i-(k-j))} = T_{k-j,i}\}$. If we look at two consecutive spanning trees $T^{(x)}$ and $T^{(x+1)}$, cardinalities of $T^{(x)} \cap S_1$ and $T^{(x+1)} \cap S_1$ are either equal or differ by 1. Thus sequence $Seq$ contains for each $l: \ k-j \leq l \leq i$ a spanning tree $T_{l,k-l}$ of $G$ having $|T_{l,k-l} \cap S_1| = l$. □

Using the previous results we know that $(i,j)$ pairs for which a spanning tree $T_{ij}$ exists are exactly pairs $\{(l,k-l); \ k-j_{\max} \leq l \leq i_{\max}\}$. Now on it requires only a constant amount of time to determine the optimum pair $(i^{\text{opt}}, j^{\text{opt}})$ and the optimum value $|i^{\text{opt}} - j^{\text{opt}}|$ of problem (2). But, even if we know the optimum pair $(i^{\text{opt}}, j^{\text{opt}})$, to determine the optimum spanning tree $T_{i^{\text{opt}},j^{\text{opt}}}$ we need to call *Check*$(i^{\text{opt}}, j^{\text{opt}})$ once. The complexity of determining the optimum spanning tree is then $O(|V|^2 m)$, the same as of algorithm $f$-SpanningTree(+).

The last algorithm which we present is better than algorithm $f$-SpanningTree(+) in the sense that it determines the optimum value of problem (2) in $O(m+n)$ time and needs only one call of *Check*$(i,j)$ to determine the optimum spanning tree.

*Algorithm f-SpanningTree(++)*

**Input :** Graph $G=(V,E)$, partition of $E$ to $S_1$ and $S_2$.
**Output :** optimum value $c^{\text{opt}}$ and an $f$-optimal spanning tree $T^{\text{opt}}$.
**K0 :** $k := |V|$
**K1 :** Find the maximum forest $F^1$ of $G^1 = (V, S_1)$; $i_{\max} := |F^1|$
**K2 :** Find the maximum forest $F^2$ of $G^2 = (V, S_2)$; $j_{\max} := |F^2|$
**K3 :** **if** $(i_{\max} - (k - i_{\max}))((k - j_{\max}) - j_{\max}) \leq 0$ **then**
    $(i^*, j^*) := (\lfloor \frac{k}{2} \rfloor, \lceil \frac{k}{2} \rceil)$
  **else if** $|i_{\max} - (k - i_{\max})| \leq |(k - j_{\max}) - j_{\max}|$ **then**
    $(i^*, j^*) := (i_{\max}, k - i_{\max})$
  **else**
    $(i^*, j^*) := (k - j_{\max}, j_{\max})$
**K5 :** $c^{\text{opt}} := |i^* - j^*|$, OUTPUT $c^{\text{opt}}$
**K6 :** $T^{\text{opt}} :=$ *Check*$(i^*, j^*)$, STOP.

We have postponed dealing with disconnected graphs until now. The disconnected case only requires small changes in the algorithms given above: we are dealing with spanning forests instead of spanning trees. The cardinality of spanning forests is $|V| - c(G)$, where $c(G)$ is the number of connected components of the graph $G$. Lemmas 2.1 and 3.1 remain valid in case of disconnected graphs since graphical matroid is defined in the same way in this case. Therefore all complexity results stated above hold in the disconnected case as well.

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