Dual source for indefinite pronoun-adjective combinations

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1. Introduction

This paper discusses structures in which indefinite pronouns combine with adjectives, as in (1). We will refer to such combinations as IP-As and to indefinite pronouns as IPs.

(1) \textit{something new; someplace nice; everyone tall}

In this section, we will sketch two competing descriptions/interpretations of the core data (Larson & Marušič 2004 vs. Roehrs 2006); we will then outline the basics of our proposal, which combines the insights of both of those data interpretations, and claims that the apparently diverging English and German IP-A data reflect an important difference in the basic structures and should thus be given separate accounts (in line with Roehrs 2008) instead of attempting to capture them with a uniform analysis (as in Roehrs 2006).\textsuperscript{1}

One approach to deriving the structures in (1) is that of Abney (1987) and Kishimoto (2000), among others, whereby the structures in (1) are derived with movement of the (light) noun \textit{thing/place/one} over the adjective, from a base configuration such as \textit{some new thing}. However, Larson & Marušič (2004) point out that if this was correct, the adjectives in (1) should behave as prenominal, which is not the case. Indeed, Larson & Marušič (2004) present a number of arguments to show that the adjectives in (1) behave as postnominal. One of these rests on the observation that in English, adjective recursion is freely available in prenominal position but not, without heavy comma intonation, in postnominal position, (2), nor when the adjective is used as

\textsuperscript{*} We are grateful to the audiences at NELS 38, CSSP 2007, FDSL 7 and the UNG Linguistic Colloquium Series for their comments.

\textsuperscript{1} Roehrs (2008) is in principle an updated and published version of Roehrs (2006), which was circulated as a manuscript. Since we only became aware of Roehrs (2008)—which differs from Roehrs (2006) in several important respects—right before the submission deadline for this paper, we treat the two as separate papers.
the main predicate; in view of this contrast, (3) suggests that the adjectives in English IP-As are postnominal, as they disallow recursion.

(2) a. the explored navigable river  
b. the river explored (*navigable)  
c. This thing is large (*heavy).

(3) a. every large heavy thing  
b. everything large (*heavy)

Another of Larson & Marušič’s (2004) arguments comes from the observation that English postnominal and predicative measure adjectives are inflected and prenominal and attributive measure adjectives are not, (4); and in view of this contrast, the fact that in (5) the adjective has to be inflected, is evidence that the adjective in such combinations is postnominal. On these and several other arguments, Larson & Marušič (2004) conclude that English IP-As only contain postnominal/predicative adjectives.2

(4) a. a 23 inch long rope  
b. a rope 23 inches long  
c. This rope is 23 inches long / *23 inch long.

(5) a. *anything 23 inch long  
b. anything 23 inches long

In stark contrast, though, Roehrs (2006) presents a number of tests which convincingly show that German IP-As contain prenominal/attributive adjectives. For example, he shows that while German postnominal adjectives cannot be iterated, adjectives can freely iterate in German IP-As, (6). Also, Roehrs (2006) shows that the adjectives in German IP-As carry the so-called strong inflection, which is the inflection of prenominal adjectives, (7). On the basis of these and a number of other arguments, Roehrs (2006) concludes that the adjectives in German IP-As are prenominal.3

(6) a. *das Haus klein schwarz  
the house small black  
b. etwas Kleines Schwarzes  
’something small and black’

(7) a. ein wichtig*(es) Beweisstück  
an important-strong exhibit  
‘an important exhibit’
 b. ein Beweisstück wichtig(*es) für die Verurteilung  
the exhibit important-strong for the sentencing  
‘the exhibit important for the sentencing’

2 Like English, Slovenian only allows predicative adjectives in postnominal positions, while all Slovenian prenominal adjectives are attributive. Thus, we use the terms prenominal and attributive adjectives interchangeably and refer to DP-internal predicative adjectives as postnominal adjectives.

3 This claim is modified in Roehrs (2008), to the effect that besides IPs that only combine with prenominal adjectives, such as jemand ‘someone’, etwas ‘something’, etc., German is also said to have some IPs that combine with postnominal adjectives, namely, jeder ‘every(one)’ and alles ‘every(thing)’.
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c.  
\begin{align*}
\text{etwas} & \quad \text{Wichtig}^\ast(\text{es}) \\
\text{something important-strong}  \\
\text{‘something important’}
\end{align*}

To summarize, then, we have evidence that adjectives in English IP-As are postnominal and that adjectives in German IP-As are prenominal. Now, one approach to this situation is to try and propose one basic structure for both types of languages; this is the approach taken in Roehrs (2006), who proposes to ‘resolve’ the discrepancy by saying that adjectives in IP-As are prenominal to a null noun in a postnominal position (cf. also Leu 2003). The approach we will take, however, is to claim that the differences between the two types of IP-A constructions also reflect different basic structures (in the spirit of Roehrs 2008). We will corroborate this by going through a number of tests to show that the difference observed between Larson & Marušič’s (2004) English data and Roehrs’ (2006) German data can in fact also be found within a language; in Slovenian, nekdo ‘someone’ combines with postnominal adjectives and nekaj ‘something’ with prenominal adjectives. The structures we propose for the two types of IP-As are in (8) and (9). Nekaj-type IP-As are basically a case of regular DPs, with a null noun, with adjectives in the specifiers of functional projections, and with nekaj heading the DP. On the other hand, nekdo-type IP-As have nekdo heading a pronominal phrase (=ProP), and the adjective adjoined to this phrase as a reduced relative clause.

\begin{align*}
\text{(8)} & & \text{(9)} \\
\text{DP} & & \text{DP} \\
\text{nekaj} & \text{FP} & \text{ProP} \\
\text{AP} & \text{NP} & \text{ProP} \\
\triangle & \amalg & \triangle \\
\emptyset N & & \text{RRC} \\
\text{AP} & & \text{nekdo}
\end{align*}

In section 2, we present a number of tests which show that not only does one find the diverging patterns when comparing different languages (e.g. English and German), but sometimes also language-internally; Slovenian will be shown to have both the English- and the German-type IP-As, with nekdo ‘someone’ combining with postnominal adjectives and nekaj ‘something’ combining with prenominal adjectives. In section 3, we develop our proposal and discuss some of its consequences.

2. The two Slovenian constructions

2.1 Case of the adjective

The first difference between the two Slovenian constructions we point out has to do with the case of the adjective that follows the IP. When the entire DP is in an oblique case, the adjectival complement agrees with the IP in both types of IP-As. But when the entire DP is marked nominative or accusative, there is a split between the two IP-A constructions. Whereas nekdo requires no special case on the adjective, i.e. the adjective still agrees with the IP, nekaj requires the adjective to be in the genitive, (10a).
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(10) a. *nekaj velikega / *veliko
   something-nom big-gen big-nom
   ‘something big’

b. nekdo * velikega / velik
   someone-nom big-gen big-nom
   ‘someone tall’

Now, the IP *nekaj is homophonous with the quantifier nekaj ‘some’, which requires its complement to be in the genitive, (11a). Since we claim that the *nekaj-type IPs head regular DPs, the genitive on the adjective in (10a) is not surprising, and can thus be of the same source as the adjective on the noun in (11a). (See e.g. Bailyn 2004 for a possible analysis of the Slavic genitive case.) Nekdo, on the other hand, only has an IP use and no quantifier use, (11b).

(11) a. nekaj snega / snežink
   some snow-gen snowflakes-gen
   ‘some snow’

b. *nekdo ljudi
   someone men-gen
   ‘someone’

Something similar is true also of the German *etwas, which is both an IP (e.g. *etwas neues “something new”) and a quantifier for mass nouns (e.g. *etwas Wein “some wine”, cf. Roehrs 2006). Just like with Slovenian nekaj, both the complement of the quantifier *etwas and the adjective with the IP *etwas are in the same case (etwas neues and *etwas Wein); the only difference is that in German, the case in question is the nominative rather than the genitive.

As mentioned above, the requirement for genitive case on the complement of nekaj does not hold in oblique cases, as shown in (12a). However, the same is true when nekaj is used as a regular determiner, as shown in (12b). In other words, the IP nekaj behaves just like the quantifier nekaj.

(12) a. z nečim velikim
   with something-instr big-instr
   ‘with something big’

b. z nekaj velikimi snežinkami
   with some big-instr snowflakes-instr
   ‘with some big snowflakes’

So, if the two nekaj’s are really one and the same element, as we propose, then—given that quantifiers need an NP to act as their restriction—it is natural to posit a null N in its complement for the IP use in (10a). On the other hand, no such conclusion can be made for nekdo, which is just a simple pronoun.

There are, nevertheless, two interesting differences between the IP nekaj and the quantifier nekaj. As shown in (12b), when the quantifier nekaj heads an oblique-cased DP, nekaj does not decline; conversely, when the indefinite pronoun nekaj is in such a
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DP, it does decline. Secondly, when the complement of the quantifier *nekaj* is a mass noun (rather than a count noun, as in (12b)), this noun does not decline in oblique cases (*nekaj snega/*snegom ‘with some snow-gen/snow-instr’). We will return to these potential problems in section 3.

2.2 Adjective recursion

A difference between the two IPs is also observed in the number of adjectives they can cooccur with. While *nekaj* freely allows stacked adjectives, as shown in (13a), *nekdo* only tolerates one adjective (unless heavy comma intonation is used), (13b).

\[(13)\]
\[
a. \text{nekaj} \quad \text{velike} \quad \text{temnega} \\
\quad \text{something} \quad \text{big} \quad \text{dark} \\
\quad \text{‘something big and dark’} \\
b. \text{nekdo} \quad \text{velik} (\text{*temen}) \\
\quad \text{someone} \quad \text{tall} \quad \text{dark} \\
\quad \text{‘someone tall’}
\]

Now, Slovenian freely allows adjective recursion in prenominal position, that is, a noun can cooccur with stacked attributive adjectives. In postnominal position, on the other hand, adjective recursion is not allowed (unless heavy comma intonation is used), and the same restriction holds for adjectives in predicative position. Therefore, the difference that (13) reveals between the two IPs further shows that while adjectives following *nekaj* exhibit prenominal/attributive properties, adjectives following *nekdo* exhibit postnominal/predicative properties.

The validity of this claim can also be checked with respect to the relative order of stacked adjectives in the *nekaj* IP-A. The ordering of adjectives is typically restricted, and if the adjectives following *nekaj* are indeed prenominal, we expect them to show the same ordering restrictions that we find with adjectives that are prenominal to ordinary nouns. As shown in (14), this prediction is borne out.

\[(14)\]
\[
a. \text{nekaj} \quad \text{velike} \quad \text{ruske} \quad \text{reka} \quad \text{vs.} \quad \text{*nekaj} \quad \text{ruske} \quad \text{velike} \quad \text{reka} \\
\quad \text{something big} \quad \text{Russian} \quad \text{big} \\
\quad \text{‘something big Russian’} \\
b. \text{velika} \quad \text{ruska} \quad \text{reka} \quad \text{vs.} \quad \text{*ruska} \quad \text{velika} \quad \text{reka} \\
\quad \text{big} \quad \text{Russian} \quad \text{river} \\
\quad \text{‘a big Russian river’}
\]

In sum, the adjective-recursion data lead us to the same conclusion again. Adjectives following *nekaj* are prenominal, adjectives following *nekdo* are postnominal.
2.3 AP-internal order

As discussed by Orešnik (1996) and Marušič (2001), when Slovenian complex APs appear prenominally, the complement must precede the adjective, (15). But when the same AP is used postnominally, the complement must follow the adjective, (16).

(15) a. \textit{okolju nevaren avto} \\
\hspace{1cm} environment-dat dangerous car \\
\hspace{1cm} ‘a car dangerous to the environment’ \\
b. * \textit{nevaren okolju avto} \\
\hspace{1cm} dangerous environment-dat car

(16) a. * \textit{avto okolju nevaren} \\
\hspace{1cm} car environment-dat dangerous \\
b. \textit{avto nevaren okolju} \\
\hspace{1cm} car dangerous environment-dat \\
\hspace{1cm} ‘a car dangerous to the environment.’

This rather clear distinction between pre- and postnominal APs offers another test for the nature of APs inside IP-As, and once again, we get conflicting results for the two IPs. As shown in (17), \textit{nekaj} allows both orders in the AP, whereas \textit{nekdo} only allows the postnominal order in the AP, (18) (cf. Larson & Marušič 2004).

(17) a. \textit{nekaj okolju nevarnega} \\
\hspace{1cm} something environment-dat dangerous \\
\hspace{1cm} ‘something dangerous to the environment.’ \\
b. \textit{nekaj nevarnega okolju} \\
\hspace{1cm} something dangerous environment-dat

(18) a. ?? \textit{nekdo okolici nevaren} \\
\hspace{1cm} someone surrounding-dat dangerous \\
b. \textit{nekdo nevaren okolici} \\
\hspace{1cm} someone dangerous surrounding-dat \\
\hspace{1cm} ‘someone dangerous to the surroundings.’

We conclude that the whole AP that combines with \textit{nekdo} can only be postnominal in its origin, while the AP combining with \textit{nekaj} appears to be either pre- or postnominal.

2.4 Prenominal and postnominal adjectives

Bolinger (1967) observes that English prenominal adjectives show an ambiguity that postnominal adjectives lack. Prenominally, adjectives can be understood either as attributing their property inherently (e.g. \textit{List all the visible stars, whether we can see them right now or not.}) or as attributing their property episodically. Postnominal adjectives, on the other hand, are unambiguous in this respect; they only have the episodic reading (cf. \#\textit{List all the stars visible, whether we can see them or not.}).
This difference is also manifested with the Slovenian adjective *viden* ‘visible’. As shown in (19), the inherent interpretation is perfectly available for *viden* when it is found in prenominal position, while this interpretation is unavailable when the same adjective is used predicatively.

(19) a. *Betelgeza je vidna zvezda, ki je ta hip ne vidimo.*
    Betelgeuse is visible star that aux this moment not see-1ps-pl
    ‘Betelgeuse is a visible star, that we cannot see at the moment.’

b. # *Ene zvezde, ki je vidna, ta hip ne vidimo.*
    one star that is visible this moment not see-1ps-pl
    ‘At this moment we don’t see a star that is visible.’

This interpretative difference can now be used as a test to determine the nature of the adjectives occurring with indefinite pronouns. As we would predict, adjectives following *nekaj* indeed allow the inherent interpretation, (20a), in which they differ from the adjectives cooccurring with the English counterpart *something* (cf. Larson & Marušič 2004), (20b). And on the other hand, adjectives following *nekdo* can only have an episodic reading, (20c), in which they pattern with the adjectives cooccurring with the English *someone*, (20d).

(20) a. *Nekaj vidnega, kar je ta hip sicer nevidno.*
    something visible that is this moment actually invisible
    ‘A visible thing that is invisible at the moment.’

b. # *Something visible, which is presently not visible.*

c. # *Nekdo viden, ki je ta hip sicer neviden.*
    someone visible that is this moment actually invisible

d. # *Someone visible, who is presently not visible.*

Once again, then, we are led to conclude that while adjectives cooccurring with either English *something* or *someone* are postnominal, Slovenian shows a split between its counterparts of these two IPs: adjectives cooccurring with the IP *nekaj* are prenominal, whereas adjectives cooccurring with the IP *nekdo* are postnominal.4

2.5 Superlatives

The last difference between *nekaj* and *nekdo* that we will provide here has to do with superlatives. As shown in (21), *nekaj* allows superlatives in its complement, but *nekdo*

4 Our claims predict that things like (i) should be possible, especially in view of the possibility of strings such as *an invisible visible star*. At first sight, it is not very straightforward how to interpret things like (i), presumably due to the presence of the pronoun with the meaning ‘something’ (rather than of a common noun such as, say, *star*); but with a little imagination, such things nevertheless seem to be possible IP-A combinations.

(i) *nekaj nevidnega vidnega*
    something invisible visible
    ‘some invisible visible thing’
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does not. Now, if Matushansky (2004) is right in her claim that superlatives are always attributive, then the contrast in (21) is yet another one that points in the same direction as the ones provided above, namely, that adjectives combining with *nekaj* are prenominal/attributive and that the adjectives combining with *nekdo* are not attributive.

(21) a. *Tole je pa nekaj najlepšega na svetu.*
    this is ptcl something most.beautiful on world
    ‘This is a most beautiful thing.’

    b. *Tole je pa nekdo najlepši na svetu.*
    this is ptcl someone most.beautiful on world
    (intended: ‘This is a most beautiful person.’)

Note that the only way to get a superlative as the complement of *nekdo*-type IPs is inside a PP, parallel to the English *someone from among the best ones*, (22). (Cf. also Cinque 2007 for relevant discussion.)

(22) *Tole je pa nekdo od najlepših na svetu.*
    this is ptcl someone from most.beautiful on world
    ‘This is someone from among the most beautiful ones.’

2.6 Summary

Slovenian indefinite pronouns *nekaj* ‘something’ and *nekdo* ‘someone’ behave differently in several respects. Like German indefinite pronouns, *nekaj* combines with an adjective that behaves as if it is prenominal/attributive. On the other hand, *nekdo* combines with an adjective that behaves as if it is postnominal/predicative, just like the adjective combining with English IPs.

Both types of IPs have other members in the group in Slovenian; for example, *nobeden* ‘noone’ and *en* ‘someone’ pattern with *nekdo*, while *nič* ‘nothing’ patterns with *nekaj*. It is important to note that not all IPs of the *nekdo* class are [+animate]. For example, of the pair *vsi/vse* ‘everyone’/‘everything’, *vsi* is used for [+animate/human] and *vse* for [–animate/human], but both of them combine with adjectives in nominative case, (23), and neither of them allow stacked adjectives, (24).

    all born-nom before 1980 shall step step forward
    ‘Everyone born before 1980 should make a step forward.’

    b. *Vse narejeno v bivši Jugi je za v muzej.*
    all made-nom in former Yugoslavia is for in museum
    ‘Everything made in the former Yugoslavia should be put in a museum.’

(24) a. *Vsi visoki temni so že na seznamu.
    all tall dark aux already on list
    ‘Everyone tall dark is already on the list.’
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b.  *Vse veliko temno je že na seznamu.
    all big dark aux already on list
    ‘Everything big dark is already on the list.’

Similarly, both *vsì and vse combine with postnominal adjectives, as seen from the fact that inside the AP that follows vsì/vse, the adjective precedes its complement, (25)-(26), and from the fact that both vsì and vse are followed by adjectives which only have an unambiguous, episodic interpretation, (27).

    all to foreigners intolerant must home
    ‘Everyone intolerant to foreigners must go home.’

(26) a.  *Vse okolici nevarno mora pod ključ.
    all environment dangerous must under key
    ‘Everything dangerous to the environment must be locked up.’

(27) a.  vsì vidni, ki so ta hip nevidni
    all visible that aux this moment invisible
    ‘everyone visible that is invisible at the moment’

b.  *vsì največji
    all biggest
    ‘everything visible that is invisible at the moment’

And lastly, neither vsì nor vse allow superlatives as their complements, (28), thereby patterning with nekdo also on the fifth one of the tests used above, and confirming once again that the adjective cooccurring with vsì/vse is not attributive and that the prenominal/postnominal adjective split between the two types of IP-As does not simply reduce to [+/-animate/human].

(28) a.  *vsì največji
    all biggest

b.  *vse največje (idiomatic exception: Vse najboljše!)
    all biggest All (the) best!

3.  Proposal

Though we agree with Roehrs’ (2006) claim about German IP-As and also say that Slovenian nekaj ‘something’-type IP-As behave like German IP-As, we do not adopt Roehrs’ (2006) account, which is given in (29) (see Leu 2005 for a comparable proposal).
It is not clear from this structure how to derive the restriction observed with English IPs and with Slovenian *nekdo*-type IPs to only postnominal adjectives, nor is there any reason for why—if stacked adjectives are available in IP-As in German—one should not also find them with English IPs and with *nekdo*-type IPs. (29) is also roughly the structure that is proposed for German IP-As (or more accurately, for one class of German IP-As, cf. Fn. 3) in Roehrs (2008), but unlike Roehrs (2006), Roehrs (2008) does not try to extend the structure for the German IP-As to all IP-As and ascribes the English IP-As a different structure, with the ModP replaced by AP. The modified structure presumably also takes care of the problems pointed out with respect to the structure in (29).

Contra Roehrs’ (2006) approach to the differences between German and English IP-As—but in line with Roehrs (2008)—we propose that Slovenian adjectives combine with IPs with two separate mechanisms. As we showed in section 2, *nekaj* cooccurs with prenominal/attributive adjectives. We also showed that the IP *nekaj* behaves just like the existential quantifier *nekaj*. Therefore, we propose to consider both of these cases as one and the same element, so that *nekaj* is in fact seen as a quantifier in both cases, and when it acts as an IP, it is really seen as heading an ordinary DP, with an ordinary NP complement to the D. The only difference between an ordinary nominal phrase like ‘some red book’ and the IP-A is that in the IP-A, the noun is null, as shown in (30).

Note that if *nekaj*-type IPs head just a regular DP, we actually predict that such IP-As will allow both prenominal and postnominal adjectives and modifiers, not just prenominal ones. But this is in fact just what we find. As we have already shown in section 2.3, complex APs that follow *nekaj* can have either the prenominal or the
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postnominal adjective-complement order. Furthermore, prepositional phrases are only allowed postnominally in Slovenian, as shown in (31), and as expected, PPs are allowed both after nekdo and after nekaj, (32).

(31) a. človek s severa b. * s severa človek
    man from north from north man
    ‘a man from the north’

(32) a. nekdo s severa b. nekaj s severa
    someone from north something from north
    ‘someone from the north’ ‘something from the north’

Since we said above that nekaj only allows genitive-marked modifiers, we should add that Slovenian postnominal adjectives agree with the noun in case (and gender and number) just like prenominal adjectives do. Therefore, we would never expect non-genitive adjectives following nekaj, simply because nekaj, when heading an ordinary DP, also requires that the postnominal APs are in the genitive, as shown in (33).

(33) nekaj velikih hribov visokih skoraj kot Triglav
    some big-gen mountais-gen tall-gen nearly as Triglav
    ‘some big mountais that are nearly as tall as Triglav’

We can now turn to the question posed at the end of section 2.1, namely, why can the IP nekaj take oblique case morphology but the determiner nekaj cannot? We suggest that case morphology needs to be realized inside the DP. If the DP has an overt noun, then case morphology is realized on the noun and the quantifier keeps its uninflected form. But when the noun is null, case morphology cannot be realized on it, and it is then hosted by the quantifier. As for the other question posed there (i.e. why only count-noun complements of the quantifier nekaj decline in oblique cases), we will have to leave it open, since answering it would lead us too far astray from the current topic.

Turning now to nekdo, let us repeat that unlike nekaj, nekdo does not allow prenominal adjectives and cooccurs only with postnominal adjectives. Partly adopting Roehrs’ (2006, 2008) proposal, we propose that nekdo is a pronominal element in the complement of D.

(34) 
    DP
    ProP
    RRC
    ProP
    △
    AP
    △ nekdo

Adjoined to the pronoun is the reduced relative clause that contains the postnominal/predicative adjective. Since nekdo is a personal pronoun/a pronominal noun,
the main frame of this DP is deficient, lacking the adjective-hosting FPs (note that personal pronouns normally cannot cooccur with adjectives), which explains why no prenominal/attributive adjectives are allowed with *nekdo*.

5. **Conclusion**

In this paper, we suggested that the conflicting interpretations of crosslinguistic IP-A data that are found in the literature can be avoided if we accept the possibility that the data actually fall into two different sets, each of which with different properties that are a result of different structures. That is, we proposed that the whole set of IP-A data should not be captured with a single structure, but that what we are seeing across these constructions are two different structures, one instantiated in the previous literature with German IP-As and the other with English IP-As. We showed, however, that the two structures can also be found within a single language, such as Slovenian. We provided several arguments to support the claim that like German IPs, Slovenian *nekaj*-type IPs combine with prenominal/attributive adjectives, but that like English IPs, Slovenian *nekdo*-type IPs combine with postnominal/predicative adjectives. We claimed that *nekaj* heads a regular DP with a null noun, and that *nekdo*, on the other hand, heads a deficient pronominal phrase which only accepts adjoined reduced relative clauses.

**References**

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