International Journal of Social Science and Human Research
ISSN (print): 2644-0679, ISSN (online): 2644-0695
Volume 09 Issue 04 April 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijsshr/v9-i4-69, Impact factor- 8.361
Page No: 3155-3162

Legal and Socio-Cultural Implications of the Job Creation Law on the Management of Protected Geopark Areas: A Case Study of Gunung Batur Geopark

I Made Sudira[1], I Ketut Kasta Arya Wijaya[2]
[1]Faculty of Law, Ngurah Rai University, Denpasar Bali
[2]Faculty of Law, Warmadewa University, Denpasar, Indonesia.

ABSTRACT: The aim of this study is to determine the legal and socio-cultural impacts based on the enforcement of Law No 11 of 2020 on Job Creation for the management of areas of protected Geoparks, mostly the Gunung Batur Geopark. It is the normative juridical, the conceptual law approach that is applied to regulation, jurisprudence, and legal doctrine. This review also finds that the Job Creation Law leads a regressive course in the hierarchy of legal norms in Indonesia, undermining the principle of supremacy of the 1945 Constitution that was established through an omnibus law paradigm, not meeting the dominant legal codes. Further, transferring the responsibility of controlling the area from local to the central government and diminishing grassroots influence contradicted the principles of regional autonomy by not recognising indigenous rights, such as those guaranteed under Articles 18B and 28I of the 1945 Constitution. Such conditions could isolate indigenous peoples and deteriorate ecosystems as a whole, putting at serious risk the socio-cultural and economic sustainability of the local people. The paper contributes to a critical perspective in which legal policy reconstruction in relation to normative synchronization is emphasized, as well as promoting participatory democracy and indigenous rights in space and natural resource management. Based on this information, an integrative and sustainable model for management is suggested so as to achieve legal legitimacy and also for social and environmental justice in Indonesia. These are crucial ideas to make geoparks' development sustainable and socially fair on the basis of local knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Job Creation Law, Gunung Batur Geopark, indigenous communities, environmental sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Year 1945 (the "1945 Constitution") is essentially the supreme, final law of Indonesia. It has the primary interest of avoiding the arbitrariness of lawmakers, and it ensures that the applicable law is not against justice for all citizens. That is the fundamental idea represented in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, and in particular in paragraph four, which states explicitly that it aims to "establish a government that seeks the protection of the entire nation and the homeland of Indonesia, the promotion of general welfare, enlightening the life of the nation, and participating in the establishment of a world order based on independence, everlasting peace, and social justice."(Soekarno, 2021).

Indonesia, as a state governed by the rule of law, has adopted the Civil Law System (the Continental European legal system) as defined in Article 1 paragraph (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia 1945. This approach makes the legislative organs the primary providers of sources of law, which are widely disseminated in society. Consequently, every government policy and court decision must be founded upon regulations enacted by legislative institutions such as the House of Representatives (DPR) and the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD). However, the formulation of regulations in Indonesia must adhere to the hierarchy of legislation according to Article 7 of Law Number 12 of 2011 concerning the Establishment of Legislation (UU P3), which positions the 1945 Constitution as the highest norm, followed by the Decrees of the People's Consultative Assembly (TAP MPR), laws or Government Regulations instead of Laws (Perpu), government regulations, presidential regulations, down to provincial and regency/city regulations. (Zarkasi, 2010).

In practice, many legislative products from the House of Representatives (DPR) and the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) have been considered problematic due to unclear regulations, conflicts between laws, and regulatory gaps. These conditions have the potential to harm society as principles of justice are often neglected. The most prominent example is the enactment of Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation (the Job Creation Law), which harmonises and repeals more than 70 pre-existing laws, ranging from labour laws to spatial planning regulations. This law has sparked controversy due to the reduction of workers' rights

and the potential for uncontrolled natural resource management, including the transfer of spatial planning authority from local governments to the central government, which is perceived as neglecting regional autonomy (Firdaus, 2021).

Spatial planning, as regulated in Article 1, Number 5 of the Job Creation Law, encompasses spatial planning formulation, spatial utilisation, and spatial utilisation control. A significant change occurred in spatial governance, which previously accommodated regional autonomy based on Law Number 26 of 2007 concerning Spatial Planning, emphasising harmony and integration between regions. However, the Job Creation Law and Government Regulation Number 20 of 2021 mandate that regional spatial plans must conform to the central spatial plan, which conflicts with the principles of decentralisation and regional autonomy and has the potential to weaken the role of regional governments in managing their own territories (Yulianti, 2021).

Protected areas are an integral part of spatial planning, playing a vital role in the protection of environmental sustainability, natural resources, and cultural values. Located in Kintamani District, Bangli Regency, the Geopark site comprises the Gunung Batur Geopark, and it is classified as a geological protected area consisting of geological, archaeological, ecological, and cultural areas with unique significance. According to UNESCO, geoparks act as conservation areas, sites for learning, and geo-tourism destinations that empower local communities to protect geological heritage (Pérez-Romero, 2023). However, local regulations such as the Bangli Regency Regional Spatial Plan (Perda RTRW) of 2023 have converted portions of the geopark area into mining zones, which threatens to revoke the geopark's status and contradicts the principle of protected area conservation.

However, recent local regulations, including the Bangli Regency Regional Spatial Plan (Perda RTRW) of 2023, have transformed parts of the geopark area into areas for mining, bringing into question whether the geopark will receive permanent status and going against the concept of protected area conservation. As the constitutional judiciary institution of Indonesia, the Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi or MK) has been well authorized to examine the law in a material review against the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD NRI 1945). In Constitutional Court Case (Case 91/PUU-XVIII/2020), the Job Creation Law (UU Ciptaker), due to neglect of the principle of meaningful public participation in the legislative process and disregard for procedural principles of law-making as laid down in Article 22A of the 1945 Constitution and Law Number 12 of 2011 on the Establishment of Legislation (UU P3), found the law to be conditionally unconstitutional. In a decision, the Court ordered the executive and legislative branches to correct the Job Creation Law in order to facilitate public participation within two years, with the law being valid during the transitional period (Republik, 2021). To rectify the issues raised by the Constitutional Court's decision, the government issued Government Regulation in place of Law Number 2 of 2022 about Job Creation (Perppu Ciptaker) that would subsequently be modified to Law Number 6 of 2023 to expedite regulatory adjustments.

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The regional regulation of Bangli Regency, Law No. 1 of 2023 concerning the RTRW, has changed the status of part of the Gunung Batur Geopark into a mining zone, which conflicts with the national policy on geopark management and protected area preservation as regulated by laws and related regulations. This phenomenon raises concerns about preserving geological heritage and environmental sustainability in the area, serving as a critical point in this research (Suryanto, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the legal context, regulation refers to written norms in the form of legislation that is generally binding and established by authorised officials through legitimate procedures. However, general binding here does not mean it applies concretely to every individual but is normative for society(Foundjem-Tita et al., 2021).

Maria Farida Indrati delineates two meanings of legislation, namely the process of creating regulations and the resulting regulations that apply at the central and regional levels. Legislation in Indonesia's positive legal system is formally stated in Law Number 12 of 2011 as written regulations made by state bodies or authorised officials according to prescribed procedures. These regulations form the primary basis for law-making and societal order regulation (Eriksen, 2023).

In the environmental and natural resource conservation context, the term geopark refers to a geological heritage area possessing scientific value, beauty, and rarity, while also serving as a place for sustainable community-based economic development (Nugroho et al., 2024). Definitions from the Global Geopark Network (GGN), UNESCO, and other experts emphasise holistic

management involving protection, education, and community economic empowerment through geotourism and indigenous products. The geopark acts as a conservation and earth science research space with interconnected geology, ecology, and local culture (Utama et al., 2023). With a multi-stakeholder management strategy, the need for cross-sector synergy, which can help preserve the natural heritage while improving the socio-economic welfare of the local population, is emphasized. Stages in the development of the geopark include feasibility studies, geological, biological, and cultural resource inventory, as well as master planning encompassing management structures and integrated spatial planning.
(Muhtadi et al., 2022). Therefore, the management of the geopark must not only be about conservation but also the education, sustainable tourism, and creative economy components. It is this kind of management that opens up a vast scope for active community work towards ecological conservation and economic benefits.

"Successful geopark management implies a synergistic view of geological/ecological and local/cultural factors as complementary to each other (Utama et al., 2023). In addition, this can foster collective awareness of the urgency of protecting Earth's heritage and generate new economic opportunities in the form of custom-made local products or geoproducts. This synergy identifies the geopark as a suitable space for education and conservation of nature to facilitate social community engagement (El-Khalafy et al., 2025).

Also, strong social networks and formal institutions are the main sources of successful geopark management. The cooperation of government, academia, local communities, and the private sector will have to be established in a dynamic cooperation to ensure that effective management in education and tourism services is maintained and promoted (Utama et al., 2023). Sustainability relies considerably on transparent and professional management structures, in addition to government policies that facilitate the protection and promotion of the geopark.

With sustainable economic development, geoparks are an opportunity to serve as geotourism sites, attracting tourists and creating new jobs for local communities. The creative economic endeavors as consequences of geopark management can involve souvenir creation, homestay organization, food management, local cuisine, and local tour guide support, serving to reinforce cultural and social values (Purnomo, 2020).

Thus, geoparks are not only conservation areas but also engines of inclusive economic development from local natural resources and culture. Protected areas refer to areas defined as places that should protect environmental sustainability, which includes natural resources, man-made elements, and cultural heritage values for sustainable development (Utama et al., 2023). Protected areas are legally based on the provisions under Article 28H and Article 33 of the 1945 Constitution and Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, as well as Presidential Regulation Number 32 of 1990. Environmental law enforcement includes cumulative criminal sanctions (fines and imprisonment) for violations of protected area management and environmental pollution (Nugroho et al., 2024).

Hans Kelsen's hierarchy of norms theory is fundamental to the creation of legal systems, within which legal norms range from a basic norm (grundnorm) to concrete norms at the lowest level. This ranking has become the most common practice in Indonesia to ensure that legislation remains consistent; the main principles, “lex superior derogat legi inferior,” “lex specialis derogat legi generalis,” and “lex posterior derogat legi priori,” have been identified as central principles in the formation and realization of laws (Kelsen, 1961).

Justice theory is described as the attitude toward fair treatment within the law that has its roots in the General Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) and other perspectives of philosophy of law; justice of this kind can be defined as the provision of non-discrimination and the same rights that are appropriate to the individual. Kelsen conceptualizes justice as a formal ideal in normative legal systems (Kelsen, 1961), John Rawls highlights social justice principles through the veil of ignorance principle for rational justice principles attentive to the needs of the least advantaged parties (Pranata, 2023).

The theory of utility of utilitarianism posits that the law should provide the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people. Jeremy Bentham emphasizes that the law must aim to create the greatest happiness for society, and therefore legal products must take into account usefulness and broad social welfare values (Tukgali, 2010).

Finally, the authority theory asserts that governmental authority stems from legislation according to the legality principle, in which authority is a formal power that is limited and granted through attribution, delegation, and mandate. This ensures that government actions are legally legitimate and accountable (Suharyono et al., 2022).

METHOD

The research method employed is normative legal research, which approaches law as a system of norms, including principles, rules, and regulations found in legislation, jurisprudence, agreements, and legal doctrines. This method aims to identify relevant legal rules and principles to address legal issues while producing arguments and novel concepts as problem prescriptions (Dian, 2017).

This study focuses on the regulation of the protected geological area (geopark) of Batur following the enactment of Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation and analyses the legal impact of local officials' actions related to this regulation. The

research objects include legislation, literature, jurisprudence, and applicable legal principles, with an approach centred on regulatory changes.

The problem approach is formulated based on two primary strategies: the legislative approach, which studies all laws and regulations relevant to the legal issue, and the conceptual approach, which explores legal theories and doctrines to create a number of legal concepts and analytical frameworks pertinent to the problem (Irwansyah, 2021).

The sources of data include primary data (i.e., authoritative legal materials such as official laws, presidential regulations, and regional regulations), secondary data (literature, journals, expert opinions, and supporting jurisprudence), and tertiary data (legal dictionaries, translation dictionaries, official websites, and relevant mass media (Ishak, 2014).

Data collection techniques involve document or literature study, entailing reading and analysing documents in both printed and electronic forms (Soekanto, S., & Mamudji, 2015). Data processing uses qualitative analysis, including data editing to complete information, logical classification for systematisation, descriptive reporting of findings, and interpretative analysis of data meanings within the legal issue context comprehensively.

RESULTS OF THE DISCUSSION

Regulation of the Batur Geopark Area before Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2020 tentang Cipta Kerja

Batur Geopark, designated as a geological protected area, has been regulated within the spatial planning legal framework that existed before the enactment of the Job Creation Law. Based on Article 18 paragraphs (1) and (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, regional governments are granted authority to manage their domestic affairs, including regulating protected areas related to geoparks (Agastya et al., 2024). Geoparks' Primary regulations, such as Law Number 26 of 2007 concerning Spatial Planning and its derivatives, govern geological protected areas generally, although they do not yet specify these areas in detail.

The management of Batur Geopark as a geological protected area is grounded not only in national regulations but also refers to the international standards recognised by UNESCO Global Geoparks (Wang, 2022). The success of managing the Batur Geopark area depends heavily on a harmonious integration of heritage conservation, sustainable local economic development, and the active involvement of communities and multi-sector stakeholders (Apriyanto et al., 2025). This reflects the significance of adaptive and synergistic legal frameworks that integrate regional regulations with central government directives within the regional autonomy framework stipulated in Article 18 paragraphs (1) and (2) of the 1945 Constitution.

The regulation of geological protected areas must be complemented by the enhancement of tourism infrastructure and educational facilities to support sustainable geotourism (Hadian et al., 2022). Regional governments have a crucial role in designing and implementing management policies that balance natural conservation with inclusive economic opportunities for the local communities. This approach aligns with the pro-growth, pro-poor, and pro-environment principles that underpin the work of UNESCO Global Geoparks (UNESCO, 2025).

In the context of environmental law and spatial planning, intergovernmental regulatory coordination presents a distinct challenge, especially regarding the allocation of authority between central and regional governments. The dynamic and sometimes contentious relationship between these authorities underscores the importance of clear regulations and community participation to prevent governance conflicts and ensure the sustainability of geoparks as both protected areas and internationally recognised tourist destinations (Hadian et al., 2022).

The successful governance of Batur Geopark is inseparable from a respect for local wisdom and the customs of the surrounding communities who have long preserved the area's sustainability (Ruhly Kesuma Dinata et al., 2022). Regulations and management practices must guarantee the involvement of indigenous communities by providing participatory spaces in decision-making and safeguarding their rights to land and cultural heritage, as emphasized in sustainable environmental governance literature (Hadian et al., 2022). A community-based approach strengthens legal legitimacy and reinforces holistic efforts to conserve the geopark area.

Regional Regulations of Bali Province Number 16 of 2009 and Bangli Regency Number 9 of 2013 specifically emphasize the role of geopark areas as geological protected zones containing unique rock formations, fossils, landscapes, and geological processes. These areas are also categorized as geological disaster-prone zones, including risks from volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, landslides, and toxic gas hazards (Apriyanto et al., 2025). As conservation areas, destructive activities such as mining are restricted and allowed only for research and educational purposes (Article 111 of Bali Provincial Regulation 2009).

Beyond its conservation function, the geopark serves as a strategic tourism area with strong natural and cultural attractions. This generates economic and social value for local communities, who are expected to actively participate in managing the area (He et al., 2022). Thus, the regulation demonstrates a synergy between conservation, education, and sustainable economic development as foundational principles in managing the geopark area before the enactment of the Job Creation Law.

The Regulatory Changes of Geoparks Following Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2020 tentang Cipta Kerja

The implementation of the UU Cipta Kerja has brought significant changes in the governance of protected areas, including geoparks. Under the UU Cipta Kerja, the authority to designate and regulate protected areas has shifted to the central government, requiring regional governments to adjust spatial planning according to central policies. This shift contradicts the principle of regional autonomy as stipulated in UUD 1945 Pasal 18 ayat (1), thereby creating potential normative conflicts between central and regional regulations.

The UU Cipta Kerja introduces flexibility in the utilisation of space within protected areas, allowing for their conversion into cultivation zones, including for mining activities. This change raises concerns regarding natural resource exploitation without adequate consideration of ecosystem sustainability and the rights of indigenous communities, who have traditionally played a vital role in managing geopark areas. Derivative regulations such as Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 21 Tahun 2021 and Peraturan Menteri ESDM Nomor 31 Tahun 2021 further emphasise management changes by prioritising the role of central ministries/agencies and business entities, thus limiting the involvement of local communities and regional governments.

The flexibility in land use granted by the UU Cipta Kerja permits conversion to cultivation zones, including mining activities (Wijaya et al., 2023). is perceived as potentially threatening ecosystem sustainability. Resource exploitation may proceed without a thorough environmental evaluation as previously required. Environmental pollution cases from mining, such as heavy metal contamination on Obi Island, illustrate weak enforcement of sanctions within the UU Cipta Kerja, undermining effective environmental protection and enabling ecosystem degradation (Arizona & Cohen, 2024).

The UU Cipta Kerja and its implementing regulations, primarily PP No. 21 Tahun 2021 and Permen ESDM No. 31 Tahun 2021, shift the focus of protected area and geopark management to central ministries/agencies and corporations, thereby reducing the participation of indigenous communities and local governments. This shift has implications for the neglect of indigenous rights, which historically have contributed to the governance and preservation of geoparks, and risks inciting social conflict and violations of indigenous human rights (Nugroho et al., 2024). Legal recognition and protection of indigenous rights within national natural resource management frameworks remain insufficient and generate social injustice.

The simplified licensing system introduced by the UU Cipta Kerja is inadequate to ensure environmental sustainability and the protection of local community rights. The mining sector, regulated under this law, demands rigorous evaluation concerning spatial use permits, environmental approvals, and monitoring involving active participation by indigenous communities and local governments as key stakeholders (Hanum et al., 2024). It is recommended that policy revisions reaffirm the involvement of indigenous peoples and regional governments in the governance of protected areas and geoparks while strengthening oversight and sanctions against environmental violations and rights infringements.

Consequently, although the UU Cipta Kerja and its regulations open opportunities for more flexible land use in protected areas, this poses heightened risks to ecosystem sustainability and indigenous rights, requiring reassessment and improvement to prevent negative social and environmental outcomes.

This situation has sparked controversy and debate due to the potential disregard of sustainability principles and indigenous rights protection. The geopark status, parts of which are already registered within the UNESCO Global Geopark network, risks being compromised if management does not comply with international standards demanding optimal conservation and community participation (Apriyanto et al., 2025). Uncontrolled conversion of protected areas into mining zones may result in the revocation of UNESCO status following the "yellow card" and "red card" mechanisms under the Global Geopark Statute.

LEGAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

The regulatory changes reflect a degradation of the principles of legal norm hierarchy and the theory of utility within the context of geopark management. The implementation of the UU Cipta Kerja, which reduces regional authority and community participation, contradicts the superior norms enshrined in the UUD 1945 concerning regional autonomy and the recognition of indigenous peoples (Pasal 18B dan Pasal 28I). Furthermore, the conversion of protected areas risks damaging natural sustainability and the long-established local economies grounded in customary law and local wisdom

Norm conflicts arising from inconsistencies between central and regional regulations demand policymakers' attention to preserve legal legitimacy and social justice. The recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous customary law communities—as part of the nation's identity safeguarded by the Constitution and its implementing laws—must be enforced to ensure development does not violate human rights or environmental sustainability (Putro & Bedner, 2023).

By utilizing an approach based on omnibus law, the UU Cipta Kerja disturbs the hierarchy of national legal norms by merging and amending multiple laws under one regulation. This leads to uncertainty, as the law has the same standing as others but covers a wider and more intricate range (Petrus & Indradjati, 2020). As a result, the principles of legal norm hierarchy and the theory of utility—which assert that lower-level norms not conflict with the higher-level norms such as the UUD 1945—are violated. The lack of strong synchronization leads to legal inconsistency, which undermines rule of law, transparency, and multi-stakeholder participation in land use and natural resource management (Afif Mahfud & Chin, 2024).

Under Article 18B and Article 28I of the 1945 Constitution, which uphold regional autonomy and recognize indigenous peoples as legal entities, the reduced authority of regional government and limited participation of local indigenous communities in geopark governance contradict these norms (Widiyono & Khan, 2023). These higher national norms often lead to legal and socio-cultural tensions as they are not consistently implemented in derivative regulations. Such normative conflicts create legal uncertainty and risk marginalizing indigenous peoples who have sustainably managed ecosystems based on high-value ethical and ecological local wisdom and customary law (Wijaya et al., 2024).

The transformation of protected areas to agricultural territories, like mining facilities, jeopardises not only ecological sustainability, but also destabilizes the socio-cultural fabric of the local society that depends on these natural resources sustainably (Horstink et al., 2024). This transformation undermines the traditional wisdom values on which environmental protection and governance have relied and diminishes social justice assurances. Thus indigenous peoples are deprived of traditional land rights and rights to resources which traditionally their communities have held, leading them to potential conflicts, at various layers and possibly a serious damage of their culture. It is argued that a policy reconstruction is required to emphasise the harmonisation of legal norms based on the hierarchy of laws and strengthening participatory democracy. A comprehensive framework would therefore involve explicitly acknowledging the rights of indigenous people and their regional autonomy in management of protected areas and involvement in permitting/monitoring processes (Firmansyah & Jamilah, 2022). A balanced and sustainable model of integrated governance should focus on socio-cultural and ecological aspects of development, not the economic aspects of development with specific respect to economic optimization as an obvious choice, as opposed to socio-economic efficiency, and sustain the development model.

Hence, the legal and socio-cultural implications of the implementation of the UU Cipta Kerja and its regulations demonstrate regression in the hierarchy of legal norms and neglect of indigenous peoples' rights, contributing to profound ecological and social injustice. A critical, multidimensional approach is essential to restore legal legitimacy and social-environmental justice in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the implementation of Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation has led to a considerable regression in how geopark areas are governed, particularly in protected geological zones like the Geopark Gunung Batur. Key findings: Our research showed that the Job Creation Law weakens the foundation of the legal norm hierarchy that lies in the Indonesian legal system, which is based on the concept of the legal norm hierarchy approach of the Indonesian government that uses the omnibus law method for integrating diverse regulatory materials with inadequate alignment to the higher legal norms, particularly the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as the highest foundational norm. This leads to the inconsistent nature of regulation, thereby compromising legal legitimacy and generating possible norm conflicts between central and regional frameworks. From socio-culturally based perspectives, the weakening of regional government authority, and an attenuation of indigenous community participation in managing protected areas, and its implications in terms of regional autonomy and recognition of indigenous rights is in direct contradiction to the values reflected in Article 18B and Article 28I of the 1945 Constitution.This results in the marginalization of indigenous peoples and risks damaging ecological sustainability along with socio-cultural structures reliant on local wisdom. The shift of protected areas towards cultivation and mining zones threatens the conservation values of geoparks, local economic sustainability, and even jeopardizes the international status of geoparks.

This study contributes through a critical and in-depth analysis of the legal and socio-cultural impacts of the UU Cipta Kerja implementation on comprehensive and contextual geopark protected area management. It emphasizes the necessity for policy reconstruction that prioritizes synchronization of legal norms based on hierarchical legislation and strengthens participatory democracy principles by involving indigenous communities and regional governments in spatial and natural resource governance. An integrative and sustainable management model must serve as a solution to ongoing norm conflicts, while preserving legal legitimacy and environmental social justice in Indonesia.

These conclusions urge policymakers, academics, and legal practitioners to re-examine and improve relevant regulations to ensure harmonious development among economic interests, socio-cultural values, and environmental sustainability for the future viability of geoparks and the human rights of indigenous peoples in Indonesia.

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