Volume radius of a random polytope in a convex body

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Abstract

Let K be a convex body in \mathbb{R}^n with volume |K| = 1. We choose N points x_1, \ldots, x_N independently and uniformly from K, and write $C(x_1, \ldots, x_N)$ for their convex hull. If $n(\log n)^2 \leq N \leq \exp(c_1 n)$, we show that the expected volume radius

$$\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K, N) = \int_{K} \cdots \int_{K} |C(x_1, \dots, x_N)|^{1/n} dx_N \cdots dx_1$$

of this random N-tope can be estimated by

$$c_1 \frac{\sqrt{\log(N/n)}}{\sqrt{n}} \le \mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K, N) \le c_2 L_K \frac{\log(N/n)}{\sqrt{n}},$$

where c_1, c_2 are absolute positive constants and L_K is the isotropic constant of K.

1 Introduction

We work in \mathbb{R}^n which is equipped with a Euclidean structure $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$. We denote the corresponding Euclidean norm by $|\cdot|$ and fix an orthonormal basis $\{e_1, \ldots, e_n\}$.

Let K be a compact subset of \mathbb{R}^n with volume |K| = 1. The matrix of inertia M(K) of K is the $n \times n$ matrix with entries

$$(M(K))_{ij} = \int_K \langle x, e_i \rangle \langle x, e_j \rangle dx.$$

The determinant of M(K) can be expressed in the form

$$(1.1) n! \det (M(K)) = \int_K \cdots \int_K [\det(x_1, \dots, x_n)]^2 dx_n \cdots dx_1.$$

This identity goes back to Blaschke and can be easily verified by expanding the determinant inside the integral. Since the right hand side is invariant under SL(n), we

see that $\det(M(K)) = \det(M(TK))$ for every $T \in SL(n)$. On the other hand, there exists $T_1 \in SL(n)$ for which $M(T_1K)$ is a multiple of the identity. Equivalently,

(1.2)
$$\int_{T_i K} \langle x, e_i \rangle \langle x, e_j \rangle dx = L_K^2 \delta_{ij}$$

where L_K is the *isotropic constant* of K (we refer to [5] for the isotropic position of a convex body). By (1), L_K is well defined and satisfies

(1.3)
$$n! L_K^{2n} = \int_K \cdots \int_K [\det(x_1, \dots, x_n)]^2 dx_n \cdots dx_1.$$

Assume now that K is a convex body with centroid at the origin. We fix $N \ge n+1$ and choose points x_1, \ldots, x_N independently and uniformly from K. Let $C(x_1, \ldots, x_N)$ be their convex hull. For every p > 0 we consider the quantity

$$(1.4) \mathbb{E}_p(K,N) = \left(\int_K \dots \int_K \left| C(x_1,\dots,x_N) \right|^p dx_N \dots dx_1 \right)^{1/pn}.$$

When N = n + 1, these quantities are exact functions of the isotropic constant of K. To see this, note that

$$A_n(K) := \int_K \ldots \int_K \left| \operatorname{co}(0, x_1, \ldots, x_n) \right|^2 dx_n \cdots dx_1$$

satisfies the identity $L_K^{2n} = n! A_n(K)$ and

$$(1.5) A_n(K) \le \mathbb{E}_2^{2n}(K, n+1) \le (n+1)^2 A_n(K).$$

It follows that

$$c_1 \frac{L_K}{\sqrt{n}} \le \mathbb{E}_2(K, n+1) \le c_2 \frac{L_K}{\sqrt{n}}$$

where $c_1, c_2 > 0$ are absolute constants. Moreover, using Khintchine type inequalities for linear functionals on convex bodies (see the next section) one can show that $\mathbb{E}_p(K, n+1) \geq cL_K/\sqrt{n}$ for every p > 0, where c > 0 is an absolute constant.

In this paper, we give estimates for the volume radius $\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K, N)$ of a random N-tope $C(x_1, \ldots, x_N)$ in K. It turns out that a generalization of the upper bound in (6) is possible.

Theorem 1.1. Let K be a convex body in \mathbb{R}^n with volume |K| = 1. For every $N \ge n+1$, we have

$$\mathbb{E}_{1/n}\left(K,N\right) \le cL_K \frac{\log(2N/n)}{\sqrt{n}}$$

where c > 0 is an absolute constant.

The proof of this fact is presented in Section 2. We can also obtain upper estimates for $\mathbb{E}_p(K,N)$, p>1/n, but the dependence on p does not seem to be optimal. Our method shows that if K is a ψ_2 -body then one has the stronger estimate $\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K,N) \leq cL_K \sqrt{\log(2N/n)}/\sqrt{n}$. This is optimal and might be the right dependence for every convex body K in \mathbb{R}^n .

Our lower bound is based on an extension of a result of Groemer [3].

Theorem 1.2. Let K be a convex body of volume 1 and B be a ball of the same volume. Then,

$$\mathbb{E}_{p}\left(K,N\right) \geq \mathbb{E}_{p}\left(B,N\right)$$

for every p > 0. In particular, the expected volume radius $\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K, N)$ of a random N-tope in K is minimal when K = B.

Groemer proved the same fact for $p \geq 1$. Schöpf [7] proved Theorem 1.2 in the case N = n+1. Our argument is along the same lines: we show that Steiner symmetrization decreases $\mathbb{E}_p(K, N)$. A different extremal problem concerning the p-th moment of the volume of Minkowski sums of intervals defined by random points from a convex body was solved in [2]: the solution is again given by the Euclidean ball for every p > 0.

In the case of the ball, one can give a lower bound for $\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K,N)$.

Theorem 1.3. Let B be a ball of volume 1 in \mathbb{R}^n . If $n(\log n)^2 \leq N \leq \exp(cn)$, then

$$\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(B, N) \ge c \frac{\sqrt{\log(N/n)}}{\sqrt{n}}$$

where c > 0 is an absolute constant.

Theorems 1.2 and 1.3 are proved in Section 3. It follows that $\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K,N) \geq c\sqrt{\log(N/n)}/\sqrt{n}$ for every convex body K of volume 1. This bound is optimal. However, an interesting question is to give lower bounds for $\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K,N)$ in terms of L_K . Since $\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K,N) \leq 1$, this would lead to non-trivial upper estimates for the isotropic constant.

For standard notation and definitions we refer to [5] and [6]. We use c, c_1, c' etc. for absolute positive constants which are not necessarily the same in all their occurrences.

2 The upper bound

Let $\alpha \in [1, 2]$. We say that a convex body K in \mathbb{R}^n is a ψ_{α} -body with constant b_{α} if

(2.1)
$$\left(\int_K |\langle x, y \rangle|^p \, dx \right)^{1/p} \le b_{\alpha} p^{1/\alpha} \int_K |\langle x, y \rangle| \, dx$$

for every $y \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $p \geq 1$. It is clear by the definition that if K is a ψ_{α} -body then the same is true for TK, $T \in GL(n)$ (with the same constant b_{α}). By Borell's lemma (see [6], Appendix III), every convex body K is a ψ_1 -body with constant $b_1 = c$, where c > 0 is an absolute constant.

Assume that K has volume 1 and satisfies the isotropic condition

$$\int_K \langle x, y \rangle^2 \, dx = L_K^2$$

for every $y \in S^{n-1}$. Then, the fact that K is a ψ_{α} -body with constant b_{α} is equivalent to the inequality

$$\left(\int_{K} \left| \langle x, y \rangle \right|^{p} dx \right)^{1/p} \le b_{\alpha} p^{1/\alpha} L_{K}$$

for every $p \ge 1$ and $y \in S^{n-1}$. We shall prove the following.

Theorem 2.1. Let K be a convex body in \mathbb{R}^n with volume 1. Assume that K is a ψ_{α} -body with constant b_{α} . Then, for every $N \geq n+1$

$$\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(K, N) \le cb_{\alpha} L_K \frac{\left(\log(2N/n)\right)^{1/\alpha}}{\sqrt{n}}.$$

This implies Theorem 1.1. For the proof, we will use a result of Ball and Pajor [1] on the volume of symmetric convex bodies which are intersections of symmetric strips in \mathbb{R}^n .

Lemma 2.2. Let $x_1, \ldots, x_N \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $1 \leq q < \infty$. If $W = \{z \in \mathbb{R}^n : |\langle z, x_j \rangle| \leq 1, j = 1, \ldots, N\}$, then

$$\left|W\right|^{1/n} \geq 2\left(\frac{n+q}{n}\sum_{j=1}^{N}\frac{1}{\left|B_{q}^{n}\right|}\int_{B_{q}^{n}}\left|\langle z,x_{j}\rangle\right|^{q}dz\right)^{-1/q}.\square$$

Proof of Theorem 2.1: We may assume that K is isotropic. Write K_N for the absolute convex hull $\operatorname{co}\{\pm x_1,\ldots,\pm x_N\}$ of N random points from K. By the Blaschke-Santaló inequality,

$$\mathbb{E}_{1/n}\left(K,N\right) \leq \mathbb{E}|K_N|^{1/n} \leq \omega_n^{2/n} \cdot \mathbb{E}|K_N^{\circ}|^{-1/n}$$

where K_N° is the polar body of K_N . Lemma 2.2 shows that

$$(2.2) |K_N^{\circ}|^{-1/n} \le \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{n+q}{n} \sum_{j=1}^N \frac{1}{|B_q^n|} \int_{B_q^n} |\langle z, x_j \rangle|^q dz \right)^{1/q}$$

for every $q \geq 1$. Consider the convex body $W = K \times \cdots \times K$ (N times) in \mathbb{R}^{Nn} . We apply Hölder's inequality, change the order of integration and use the ψ_{α} -property of K:

$$\mathbb{E}|K_N^{\circ}|^{-1/n} \leq \int_W \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{n+q}{n} \sum_{j=1}^N \frac{1}{|B_q^n|} \int_{B_q^n} |\langle z, x_j \rangle|^q dz \right)^{1/q} dx_N \cdots dx_1
\leq \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{n+q}{n} \sum_{j=1}^N \frac{1}{|B_q^n|} \int_{B_q^n} \int_W |\langle z, x_j \rangle|^q dx_N \cdots dx_1 dz \right)^{1/q}
\leq \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{n+q}{n} \left(q^{1/\alpha} b_{\alpha} L_K \right)^q N \frac{1}{|B_q^n|} \int_{B_q^n} |z|^q dz \right)^{1/q} .$$

Since $\omega_n^{2/n} \le c_1/n$ and $|z| \le n^{1/2-1/q}$ for all $z \in B_q^n$, we get

$$\mathbb{E}_{1/n}\left(K,N\right) \leq \frac{c}{\sqrt{n}} b_{\alpha} L_{K} q^{1/\alpha} \left(\frac{N}{n}\right)^{1/q} \left(\frac{n+q}{n}\right)^{1/q}.$$

Choosing $q = \log(2N/n)$ we complete the proof.

Remark The proof shows that $\mathbb{E}_{p_0}(K, N) \leq cb_{\alpha}L_K(\log(2N/n))^{1/\alpha}/\sqrt{n}$, where $p_0 = \log(2N/n)/n$. Since

$$f(x_1,\ldots,x_N) = \left(\sum_{j=1}^N \int_{B_q^n} |\langle z,x_j
angle|^q dz
ight)^{1/q}$$

is a norm on \mathbb{R}^{Nn} , one can estimate $\mathbb{E}_p(K,N)$ for larger values of p by a standard application of Borell's lemma (see [6], Appendix III). When p is close to 1, the right dependence of $\mathbb{E}_p(K,N)$ on p is not clear.

3 The lower bound

Let H be an (n-1)-dimensional subspace of \mathbb{R}^n . We identify H with \mathbb{R}^{n-1} and write $x=(y,t),\ y\in H,\ t\in \mathbb{R}$ for a point $x\in \mathbb{R}^n$. If K is a convex body in \mathbb{R}^n with |K|=1 and P(K) is the orthogonal projection of K onto H, then

(3.1)
$$\mathbb{E}_p^{pn}(K,N) = \int_{P(K)} \cdots \int_{P(K)} M_{p,K}(y_1,\ldots,y_N) \, dy_N \cdots dy_1$$

where

$$(3.2) \quad M_{p,K}(y_1,\ldots,y_N) = \int_{\ell(K,y_1)} \cdots \int_{\ell(K,y_N)} \left| C((y_1,t_1),\ldots,(y_N,t_N)) \right|^p dt_N \cdots dt_1$$

and $\ell(K, y) = \{t \in \mathbb{R} : (y, t) \in K\}.$

We fix $y_1, \ldots, y_N \in H$ and consider the function $F_Y : \mathbb{R}^N \to \mathbb{R}$ defined by

$$(3.3) F_Y(t_1, \dots, t_N) = |C((y_1, t_1), \dots, (y_N, t_N))|,$$

where $Y = (y_1, \ldots, y_N)$. The key observation in [3] is the following:

Lemma 3.1. For any
$$y_1, \ldots, y_N \in H$$
, the function F_Y is convex.

We now also fix $r_1, \ldots, r_N > 0$ and define $Q = \{U = (u_1, \ldots, u_N) : |u_i| \le r_i, i = 1, \ldots, N\}$. For every N-tuple $W = (w_1, \ldots, w_N) \in \mathbb{R}^N$ we set

$$(3.4) G_W(u_1,\ldots,u_N) = F_Y(w_1+u_1,\ldots,w_N+u_N),$$

and write

$$G_W(U) = F_Y(W + U).$$

This is the volume of the polytope which is generated by the points $(y_i, w_i + u_i)$. Finally, for every $W \in \mathbb{R}^N$ and $\alpha > 0$, we define

$$A(W,\alpha) = \{ U \in Q : G_W(U) \le \alpha \}.$$

With this notation, we have

Lemma 3.2. Let $\alpha > 0$ and $\lambda \in (0,1)$. If $W, W' \in \mathbb{R}^N$, then

$$(3.6) |A(\lambda W + (1 - \lambda)W', \alpha)| \ge |A(W, \alpha)|^{\lambda} |A(W', \alpha)|^{1 - \lambda}.$$

Proof: Let $U \in A(W, \alpha)$ and $U' \in A(W', \alpha)$. Then, using the convexity of F_Y we see that

$$\begin{split} G_{\lambda W+(1-\lambda)W'}\left(\lambda U+(1-\lambda)U'\right) &= F_Y\left(\lambda (W+U)+(1-\lambda)(W'+U')\right)\\ &\leq \lambda F_Y(W+U)+(1-\lambda)F_Y(W'+U')\\ &= \lambda G_W(U)+(1-\lambda)G_{W'}(U')\\ &\leq \alpha. \end{split}$$

Therefore,

$$A(\lambda W + (1 - \lambda)W') \supset \lambda A(W, \alpha) + (1 - \lambda)A(W', \alpha)$$

and the result follows from the Brunn-Minkowski inequality.

Observe that the polytopes $C((y_i, w_i + u_i)_{i \leq N})$ and $C((y_i, -w_i - u_i)_{i \leq N})$ have the same volume since they are reflections of each other with respect to H. It follows that

$$(3.7) A(-W,\alpha) = -A(W,\alpha)$$

for every $\alpha > 0$. Taking W' = -W and $\lambda = 1/2$ in Lemma 3.2, we obtain the following:

Lemma 3.3. Let $y_1, \ldots, y_N \in H$. For every $W \in \mathbb{R}^N$ and every $\alpha > 0$,

$$(3.8) |A(O,\alpha)| \ge |A(W,\alpha)|,$$

where O is the origin in \mathbb{R}^N .

For every $y \in P(K)$, we denote by w(y) the midpoint and by 2r(y) the length of $\ell(K,y)$. Let S(K) be the Steiner symmetral of K. By definition, P(S(K)) = P(K) = P and for every $y \in P$ the midpoint and length of $\ell(S(K),y)$ are w'(y) = 0 and 2r'(y) = 2r(y) respectively.

Lemma 3.4. Let $y_1, ..., y_N \in P(K) = P(S(K))$. Then,

$$M_{p,K}(y_1,\ldots,y_N) \ge M_{p,S(K)}(y_1,\ldots,y_N)$$

for every p > 0.

Proof: In the notation of the previous lemmata, we have

$$M_{p,K}(y_1, \dots, y_N) = \int_Q (G_W(U))^p dU$$

= $\int_0^\infty |\{U \in Q : G_W(U) \ge t^{1/p}\}| dt$
= $\int_0^\infty (|Q| - |A(W, t^{1/p})|) dt$.

By the definition of S(K),

$$M_{p,K}(y_1,\ldots,y_N) = \int_{O} (G_{O}(U))^p dU = \int_{0}^{\infty} (|Q| - |A(O,t^{1/p})|) dt,$$

and the result follows from Lemma 3.3.

It is now clear that $\mathbb{E}_p(K, N)$ decreases under Steiner symmetrization.

Theorem 3.5. Let K be a convex body with volume |K| = 1 and let H be an (n-1)-dimensional subspace of \mathbb{R}^n . If $S_H(K)$ is the Steiner symmetral of K with respect to H, then

$$\mathbb{E}_p\left(S_H(K),N\right) \le \mathbb{E}_p\left(K,N\right)$$

for every p > 0.

Proof: We may assume that $H = \mathbb{R}^{n-1}$. Since $P(S_H(K)) = P(K)$, Lemma 3.4 and (9) show that

$$\mathbb{E}_{p}^{pn}(K, N) = \int_{P(K)} \cdots \int_{P(K)} M_{p,K}(y_{1}, \dots, y_{N}) dy_{N} \cdots dy_{1}$$

$$\geq \int_{P(S_{H}(K))} \cdots \int_{P(S_{H}(K))} M_{p,S_{H}(K)}(y_{1}, \dots, y_{N}) dy_{N} \cdots dy_{1}$$

$$= \mathbb{E}_{p}^{pn}(S_{H}(K), N),$$

completing the proof.

Proof of Theorem 1.2: Since the ball B of volume 1 is the Hausdorff limit of a sequence of successive Steiner symmetrizations of K, Theorem 3.1 shows that the expected volume radius is minimal in the case of B.

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Remark The argument shows that a more general fact holds true.

Theorem 3.6. Let K be a convex body of volume 1 and let B be a ball of the same volume. Then,

$$\int_{K} \cdots \int_{K} f(|C(x_{1}, \dots, x_{N})|) dx_{N} \cdots dx_{1}$$

$$\geq \int_{B} \cdots \int_{B} f(|C(x_{1}, \dots, x_{N})|) dx_{N} \cdots dx_{1}$$

for every increasing function $f: \mathbb{R}^+ \to \mathbb{R}^+$.

Next, we give a lower bound for $\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(B,N)$. We will actually prove that the convex hull of N random points from K=B contains a ball of radius $c\sqrt{\log(2N/n)}/\sqrt{n}$ (an analogous fact was proved in [4] for an arbitrary convex body K, but the fact that we are dealing with a ball leads to the much better estimate which is needed).

Lemma 3.7. Let $B = rD_n$ be the centered ball of volume 1 in \mathbb{R}^n . If $\theta \in S^{n-1}$, then

Prob
$$(x \in B : \langle x, \theta \rangle > \varepsilon r) > \exp(-4\varepsilon^2 n)$$

for every $\varepsilon \in (c_1/\sqrt{n}, 1/4)$, where $c_1 > 0$ is an absolute constant.

Proof: A simple calculation shows that

$$\operatorname{Prob}\left(x \in B : \langle x, \theta \rangle \ge \varepsilon r\right) = \omega_{n-1} r^n \int_{\varepsilon}^{1} (1 - t^2)^{(n-1)/2} dt$$
$$\ge \frac{\omega_{n-1}}{\omega_n} \varepsilon (1 - 4\varepsilon^2)^{(n-1)/2}$$
$$\ge \exp\left(-4(n-1)\varepsilon^2\right)$$
$$\ge \exp(-4\varepsilon^2 n)$$

since $\sqrt{n}\omega_n \leq c_1\omega_{n-1}$ for some absolute constant $c_1 > 0$.

Lemma 3.8. There exist c > 0 and $n_0 \in \mathbb{N}$ such that if $n \ge n_0$ and $n(\log n)^2 \le N \le \exp(cn)$, then

$$C(x_1,\ldots,x_N) \supseteq \frac{\sqrt{\log(N/n)}}{6\sqrt{n}}B$$

with probability greater than $1 - \exp(-n)$.

Proof: By Lemma 3.7, for every $\theta \in S^{n-1}$ we have

$$\operatorname{Prob}\left((x_1,\ldots,x_N): \max_{j\leq N}\langle x_j,\theta\rangle \leq \varepsilon r\right) \leq \left(1 - \exp(-4\varepsilon^2 n)\right)^N$$

$$\leq \exp\left(-N\exp(-4\varepsilon^2 n)\right)$$

for every $\varepsilon \in (c_1/\sqrt{n}, 1/4)$. Let \mathcal{N} be a ρ -net for S^{n-1} with cardinality $|\mathcal{N}| \le \exp(\log(1+2/\rho)n)$. If

$$(3.9) \qquad \exp\left(n\log(1+2/\rho) - N\exp(-4\varepsilon^2 n)\right) \le \exp(-n),$$

we have $\max_{j \leq N} \langle x_j, \theta \rangle > \varepsilon r$ for all $\theta \in \mathcal{N}$ with probability greater than $1 - \exp(-n)$. For every $u \in S^{n-1}$ we find $\theta \in \mathcal{N}$ with $|\theta - u| < \rho$. Then,

$$\max_{j \le N} \langle x_j, u \rangle \ge \max_{j \le N} \langle x_j, \theta \rangle - \max_{j \le N} \langle x_j, \theta - u \rangle \ge (\varepsilon - \rho) r.$$

We choose $\varepsilon = 2a \left((\log(N/n)/n)^{1/2} \right) (a > 0)$ is an absolute constant to be determined) and $\rho = \varepsilon/2$. Then,

$$n\log(1+2/\rho) + n \leq 2n\log(3/\rho) \leq n\log\left(\frac{9n}{a^2\log(N/n)}\right) \leq n\log n,$$

if $a^2 \ge 9/\log(N/n)$. Therefore, (17) will be a consequence of

(3.10)
$$\exp\left(16a^2\log(N/n)\right) \le \frac{N}{n\log n},$$

which can be written equivalently in the form

$$\left(\frac{N}{n}\right)^{1-16a^2} \ge \log n.$$

If $N \ge n(\log n)^2$ and a = 1/6, then (19) is clearly satisfied. The restriction we had posed on a was $a^2 \ge 9/2 \log \log n$, which is also satisfied when $n \ge n_0$, for a suitable (absolute) $n_0 \in \mathbb{N}$.

Theorem 3.9. Let B be the ball of volume 1 in \mathbb{R}^n . If $n(\log n)^2 \leq N \leq \exp(cn)$, then

$$\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(B, N) \ge c \frac{\sqrt{\log(N/n)}}{\sqrt{n}}$$

where c > 0 is an absolute constant.

Proof: Let $f(N,n) = \sqrt{\log(N/n)}/6\sqrt{n}$ and

$$A = \{(x_1, \ldots, x_N) : C(x_1, \ldots, x_n) \supseteq f(N, n)B\}.$$

By Lemma 3.8, $Prob(A) \ge 1 - exp(-n)$, and hence

$$\mathbb{E}(B, N) \ge \int_A |C(x_1, \dots, x_N)| dx_1 \cdots dx_N$$

$$\ge (1 - \exp(-n)) f(N, n) |B|$$

$$\ge f(N, n)/2,$$

completing the proof.

This completes the proof of Theorem 1.3.

Remarks (a) The argument shows that if $\delta > 0$ and $c_1 n (\log n)^{1+\delta} \leq N \leq \exp(c_2 n)$, then

(3.12)
$$\mathbb{E}_{1/n}(B, N) \ge c\sqrt{\delta} \frac{\sqrt{\log(2N/n)}}{\sqrt{n}}.$$

(b) The estimate of Lemma 3.8 implies that

(3.13)
$$\mathbb{E}_p(B, N) \ge c \frac{\sqrt{\log(2N/n)}}{\sqrt{n}}$$

for every $p \ge \exp(-n)$. However, it is not clear if (21) holds true for every p > 0.

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