

Multi-population Evolutionary Algorithm for Multimodal Multiojective Optimization

1st Kai Zhang

School of Computer Science and
Technology
Wuhan University of Science and
Technology
Wuhan, China
zhangkai@wust.edu.cn

2nd Fang Liu

School of Computer Science and
Technology
Wuhan University of Science and
Technology
Wuhan, China
1213553227@qq.com

3rd Chaonan Shen

School of Computer Science and
Technology
Wuhan University of Science and
Technology
Wuhan, China
449777215@qq.com

4th Zhiwei Xu

School of Computer Science and
Technology
Wuhan University of Science and
Technology
Wuhan, China
1786546913@qq.com

Abstract—In recent years, numerous efficient and effective multimodal multi-objective evolutionary algorithms (MMOEs) have been developed to address multimodal multi-objective optimization problems (MMOPs) involving multiple equivalent sets of Pareto optimal solutions to be found simultaneously. However, the Pareto optimal solutions may have various contracting or expanding shapes, and have random locations in the decision space. In addition, uniform decision distribution does not imply good objective distribution. Therefore, many existing MMOEs are very difficult to guide the individuals converged to every Pareto subregion with good distribution in both the decision space and the objective space. In this paper, we present a multi-population evolutionary algorithm to search for the equivalent global Pareto optimal solutions. The original population should be divided into two groups of subpopulations with equal size. The first subpopulation is designed to search for the optimal solutions in objective space. At the same time, the second subpopulation focus to obtain high-quality optimal solutions in the decision space. The multi-population strategy is helpful to improve the decision and objective distributions simultaneously, and address the MMOPs effectively. The proposed algorithm is compared against five state-of-the-art MMOEs. The experimental results indicate the proposed algorithm provides better performance than competing MMOEs on IEEE CEC 2019 MMOPs test suite.

Keywords—multimodal multi-objective optimization problem, multimodal multi-objective evolutionary algorithm, evolution strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

For the past few years, many multimodal multi-objective evolutionary algorithms (MMOEs) have been developed to address multimodal multi-objective optimization problems (MMOPs) involving multiple equivalent sets of Pareto optimal solutions [1]-[3]. The mathematical model of the multi-objective optimization problem (MOP) can be formulated as follows:

$$\min f(x) = \min[f_1(x), f_2(x), \dots, f_i(x), \dots, f_M(x)]^T \quad (1)$$

where the decision vector x consists of N decision variables, $x = [x_1, x_2, \dots, x_i, \dots, x_N]^T \in \Omega$. Ω denotes the decision space. The

objective vector $f(x)$ consists of M objective functions, $f_i(x) \in R^M$, $i=1, \dots, M$. R^M denotes the objective space.

For an MOPs, a group of non-dominated optimal solutions is called the Pareto optimal set (POS), and the corresponding objective vectors are called the Pareto optimal front (POF). Moreover, the MMOPs have more than one equivalent set of Pareto optimal solutions or at least more than one local Pareto optimal solution for any point on the Pareto front [4]. Therefore, it is quite different between MMOEs from ordinary MOEs. The MMOEs need to satisfy three conditions simultaneously, (1) well-converged, (2) well-distributed in the objective space, and (3) well-distributed in the decision space.

In recent years, numerous MMOEs have been designed for solving MMOPs. Some of them enhance the diversity of the decision space to find multimodal optimal solutions [5]-[10]. In contrast, some MMOEs are based on decomposition techniques and integrate niching techniques in the decision space for searching more groups of Pareto optimal solutions [11]-[13]. Moreover, the performance indicators, such as hypervolume indicator, are also adopted in some MMOEs to guide the evolutionary process [14]-[16].

In this paper, a novel multi-population evolution strategy algorithm is proposed for solving MMOPs, namely MP-MMOEs. The original population should be divided into two groups of subpopulations with equal size. The first subpopulation is designed to search for the optimal solutions in objective space that would satisfy conditions (1) and (2). At the same time, the second subpopulation focus to obtain high-quality optimal solutions in the decision space, that need satisfy conditions (1) and (3). For this reason, the multi-population strategy can meet three conditions simultaneously, and improve the decision and objective distributions effectively.

The performance of the proposed algorithm is evaluated on twenty-three competition MMOP test instances in IEEE CEC 2019 [17]. The proposed algorithm can address the MMOPs effectively, and achieve high-quality multiple groups of optimal solutions efficiently. The experimental results indicate

the proposed algorithm performs better than five competing state-of-the-art MMOEAs, including Omni-optimizer [5], MO_Ring_PSO_SCD [10], MOEA/D-AD [12], NIMMO [16] and TriMOEA-TA&R [9].

II. RELATED WORKS

For the past few years, many MMOEAs have been designed for solving MMOPs with different strategies, including Pareto-based approaches, decomposition-based approaches, and indicator-based approaches.

A. Pareto-based MMOEAs

The Pareto-based MMOEAs prefer the converged solutions with the Pareto dominance principle, and enhance the diversity of the decision space to find multimodal optimal solutions. In [5], the Omni-optimizer is presented to search for multiple equivalent Pareto optimal solutions by using crowding distances in both the decision and objective spaces. In [6], DNEA is proposed to maintain good distribution with sharing functions. In [7], DN-NSGA-II is designed to replace the crowding distance in the objective space with decision space. In [8], SPEA2+ adopt two archives to improve the performance of SPEA2, and the archives keep updating with density qualities.

In [9], TriMOEA-TA&R is presented for multimodal multi-objective optimization, which adopts two-archive and recombination strategies. In [10], MO-Ring-PSO-SCD is designed to search for multiple Pareto subregions that integrated special crowding distance into multi-objective PSO algorithm.

B. Decomposition-based MMOEAs

The Decomposition-based MMOEAs usually decompose an MMOP into a number of single-objective optimization sub-problems, and uses a search heuristic to optimize these sub-problems simultaneously and cooperatively, such as MOEA/D [11]. In [12], MOEA/D-AD is proposed to integrate Addition and Deletion operators with dynamic population size. In [13], a decision space diversity maintenance mechanism is incorporated into MOEA/D for solving MMOPs.

C. Indicator-based MMOEAs

The indicator-based MMOEAs choose some performance indicators to guide the evolutionary process. In [14], the hypervolume indicator and Solow-Polasky diversity technique are adopted for solving MMOPs. In [15], the hypervolume indicator is also integrated to optimize the decision diversity. In [16], a novel niching indicator-based algorithm NIMMO is proposed to solve MMOPs.

III. PROPOSED ALGORITHM

In this paper, we present a multi-population based evolution strategy for solving MMOPs, named MP-MMOES. In the

proposed algorithm, the whole population would be divided into two subpopulations. The first subpopulation is focused on searching for well-diversified optimal solutions in the objective space. The second subpopulation is designed to maintain diversity in the decision space. The multi-population technique is helpful to improve the objective and decision distributions simultaneously.

Let $P_t^{(i)}$ be the i th individual in population P_t , which is divided into two subpopulations S^{obj} and S^{dec} randomly, as shown in Fig.1.

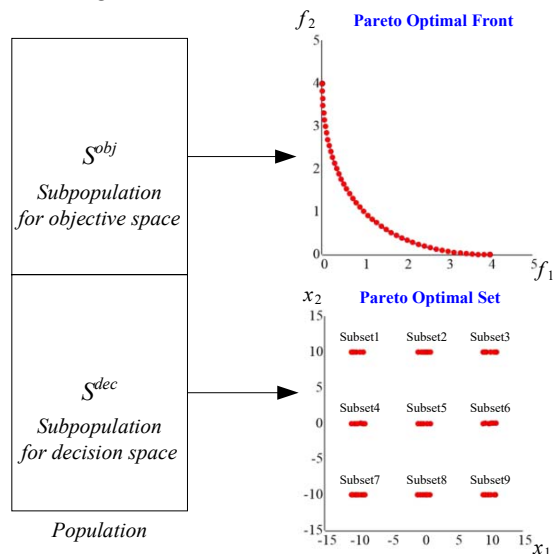


Fig. 1. The proposed algorithm adopts multi-population strategy to search for objective space and decision space independently.

For each generation, the proposed algorithm uses the Polynomial mutation to generate new candidate individuals. Let $NewP_t^{(i)}$ be the newly mutated candidate solution of individual $P_t^{(i)}$. If $NewP_t^{(i)}$ dominates $P_t^{(i)}$, it would replace the $P_t^{(i)}$ since $NewP_t^{(i)}$ has better convergent quality than $P_t^{(i)}$.

Let $DomCount(P_t^{(i)})$ be the function, which calculate the summation of other individuals that dominate $P_t^{(i)}$, as shown in Algorithm 1.

Algorithm 1 $DomCount(P_t^{(i)})$

Input: $P_t^{(i)}$
Output: *Count*

- 1: $Count = 0$
- 2: **for** $k = 1$ to P
- 3: **if** $k = i$ **then continue;**
- 4: **if** $(P_t^{(k)} < P_t^{(i)})$ **then**
- 5: $Count = Count + 1$
- 6: **end if**
- 7: **end for**
- 8: **return** *Count*

If $NewP_t^{(i)}$ and $P_t^{(i)}$ are non-dominated with respect to each other, the values of their $BeDomCount()$ would be compared. When the $BeDomCount()$ of $NewP_t^{(i)}$ is smaller than that of $P_t^{(i)}$, the $NewP_t^{(i)}$ would replace the $P_t^{(i)}$ for less individuals can dominate $NewP_t^{(i)}$. When the value of $BeDomCount(NewP_t^{(i)})$ is equal to the value of $BeDomCount(P_t^{(i)})$, the values of MED or $MEDx$ would then be compared.

If the $P_t^{(i)} \in S^{obj}$, the MED [18]-[19] values $MED(P_t^{(i)})$ and $MED(NewP_t^{(i)})$ are calculated. If $MED(NewP_t^{(i)})$ is greater than $MED(P_t^{(i)})$, the $NewP_t^{(i)}$ would replace $P_t^{(i)}$ which implies the $NewP_t^{(i)}$ have better diversity quality than $P_t^{(i)}$.

$$MED(P_t^{(i)}) = TotalDist(P_t^{(i)}) \times NearDist(P_t^{(i)}) \quad (2)$$

where

$$TotalDist(P_t^{(i)}) = \sum_{j=1}^P \sum_{m=1}^M |f_n^{(i)} - f_n^{(j)}|.$$

$$NearDist(P_t^{(i)}) = \min_{j,j \neq i} \sum_{m=1}^M |f_n^{(i)} - f_n^{(j)}|.$$

On the other hand, if $P_t^{(i)} \in S^{dec}$, the $MEDx$ [20] values $MEDx(P_t^{(i)})$ and $MEDx(NewP_t^{(i)})$ are calculated. If $MEDx(NewP_t^{(i)})$ is greater than $MEDx(P_t^{(i)})$, the $NewP_t^{(i)}$ would replace $P_t^{(i)}$ which implies the mutated new candidate solution $NewP_t^{(i)}$ is superior to the original $P_t^{(i)}$ in decision space.

$$MEDx(P_t^{(i)}) = TotalDistX(P_t^{(i)}) \times NearDistX(P_t^{(i)}) \quad (3)$$

where

$$TotalDistX(P_t^{(i)}) = \sum_{j=1}^P \sum_{n=1}^N |x_n^{(i)} - x_n^{(j)}|.$$

$$NearDistX(P_t^{(i)}) = \min_{j,j \neq i} \sum_{n=1}^N |x_n^{(i)} - x_n^{(j)}|.$$

The computational complexity of the $MEDx$ is $O(NP)$, where N is the number of decision variables and P is the population size. The pseudocode of the $MEDx$ is given in Algorithm 2.

Algorithm 2 MP-MMOES Algorithm

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1: Initialization  $P_t, t=0$ 
2: for  $i=1$  to  $P$ 
3:   if  $i \bmod 2 = 0$  then  $S^{obj} = S^{obj} \cup P_t^{(i)}$ 
4:   else  $S^{dec} = S^{dec} \cup P_t^{(i)}$ 
5: end for
6: while ( $t <$  maximum generation) {
7:   for  $i=1$  to  $P$  {
8:      $NewP_t^{(i)} = PolynomialMutation(P_t^{(i)})$ 
9:     Objective Functions Calculation ( $NewP_t^{(i)}$ )
10:    if ( $NewP_t^{(i)} < P_t^{(i)}$ ) {
11:       $P_t^{(i)} = NewP_t^{(i)}$ 
12:    else if ( $NewP_t^{(i)} \nless P_t^{(i)}$ ) and ( $P_t^{(i)} \nless NewP_t^{(i)}$ ) {
13:      if  $DomCount(NewP_t^{(i)}) < DomCount(P_t^{(i)})$  {

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14:       $P_t^{(i)} = NewP_t^{(i)}$ 
15:    else if  $DomCount(NewP_t^{(i)}) = DomCount(P_t^{(i)})$  {
16:      if ( $P_t^{(i)} \in S^{obj}$  and  $\frac{MED(NewP_t^{(i)})}{MED(P_t^{(i)})} > 1$ ) or
17:      ( $P_t^{(i)} \in S^{dec}$  and  $\frac{MEDx(NewP_t^{(i)})}{MEDx(P_t^{(i)})} > 1$ ) {
18:         $P_t^{(i)} = NewP_t^{(i)}$ 
19:      } //end if
20:    } //end if
21:  } //end if
22: } //end for
23: } //end while

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IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

The proposed MP-MMOES is evaluated on twenty-three benchmark instances on IEEE CEC 2019 competition MMOPs [17], and the performances are compared with five state-of-the-art MMOEAs, including MO_Ring_PSO_SCD [10], Omni-optimizer [5], MOEA/D-AD [12], NIMMO [16], and TriMOEA-TA&R [9]. In our experiment, the population size, P , is set to 200, while the maximum iteration is set to 300. The Polynomial mutation distribution index [21] is set to 20. In order to make a fair comparison, all the competing algorithms are run 30 times independently for each MMOP.

In the comparison, two indicators IGD [22] and IGDx [23] are adopted to evaluate the performance of these competing algorithms. The smaller IGD or IGDx value means the obtained solutions have better diversity and convergence in the objective space or in the decision space respectively.

$$IGD = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^{|PF|} Dist_i^2)^{1/2}}{|PF|}, \quad (4)$$

$$IGDx = \frac{(\sum_{j=1}^{|PS|} Dist_j^2)^{1/2}}{|PS|}, \quad (5)$$

where $Dist_i$ of the IGD metric denotes the Euclidean distance between i th sampled reference objective vector and obtained nearest objective vector. Moreover, $Dist_j$ of the IGDx metric denotes the Euclidean distance between the j th reference decision vector and obtained nearest decision variables.

Table I lists the IGD values obtained using the six competing MMOEAs. The proposed MP-MMOES achieved significantly better IGD performance for sixteen MMOPs, which wins fifteen instances. Omni-optimizer also performed best on seven instances. NIMMO yielded the best results on one test instance. For Omni test instance, MMF2, MMF3, MMF4, MMF6, and MMF8 instances, MP-MMOES achieve better performance than other competing MMOEAs, except Omni-optimizer. For MMF9, NIMMO achieves the best performance, while MP-MMOES and Omni-optimizer are not far behind.

Table II lists the IGDx values obtained by the competing MMOEAs. Compared with the other competing MMOEAs,

MP-MMOES achieved significantly better IGDx performance for thirteen MMOPs. For the remaining MMOPs, NIMMO performed best on four instances, MOEA/D-AD and TriMOEA-TA&R also win three instances, respectively. Although Omni-optimizer obtained the best IGDx values on SYM Part2, SYM Part3, and MMF4 instances, MP-MMOES also performed better than other MMOEAs. For MMF10, MMF11, and MMF12 instances, the proposed MP-MMOES achieved good IGDx values, just a little worse than NIMMO.

As shown in Table I and Table II, MP-MMOES achieves the best performance on most of the IEEE CEC2019 MMOPs in both IGD and IGDx metrics. The experimental results prove that MP-MMOES can handle the MMOPs with various characterizes, including convex, concave, disconnected, and sphere Pareto fronts. In addition, these MMOP instances have 2 to 27 Pareto subregions. The experimental results also demonstrate the ability to find multiple sets of well-distributed and well-converged optimal solutions in the decision space.

TABLE I. AVERAGE IGD VALUES OVER 30 RUNS ON BENCHMARK INSTANCES (POPULATION SIZE 200), WHERE THE BEST MEAN IS SHOWN IN A GRAY BACKGROUND

Problem	MP-MMOES	MO_Ring_PSO_SCD	Omni-optimizer	MOEA/D-AD	NIMMO	TriMOEA-TA&R
OMNI TEST	0.01251123	0.029150124(+)	0.008958462(-)	0.012637087(=)	0.024598026(+)	0.015126827(+)
SYM PART1	0.00897592	0.021807789(+)	0.009521222(+)	0.017766730(+)	0.034295248(+)	0.040351677(+)
SYM PART2	0.01004566	0.022575431(+)	0.011739039(+)	0.017760622(+)	0.035765847(+)	0.030371377(+)
SYM PART3	0.01116590	0.023256683(+)	0.012636299(+)	0.016262678(+)	0.048581612(+)	0.026949094(+)
MMF1	0.00276004	0.005121772(+)	0.002815454(+)	0.006502579(+)	0.005040815(+)	0.003179426(+)
MMF2	0.00537555	0.005361835(=)	0.003353320(-)	0.013881331(+)	0.011629751(+)	0.007202187(+)
MMF3	0.00504986	0.005290680(+)	0.003214919(-)	0.017465270(+)	0.009359596(+)	0.005974700(+)
MMF4	0.00272586	0.004610905(+)	0.002617184(-)	0.003136242(+)	0.005434900(+)	0.003330633(+)
MMF5	0.00278193	0.005059484(+)	0.002819489(+)	0.005939438(+)	0.003843573(+)	0.003219364(+)
MMF6	0.00275766	0.004336623(+)	0.002673216(-)	0.009208363(+)	0.004303962(+)	0.003129046(+)
MMF7	0.00269708	0.004664684(+)	0.002812777(+)	0.003251445(+)	0.002749795(+)	0.003421886(+)
MMF8	0.00351207	0.005222054(+)	0.003021578(-)	0.006653161(+)	0.013075597(+)	0.003671090(+)
MMF9	0.01124202	0.032835218(+)	0.011532801(+)	0.014723816(+)	0.009595338(-)	0.072431150(+)
MMF10	0.05685035	0.201809301(+)	0.196936485(+)	0.201469069(+)	0.203597691(+)	0.232581952(+)
MMF11	0.07961368	0.111134791(+)	0.093753732(+)	0.096695782(+)	0.087955047(+)	0.168825871(+)
MMF12	0.04027870	0.055809815(+)	0.082851825(+)	0.084465142(+)	0.091129024(+)	0.085663818(+)
MMF13	0.07036060	0.140756921(+)	0.129059300(+)	0.151105279(+)	0.155633659(+)	0.243840159(+)
MMF14	0.08174011	0.106392551(+)	0.087486389(+)	0.083680814(+)	0.108886753(+)	0.089755198(+)
MMF14A	0.08460216	0.103348602(+)	0.089508155(+)	0.088885890(+)	0.126412248(+)	0.095896802(+)
MMF15	0.17141854	0.191021894(+)	0.198716264(+)	0.185994005(+)	0.203966567(+)	0.209279524(+)
MMF15A	0.17427857	0.186060373(+)	0.192931611(+)	0.192538464(+)	0.223188539(+)	0.200169061(+)
MMF1Z	0.00260765	0.004394332(+)	0.002626091(+)	0.006512066(+)	0.004145604(+)	0.003240226(+)
MMF1E	0.00632096	0.004837187(-)	0.003008280(-)	0.074925971(+)	0.004988975(-)	0.003952197(-)

Wilcoxon's rank sum test at a 0.05 significance level is performed between MP-MMOES and compared MMOEAs. "+" means MP-MMOES better than compared algorithm, "-" means compared algorithm better than MP-MMOES, "=" means not comparable)

TABLE II. AVERAGE IGDx VALUES OVER 30 RUNS ON BENCHMARK INSTANCES (POPULATION SIZE 200), WHERE THE BEST MEAN IS SHOWN IN A GRAY BACKGROUND

Problem	MP-MMOES	MO_Ring_PSO_SCD	Omni-optimizer	MOEA/D-AD	NIMMO	TriMOEA-TA&R
Omni Test	0.02632202	0.217196057(+)	0.131158507(+)	0.081893471(+)	0.217575998(+)	0.594181794(+)
SYM Part1	0.05932537	0.096149204(+)	1.173611504(+)	0.041591252(-)	0.048317548(-)	0.023229720(-)
SYM Part2	0.06704590	0.097445041(+)	0.097448507(+)	0.048892647(+)	0.063278998(-)	4.155618496(+)
SYM Part3	0.05121727	0.851996784(+)	3.050050628(+)	0.034863555(+)	0.081800845(+)	1.620846507(+)
MMF1	0.03762181	0.063353978(+)	0.045215521(+)	0.071513259(+)	0.053231768(+)	0.049364585(+)
MMF2	0.00741552	0.009132735(+)	0.031248666(+)	0.028723763(+)	0.052812145(+)	0.067378944(+)
MMF3	0.00727242	0.011067556(+)	0.027324559(+)	0.031608785(+)	0.029581061(+)	0.020799817(+)
MMF4	0.02049264	0.036325339(+)	0.030923922(+)	0.017905388(+)	0.042916214(+)	0.024458536(+)
MMF5	0.06496427	0.102276120(+)	0.081714047(+)	0.080449518(+)	0.076950091(+)	0.085264364(+)
MMF6	0.05597783	0.079549655(+)	0.080433137(+)	0.123508902(+)	0.094966913(+)	0.069074403(+)
MMF7	0.01977541	0.031406961(+)	0.022861407(+)	0.027485326(+)	0.017435345(-)	0.018530028(-)
MMF8	0.04974763	0.082158474(+)	0.096914560(+)	0.109575408(+)	0.172983742(+)	0.573401878(+)
MMF9	0.00683108	0.010021181(+)	0.014822142(+)	0.028384815(+)	0.003361935(-)	0.003214856(-)
MMF10	0.02695622	0.151342778(+)	0.200798997(+)	0.162241019(+)	0.005874503(-)	0.201518847(+)
MMF11	0.18725754	0.182463070(-)	0.249403697(+)	0.252730929(+)	0.005178888(-)	0.252469858(+)
MMF12	0.04264283	0.144709677(+)	0.245224634(+)	0.057814483(+)	0.003454885(-)	0.248161186(+)
MMF13	0.08438545	0.207209987(+)	0.256424454(+)	0.26776513(+)	0.152421393(+)	0.262319177(+)
MMF14	0.05391435	0.070215794(+)	0.056658273(+)	0.049692623(-)	0.069142571(+)	0.037778377(-)
MMF14a	0.06657818	0.081579614(+)	0.077396503(+)	0.080790013(+)	0.117392033(+)	0.070475720(+)
MMF15	0.15399948	0.165294286(+)	0.265308491(+)	0.235141253(+)	0.173706488(+)	0.271423071(+)
MMF15A	0.15002052	0.174037831(+)	0.216245775(+)	0.210341619(+)	0.217304018(+)	0.223909506(+)
MMF1z	0.02695412	0.041882876(+)	0.032226072(+)	0.050524589(+)	0.034615409(+)	0.052162199(+)
MMF1c	0.21090805	0.309876589(+)	2.054671704(+)	0.646411251(+)	0.867156463(+)	1.818341024(+)

Wilcoxon's rank sum test at a 0.05 significance level is performed between MP-MMOES and compared MMOEAs. "+" means MP-MMOES better than compared algorithm, "-" means compared algorithm better than MP-MMOES, "=" means not comparable)

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we propose a multi-population based evolutionary algorithm to solve MMOPs. The whole population is divided into two subpopulations in our algorithm. The first subpopulation is designed to find well-converged and well-distributed non-dominated optimal solutions in objective space. The second subpopulation is focused on searching for multiple groups of multimodal optimal solutions in decision space. In order to obtain good distributed optimal solutions, the MED and MEDx methods are adopted to maintain diversity in the objective space and the decision space, respectively. The performance of MP-MMOES is compared against five state-of-the-art MMOEAs, including MO_Ring_PSO_SCD, Omni-optimizer, MOEA/D-AD, NIMMO, and TriMOEA-TA&R. The experimental results demonstrate the proposed MP-MMOES provides competing performance than compared MMOEAs on twenty-three IEEE MMOPs in IGD, IGDx metrics.

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