DOSSIER

AN ONTOLOGY OF OMNIPRESENT AND OMNISCIENT CAMERAS:

changes to telejournalism and the ubiquity of devices for recording reality

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ABSTRACT - The proliferation of technological devices that visually register the world has led to changes in the narrative formats of telejournalism. The various types of cameras used by television stations - surveillance, amateur, hidden and even professional ones - give broadcasters a plethora of strategies for reaching an audience who tend to dominate and distrust the wellknown media languages. This paper presents a proposal for categorizing the cameras used in daily telejournalism in order to better understand the specifics of the phenomenon. Overall, all these cameras appear to be used for creating a realist aesthetic with low media interference. Key words: Telejournalism. Omnipresent Cameras. Omniscient Cameras. Devices of reality. Realistic aesthetic.

POR UMA ONTOLOGIA DAS CÂMERAS ONIPRESENTES E ONISCIENTES: Reconfigurações no telejornalismo frente à ubiquidade de dispositivos que registram o real

RESUMO - A proliferação de dispositivos tecnológicos que registram visualmente o mundo tem acarretado mudanças nos formatos narrativos do telejornalismo. As diversas modalidades de câmeras - como as de vigilância, as câmeras amadoras, as escondidas e mesmo as profissionais utilizadas pelas emissoras – possibilitam que os veículos experimentem diversas estratégias, no intuito de contemplar um espectador que tende a dominar e a desconfiar das já conhecidas linguagens midiáticas. Neste texto, pretendemos apresentar uma proposta de categorização às câmeras aproveitadas cotidianamente pelo telejornalismo, de modo a nos aproximarmos à especificidade do fenômeno. Em comum, todas as câmeras apontam à busca de uma estética realista, baseada no reconhecimento de uma baixa interferência midiática. Palayras-chave: Teleiornalismo, Câmeras Onipresentes, Câmeras Oniscientes. Dispositivos do Real, Estética Realista.

POR UNA ONTOLOGÍA DE LAS CÁMARAS OMNIPRESENTES Y OMNISCIENTES: Reconfiguraciones en las noticias de televisión a través de la ubicuidad de los dispositivos que graban el mundo real

RESUMEN - La proliferación de dispositivos tecnológicos que registran visualmente el mundo ha llevado a cambios en la narrativa de formatos del teleperiodismo. Los diversos tipos de cámaras - como las de vigilancia, cámaras de consumo, las ocultas e incluso las profesionales utilizadas

por los organismos de radiodifusión - permiten a los vehículos experimentar diversas estrategias con el fin de contemplar un espectador que tiende a dominar y sospechar de la lenguaje de los medios de comunicación. En este trabajo, tenemos la intención de presentar una propuesta de categorización de las cámaras utilizadas diariamente por el teleperiodismo con el fin de estar más cerca de la especificidad del fenómeno. En común, todas cámaras apuntan para buscar una estética realista, basada en el reconocimiento de una baja interferencia mediática.

Palabras clave: Teleperiodismo. Cámaras ubicuas. Cámaras omniscientes. Dispositivos reales. Estética realista.

The omnipresence of cameras and the discursive promise of reality without mediations

Journalism is going through a process of experimentation and gradual transformation is occurring to the way it functions and its narrative formats. It is a complex setting revealing subtle yet structural changes to a journalism that considers itself postindustrial, since it is no longer "organized according to an industrial logic of cascading production; but is instead more complex: more active actors, more circulation, algorithms, artificial intelligence, more computing inside of it" (BERTOCCHI, 2014, p. 2). In other words, addressing journalistic production means understanding how its fabric is sewed together by its producers, its receptors and the profitable social and technological devices used for communication between one another. Consequently, this intricate relationship makes it impossible for the process of communication to be reduced to a polarized vision between media and society; a "dualism that is so much more damaging because it essentially reinforces the polarity between active and passive" (BRAGA, 2006, p. 16).

What is interesting about analyzing this setting is we are able to observe the changes within the *modus operandi* of telejournalism through the popularization and the omnipresence of mobile devices throughout the world such as the different kinds of cameras, tablets and mobile phones. These technological gadgets become contemporary machines of visibility when they generate an abundance of never-ending content, which is offered on a daily basis to journalism broadcasters and expands on the reach of what the medium is capable of registering and making available to their audience.

The way television broadcasters use these devices has been referred to as participatory journalism or collaborative journalism, in an attempt to connect the phenomenon to complex concepts. However, as Zanotti (2010) suggests, these concepts go beyond any consensus since there is no full clarity on the limits and conditions on the audience's participation in the production of news. Nevertheless, it is necessary to discuss the change to journalistic procedures brought on by the public's active collaboration.

> However, regardless of its maturity or conceptual consensus, the issue gains strength in a historically important moment when society is affected by a process of technological and organizational innovations, pointing to a social innovation, an environment in which journalism is interwoven (...). At this stage, traditional media can use this participation to improve journalistic production, to democratize content and to incorporate the audience into the production process (id, p. 32-33).

So, what we see now is telejournalism broadcasters gradually using this content – most often in the form of citizen or participatory journalism maintained by systematically approving user-generated content (UCG) (KLATELL, 2014) – because of the expected genuineness of this material.

In other words, these camera recordings become invaluable to both broadcasters and their audience for supposedly providing content that differs from the performative representation of the self (GOFFMAN, 2004), always occurring when an individual appears to be unaware of being observed, or even when this individual forgets that he or she is being watched. In this way, such devices promise to make the differentiation visible, the view of a reality that escapes the highly- controlled media intervention. These devices seem to give the ontological premise (JOST, 2007) of watching something that wouldn't be focused on if it weren't for the existence and the popularization of such cameras. What one looks for then is to "expose reality by focusing on moments previously ignored by the media and on scenes and situations classified as being intimate or behind-the-scenes" (MARTINS, 2005, p. 07).

Added to that is a process of collective acquisition of media languages and easy access to the production of messages. The mastering of such technologies allows for a large number of people to speak (at least in the domains restricted to the virtual environment of the internet) which creates a crisis in the idea of journalistic organizations being the only ones authorized to produce discourses of reality. This process is succeeded by "a constant feeling of informative disorientation, provoked mostly by the abundance of news" (NÓRA and D'ABREU, 2014, p. 6). In other words, audiences who are literate in the grammar of media and are almost encouraged to distrust it have led broadcasters to start using content that is generated externally - or generated by the media institution itself and that closely resembles being amateur - in an attempt to bring narratives to their audience where the external world is exhibited in an almost translucent way, something we show in this paper.

It is therefore possible to point out the trend in camera usage as a symptom of the lack of trust historically attributed to the press as an institution that promotes and disseminates the truth. The different factual versions published across digital media - such as personal accounts, interpretations, and visual registry made out as if to be incontestable proofs - make it clear to audiences that there is no longer any way to know the absolute truth about what is happening. Communication broadcasters are now forced to urgently re-evaluate their activities and redefine their functions in order to uphold their legitimacy in the eyes of a public who have traditionally sustained it by paying for the delivery of truth, and not for doubting it. The media must therefore consider this as a commercial necessity (CASTILHO, 2015).

The discussion presented here had already been included in a previous study (MARTINS, 2016b) investigating the different technical, aesthetic and narrative nuances which telejournalism uses the ubiquity of devices that visually register reality for. In view of the broad scope of this material, we categorized the images generated by these cameras in order to group the specific nature of these devices together, their appropriation in journalism revealing a path of renovation of the realistic aesthetics (POLYDORO, 2013).

This way, we believe that broadcasters use these external recordings on a daily basis because of the effect of reality that they provide; effects with low technical quality (most amateur images are poorly shot which makes it difficult to distinguish objects in a scene, they don't have any and come in very low definition).

A proposal for categorization: omnipresent and omniscient cameras

We systematize and separate the images according to the devices they were taken with. In lines with the previous study, we determined that these images could be separated into two categories: omnipresent cameras and omniscient cameras. Omnipresent represent the recordings made by everyday people and/ or professionals and their subsequent use by the media. They hold the promise that, if it weren't for their ubiquity, the audience would know almost nothing about what events had occurred. Omniscient represent the material registered by surveillance cameras or other devices included in journalistic narratives with the hope of capturing a real event which the public were unaware they were participating in. This effect is sustained because an audience recognizes they are watching something from a mechanized look or an automated recording, which the image gives unquestionable proof of (BRUNO, 2013). The narrative strategy lies in the fact that what was viewed was not intended to be shown, and the viewer then recognizes the narrative as transposing what really happened onto the screen.

We divided the images from the omniscient and omnipresent devices into four broad sub-categories. These classifications were intended for taking a closer look at the idiosyncrasies of the material before conceptualizing it into closed or definitive categories; thereby arriving at a better description of the aesthetic effects they generate and ultimately helping towards understanding the strategies behind the narrative content in the reports.

1. The first category of omniscient cameras is **surveillance** cameras, which offer a mechanical look that promises to transpose an interventionless reality to the screen, one where the participants are unaware they are being watched. This resource comes from the fly-on-the-wall¹ strategy typical of Direct Cinema which recommends the non-intervention of the author in what is happening in order to represent reality "as it is" (PENAFRIA, 2012). The discursive promise, therefore, is a transparent representation of an unmediated reality as the participants in the scene act, unaware of the media watching them. These cameras are based on two implicit arguments: "the suspension of human subjectivity, substituted by the objectivity of the objective lens, and ultimately, the suspension of the look" (JOST, 2009, p. 21).

The surveillance camera does not transmit the performance of an actor who knows he or she is being watched, but instead, transmits an expression which is unintentionally given to the public; the confessions of an involuntary expressive behavior (GOFFMAN, 2004). The discursive premise is that this camera registers authentic performances - ones that record the natural behavior of actors when alone, the body behind the emotion of being surprised by something unexpected, an instinctive reaction of astonishment or fear when witnessing an accident, all captured by an invisible camera.

Breaking protocols of representation as a legitimate and fundamental way of reading certain television formats² remains a symptom of what Sennett (2001) famously refers to in his classic work as the progressive ascension of the value of private life and the consolidation of an intimate society. This process occurs within the erosion of public life which itself results from the blurring of the ideas of what public and private is, something which occurs when the self becomes a thing of importance to be investigated at all costs. In an ideology of intimacy (ID) contact between people and the revelation of the *self* which is hidden from public representation become morally good. When exposing private life – something that everyday technology operating as machines of visibility has made possible -the "subject's real life in modernity" (BRUNO, 2013, p. 64) becomes explicit.

Therefore, the omnipresence of surveillance cameras, a natural part of the landscape nowadays, offers the media a content of the private life sphere (like the cameras that secretly record babysitters or elderly caregivers mistreating their clients; cameras installed in police cars, registering mistakes and bad professional decisions of the registered individuals) in which the actors are unaware of their public *performance*. They also record scenes from public places (such as the countless registers of accidents, assaults, shocking scenes of mothers who abandon their children in trash cans without knowing they are being filmed) where flagrant acts are brought into the public eve. This range of registers is used by broadcasters in diverse narrative strategies to attract viewers who are looking forward to watching a scene that is unfiltered by the media. This is collectively recognized as something that justifies the reality that is shown.

Nevertheless, as previously noted, the images from these devices are usually qualified in narratives through the use of verbs such as catch and capture, and are always featured as being impressive. The idea behind the expression caught in the act - an unusual event occurring in an unexpected place that disrupts the realm of privacy and goes public, and is visible to all – demonstrates the consolidation of an "aesthetic of getting caught" (BRUNO, 2008) and points to surveillance as a natural way of looking at and paying attention to contemporary culture.

Thus, the omnipresence of devices that register the world ends up normalizing the search for catching people in the act; anything that is a break from the norm. In certain registers, "the lack of apparent intention fortunate enough to have been caught on camera lends a character of proof to the surveillance image that is intrinsically linked to its control functions" (id, p. 7). The act caught on this surveillance camera can be thought of as kind of lifting the curtains and revealing scenes from the real world, normally reserved for times when resting from performing.

2. The second category of omniscient cameras is concealed or hidden cameras, normally used by reporters. Here, the discursive premise is based on the belief that the filmed subjects exhibit certain behaviours because they are unaware they are being filmed. This type of camera is normally used in hidden-camera style comedy programs and in undercover investigative reports. The "success of its promise lies in the viewer's belief that the images haven't received any kind of treatment a posteriori" (JOST, 2009, p. 22), and in the audience's belief that only they and the broadcaster share the media's view of the scene; if the viewer finds out that the individual being filmed knows he or she is being recorded, the promise is broken³.

Like surveillance cameras, this device is used for catching people in the act of being themselves; something that is missing from the public performance. For this reason, the narrative prescribed to such videos tends to highlight the contrast between hidden camera recordings and the individual's representation afterwards, when they find out that they had been filmed. This is what happens, for example, in a report broadcast by Jornal Hoje on Rede Globo in January 2015. A company representative was recorded talking about doctors being bribed to make unnecessary surgeries. Then, the narrative replays the testimony given to the hidden camera and captures the reaction of the individual once he finds out he had been filmed for the television news program Fantastico, broadcast on the same channel. The company representative runs away; the reporter describes him as "desperate". The camera attached to the reporter continues recording while he runs after the fleeing representative4.

The hidden (or concealed) camera also sustains itself by eliminating the need for someone to look through it (because the image is captured by a device attached to the journalist's body without that journalist actually manually operating it) and, consequently, be associated to a maximum objectivity (JOST, 2009). Nevertheless, this camera establishes another kind of experience in relation to the surveillance camera - since it is attached to the reporter's body, its framing suggests a subjective look, as if the viewer were observing the scene through someone else's viewpoint. In other words, it is a kind of first-person narrative: even if the reporter is not looking through the camera, it still generates a recording that provides an almost carnal aesthetic experience, as if the spectator had taken part in the event. In this way, this resource signals a connection to a "fetish culture for testimonials" (SERELLE, 2012, p. 262), which strengthens and legitimizes the bond between a report and an experience.

The use of hidden cameras generally employed in investigative journalism for discovering and releasing secret information or information restricted to the private spheres is usually questioned because it puts reporters at risk and sometimes reverses their role, giving them a specialized task which the police should be doing, not them. This resource also generates ethical criticism, leading Dalmonte (2012) to label it as a mask strategy. The reporter assumes a different identity - like the one of a false patient enquiring about having an abortion in an illegal clinic, for example – which constitutes a criminal practice of false identity and, consequently, is an illegal way of revealing illegal acts.

3. The third type of omnipresent camera is what we call amateur omnipresent cameras in its increasing modalities and uses - such as the recordings made by digital cameras, cell phones, tablets, webcams, cameras Go-Pro⁵ - which offer images in low quality and aesthetics with unstable framing and almost no editing. In other words, they are all the kinds of user generated content (UGC) included in TV journalism agendas which lead to what broadcasters tend to call collaborative, participative or citizen journalism; expressions that broadcasters most often use in marketing than for describing changes in the productive processes of TV journalism, which now faces this inexhaustible amount of material.

We are referring here to a range of materials that tend to be gradually adopted by journalism companies to generate a narrative the audience will see as being authentic. This content allows broadcasters to implement a kind of amateur aesthetic which sustains itself as a rhetorical resource in opposition to the anemic transparence of professional images in journalism (COSTA; POLYDORO, 2012). In other words, the ubiquity of omnipresent cameras in television broadcasting may also be seen as a symptom of a kind of saturation of TV journalism formats as more adequate rhetorical resources for the representation of reality.

> TV journalism also created an aesthetic of transparency in editing, with the reporter acting as a kind of narrator of the facts; narration which is empirically validated by the sequence of images presented in reports or voiceovers. For a while, just like classic cutting had

done, 'journalist cutting' was able to create its own vision of reality. Responding to the stronger appeals of immediacy, amateur filming of today has ended up forming a new form of transparency (id, p. 4).

In this sense, amateur cameras are also articulated as reporting on the artificiality of journalistic resources, exhibiting the limits of its "ideology of absolute transparency between the enunciation and the fact, as if language worked like a realistic painting of the world" (SODRÉ, 2009, p. 49). The presupposed subjectivity in the content supplied by citizens - which, in a contradictory way, reveals itself to be closer to reality than the weak reports of journalism - shows the notion of journalistic objectivity to be diminishing.

Considering this prospect, Sodré (id) proposes the concept of weak objectivity, in contrast to strong objectivity, which allows a kind of observer interference in events that requires the observer to act independently from the facts. The omnipresent cameras produce reports that break from the idea of an authoritarian journalistic narrative (because it is disguised) and erases the supposed objective representation of reality (RESENDE, 2009) while assuming a personalized view which presupposes and exhibits the person who is filming. Taking into consideration that this person is external to the journalistic organization, he or she will not be bound to the organization's interests and will therefore produce a more honest item, and less ideological.

As a phenomenon in construction, the UGCs present a challenge for broadcasters to use who are still contemplating and adapting to the employment of such omnipresent devices. The appropriation of this content is being researched in a current study on eight international television broadcasters and their respective websites. Brown, Dubberley and Wardle (2014) report some initial findings:

- a) user generated content is utilized every day by journalistic organizations to produce stories that wouldn't – or couldn't – be told without it. However, it is used more often when other images (ones generated by broadcasters) are not available;
- b) there is a considerable level of trust put in news agencies to search and verify the UGCs and not unify standards for working with this content:
- c) the news organizations have little discernment of when they are using UGCs and are not used to crediting the individuals who capture the material;
 - d) those responsible for the news organizations are frequently

unaware of the complexities involved in the daily work of discovering, verifying and observing the legislation for UGCs. Consequently, the staffs of many newsrooms do not get the necessary treatment and support to work with such content;

- e) the vicarious impact caused by user generated images is an important matter for the journalists who work with UGCs on a daily basis. These journalists understand that journalistic content has a different impact than normal;
- f) there is a fear among the communication organizations that in the future legal matters will have an impact over how organizations use UGCs.

The omnipresent cameras also provide journalistic broadcasters with images that Jost (2007) denominates as "violent" and produce a level of perceptive shock (in contrast to the "image of violence" which produces an emotive shock, yet from a distance), as it allows "to live the event, because it constructs humanity behind the camera" (id, p. 101). Its attractiveness lies in recognizing the typical formal conventions of an amateur recording, giving the narrative a discursive promise of representing a reality that, besides reporting the visible, reproduces the experience and the drama of living the displayed situation.

When analyzing the impacts caused by instant television transmission of the attacks on the World Trade Center, Jost (ibid) compares the distanced reception of the initial images - which didn't show any signals normally attributed to being instant. They were stable, well framed scenes which showed the terror of a "disembodied, almost divine point of view" (ibid, p. 100) - the reaction of fright was caused by later amateur images of lesser technical quality and were therefore less clear. For the author, these images revealed more "movements that testify a hesitation about what needs to be seen" (ibid) than something effectively from the visible sphere, in other words, an image more lived than properly seen.

Thus, the omnipresent amateur cameras are used for the purpose of recognizing violent, sensory images that presuppose a subject who watches and lives the reported event. As rhetorical resources, they are based on the promise of authenticity and of no interference from the media. Nevertheless, as all rhetoric, the amateur videos get their strength from reporting that other visions of the world are false (COSTA; POLYDORO, 2012), such as the historically consolidated conventions of the journalistic products. The strategies for using amateur footage is based on the public's recognition of an amateur aesthetic, of low quality, which convokes the viewer to

recognize the break from conventional, highly controlled journalism - even if this is only another sensory effect meant to silence the fact that the UGCs tend to be mostly narrated by vehicles of journalism.

4. Finally, the professional omniscient cameras, maybe the most difficult ones to recover, are full of authentic recordings that explore some side of the amateur aesthetic but are still visibly mediated by media institutions. They are formats which the media explores either voluntarily or involuntarily and in which the eruption of spontaneity is key to reading it. The authenticity of the subject who speaks or of the scene on display becomes more important than the "objectivity of pure expression", in other words, the semiotic relation of the image as an index that exposes "an existential bond to reality from where it has taken its strength" (JOST, 2009, p. 23).

Professional omnipresent cameras have been employed in many television formats such as reality shows, which work on the premise that the camera is forgotten about so that the "real self" breaks onto the scene: or in "confessional" formats where all the protocols stimulate a revelation of the self before the cameras. More than just learning about a supposed truth in the narrative, the format intends to record these involuntary shots of representation where the body shows nervousness or tension, and ends up revealing what people tend to dissimulate through language (BROOKS, 1995).

Broadcasters have been using rhetorical resources that make complex journalistic narratives, in which the traditional formats of telejournalism are reconfigured: they are images with voiceovers showing video captured by the producers in a clandestine way, long interviews without any cuts, long videos shown without voiceover texts, opting for an apparent silencing of the broadcaster - in other words, a whole series of hybrid formats in which supposed mistakes are inserted in television news, which tend to approximate to the effects of the aesthetic narratives that are more common in amateur cameras.

This is what we observe, for instance, in a report released by Jornal Nacional⁶ in February 2014 which shows the testimony of tattoo artist Fabio Raposo, who confesses to the network's professional camera (Rede Globo) that he was the one who had given the firecracker to the person who was suspected of having lit and thrown it at reporter Santiago Andrade, causing his death. What caught our attention in the report (which is nothing more than a long testimony by Raposo without any reporters present) is that the edition is made in one cut.

The topic offered here is the body of Raposo which pulsates with signals: his nervousness, his avoidance of looking at the camera as if he were avoiding looking at the eyes of his interlocutor, his stuttering speech, his use of slang from Rio de Janeiro. Even though Raposo is evidently under the focus of a camera from the biggest broadcaster in Brazil, and is aware of his exposure across the media and therefore consider this potential visibility when choosing elements for his performance – the theme of the video is the contrast of his speech and the bypasses of representation emitted by a nondomesticated body, which pulsates, snaps, and makes mistakes. Thus, we observe here that the apparent non-editing of the video is also a narrative strategy.

In order to organize the categories presented here, the chart below shows the specifications of the identified cameras (Table 1).

TABLE 1 - Types of cameras

Camera	Category	Discursive promise	Examples used by telejournalism
Surveillance or security camera	Omniscient	Representation of reality through mechanical recording, those observed are unaware, and therefore, surrounded by a sense of objectivity	Cameras that operate as forms of surveillance in public and private spaces
Concealed or hidden camera	Omniscient	Representation of reality through mechanical recording, those observed are unaware; aesthetic experience based on the subjectivity of the reporter on the scene	Portable cameras hidden on the reporter's body
Amateur omnipresent camera	Omnipresent	Authenticity promise based on the low technical quality of what is recorded, showing that the author of the image does not work in any journalistic institution	Various UGCs: portable cameras, video cameras, cell phones, smartphones, tablets, webcams, Go-Pro cameras
Professional omnipresent camera	Omnipresent	The discursive promise occurs through appropriation/simulation of more typical aesthetic strategies of the amateur recording	Technological devices from the broadcaster itself

Source: The author

The exercise proposed in this reflection is to eventually present a systematization of a phenomenon in the development of journalism, focusing on formulating future analyses that contemplate the specific uses of cameras. Above all, we hope to uncover the complexities of these machines of visibility, whose ubiquitous use in TV journalism can also be read as a symptom of the changes in the relationship between journalistic organizations and their audience.

What has been observed is that the products of TV journalism tend to take advantage of this camera content when trying to create a more genuine effect - and consequently maintaining or even reclaiming credibility which had been lost (CASTILHO, 2014). It is possible that, with the intention of rescuing and accomplishing new effects of reality, journalism will gradually explore - and also mimic the contents generated by external bodies.

*This paper was translated by Mirella Longo Maines and revised by Beate Josephi and Lee Sharp

- Common expression in Direct Cinema, a cinema genre that presupposed the utilization of light equipment and synchronized sound in documentaries in order to create a less-mediated realist representation, one unaltered by the cameras. The fly-on-the-wall strategy is also called long take, which is intended to represent exactly what the filmed events represent - as if the author of the images didn't have any interference in the approaching of the fact; a "fly on the wall", alienated to any participation (PENAFRIA, 2012).
- As an example, the television formats that take advantage of capturing feelings that go beyond the expected performance of those who put themselves under the eye of media cameras, such as: reality shows, which are based on the expectation of a certain forgetfulness of the cameras and the expected revelation of the true self beyond the "masks" used in daily life; the popular television journalistic programs which standardized the use of close ups each time the interviewee becomes emotional; the formats in "confessional" styles which operate in the expectation of stripping the individual from his or her public persona.

- It is what happens, for instance, in hidden-camera programs where the audience collectively suspects the ones involved are hired actors and not individuals caught in daily-life situations.
- Available at http://glo.bo/1BB9PWm>. Accessed on February 17th 2015.
- It is a small digital camera made for the sporty or adventurous public; its main characteristic is its versatility: it is light, small and resistant and can be attached to sports equipment and record images of movements, simulating the view of whomever takes part in the experience.
- Available at http://bit.ly/1mGh88t>. Accessed on February 18th

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