



Presents

Stories & Reflections from the Holocaust: *How our Beliefs Shape our Actions*

Stories can help us better understand ourselves and others. Stories can move us to take action, see things differently, or forge a bond between ourselves and people from different cultures and backgrounds.

STORIES MAKE US HUMAN. THERE ARE A GREAT MANY LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM STORIES.

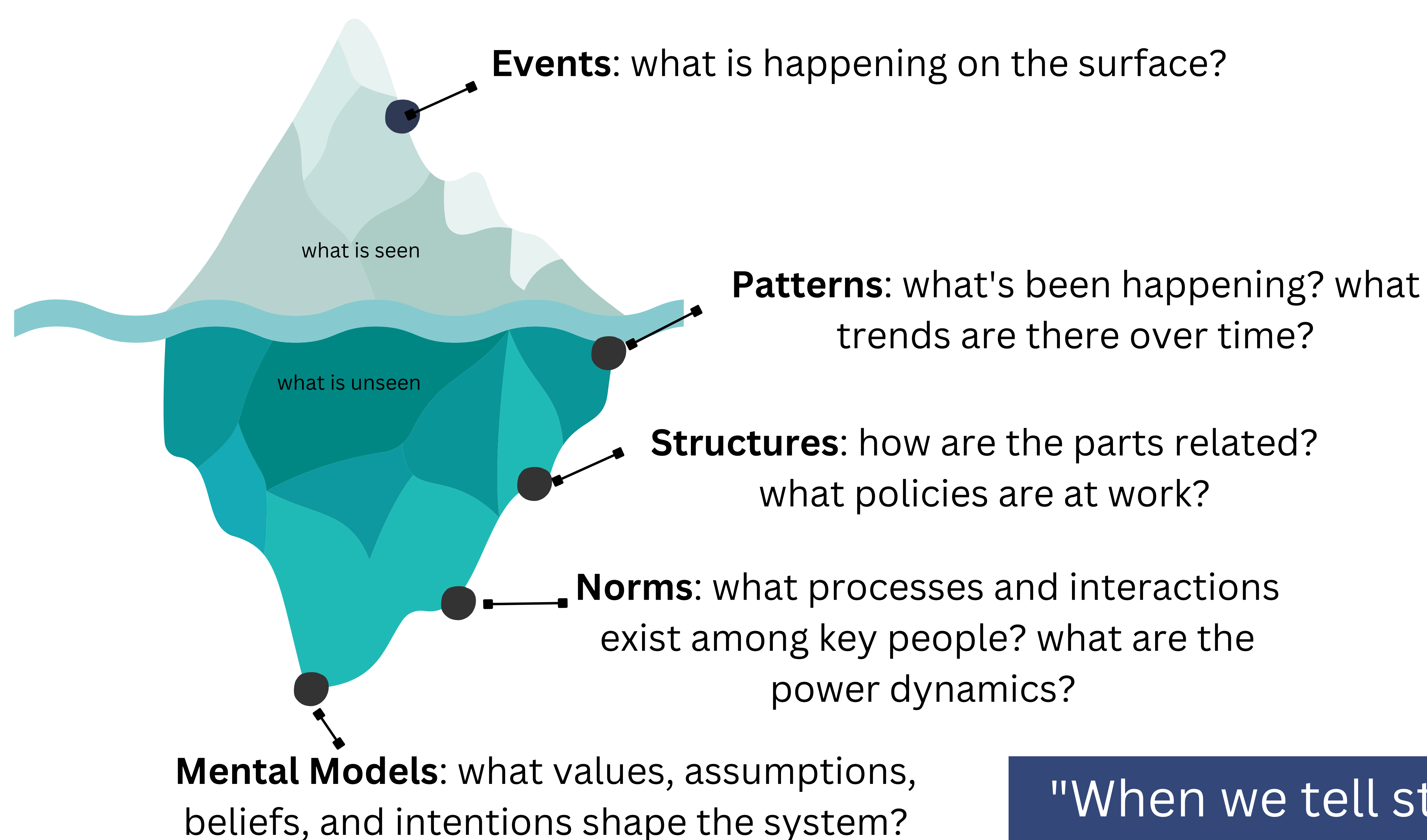
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This exhibit presents three stories from survivors of the Holocaust. Each story reveals one of three thought processes that were common towards Jews during the Holocaust: **hate, isolation, and humanity.** By participating in this exhibit, you will understand how the thought processes of hate and isolation, among others, led to the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime as well as the humanity that saved the lives of many others.

This exhibit begins and ends with a short - anonymous - survey, where you can share your thoughts and ideas. Our intention is that this exhibit will encourage you to see beyond the stories of **hate, isolation, and humanity** to recognize the mental models - yours as well as others' - and understand how they not only drove the **actions** that led to the Holocaust but also drive the **actions** of the world we live in today. A good analogy is an iceberg: so much more leaks beneath the surface than what you actually see.



We define the thought processes as "mental models" - the values, assumptions, beliefs, and intentions that shape our actions - or inactions- and attitudes towards others.

"When we tell stories, we spark connections. This is how humans have communicated since the beginning of time. By telling stories." Tom Corson-Knowles

This exhibit was created in partnership with the SIE CoLab



Herman Haller: The Action of Hate



Herman Haller was born in 1924 in Berlin, Germany. His parents, Anna and Victory Haller, divorced when he was 7 years old. Herman's family, which consisted of his mother, brother, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, was very close. His family was in the furniture business and operated furniture stores.



Herman Haller's travel document



Members of the Nazi Party stand with boycott signs

On November 9th, 1938, during an event that is now known as *Kristallnacht*- the night of broken glass- the family's business was destroyed by Nazis, forcing his mother out of work and leaving her unable to make a living. Herman was sent to check on his aunt, and on his way he rode past a synagogue where Nazi's were throwing benches, books, and Torah scrolls into the street and burning them. He kept riding until he reached his aunt's house, where he saw that the windows of her furniture business had been smashed.



Windows of a store that was damaged during Kristallnacht

Story provided by Linda Chase of the Jewish Journal

Reflection: Herman, his family, and others experienced losing their livelihoods, neighborhoods, and in some cases their lives, due to **the action of hate** towards Jews. Consider the following to understand how the power of mental models drove the individual and collective behavior to the **actions of hate** that were experienced by Herman and his family.

- 1) What key events were happening in society during this time that manifested these **actions of hate**?
- 2) What structures (government rules, policies, and laws) encouraged individuals and businesses to show **hate** towards Jews?
- 3) What expectations and norms about **hate** shaped the behavior of individuals, businesses, and their communities towards Jews?

Sam Ron: The Action of **Isolation**



Shmuel Rakowski, Sam Ron

Born Shmuel Rakowski in 1932, Sam lived in Kazimierza Wielka [Krakow], Poland with his father Josef, his mother Zelda, and his brother Yulik. His father was a successful businessman who owned and operated a lumber company. He recalls life being nice in the years leading up to the war, and he attended Polish public school for seven years where he excelled in his studies. He remembers that antisemitism was very common at the time, but that the people in town who hated Jews mostly left him and his family alone.

On September 1, 1939 everything changed for Sam and his family. German planes began flying overhead, causing panic during a time that should have been spent preparing for Shabbat. Suddenly the day-to-day lives for Jews in Poland were very different than they had been. A curfew was enforced, laws restricting daily activities were enacted, and Sam, his family, and all other Jews were required to wear a white arm band with a blue star that publicly identified them as Jews.



Jews forced to shovel snow in Krakow Ghetto, c. 1940



Krakow Ghetto Jewish armband

In 1942, deportations began to happen and Sam and his family hid in a business associates barn until they were able to sneak themselves into the Krakow ghetto. While in the ghetto, his family worked in a metal factory until the ghetto was liquidated. From here, Sam went on to work in a series of camps and subcamps before ending up on a death march and ultimately being liberated on May 2, 1945 when the Germans abandoned the prisoners in the forest. Sam reunited with his mother and father, but learned that his brother had died in Mauthausen.

Story provided by Linda Chase of the Jewish Journal

Reflection: Sam and his family were faced with isolation as a result of the laws and policies that were in effect once Germany invaded Poland. The community that they were once a part of turned their backs on them, leaving them completely alone. Consider the following to understand how the power of mental models drove the individual and collective behavior to the **actions of isolation** that were experienced by Sam and his family.

- 1) What key events were happening in society during this time that manifested these **actions of isolation**?
- 2) What structures (government rules, policies, and laws) encouraged individuals and businesses to show isolation towards Jews?
- 3) What expectations and norms about **isolation** shaped the behavior of individuals, businesses, and their communities towards Jews?

Fred & Ruth Kirschner: The Action of **Humanity**



Fred and Ruth Kirschner

Ruth was born on January 9, 1924 in Mannheim Germany. Her family moved from Mannheim to a city on the French border after she was born and while there Ruth attended a Jewish school. She had non-Jewish friends and doesn't remember encountering any antisemitism until 1935 when she was 10 years old and Hitler had begun implementing anti-Jewish laws and policies throughout Germany. After living in Belgium between 1935 and 1937 with her mother, Ruth and her family received assistance from a Rabbi who helped relocate them to Paris, where they lived comfortably within the Jewish culture there until Hitler invaded in 1940, dividing the country.



Gurs internment camp



Fred Kirschner was born on May 10, 1928 and was the youngest of 3 children. His family was arrested when he was 12 and sent to the Gurs internment camp in southwestern France. Since he was under the age of 14, Fred was assigned to the women's barracks at the camp. He spent more than a year at this camp where he was treated poorly and as entertainment for the guards. He was transported to several other camps where he experienced similar treatment and became very ill. He befriended a French woman who passed him off as her son and took him to doctors so he could get the surgery he needed.



Gurs internment camp barrack

Both Ruth and Fred met a woman named Suzanne who ran an orphanage in France. They both stayed with Suzanne in the orphanage until the war ended. In 1949 they moved to the United States where they initially lived in New York before relocating to South Florida in 1990. Their advice is “**everyone should learn from history, and we must all guide future generations so history doesn't repeat itself.**”

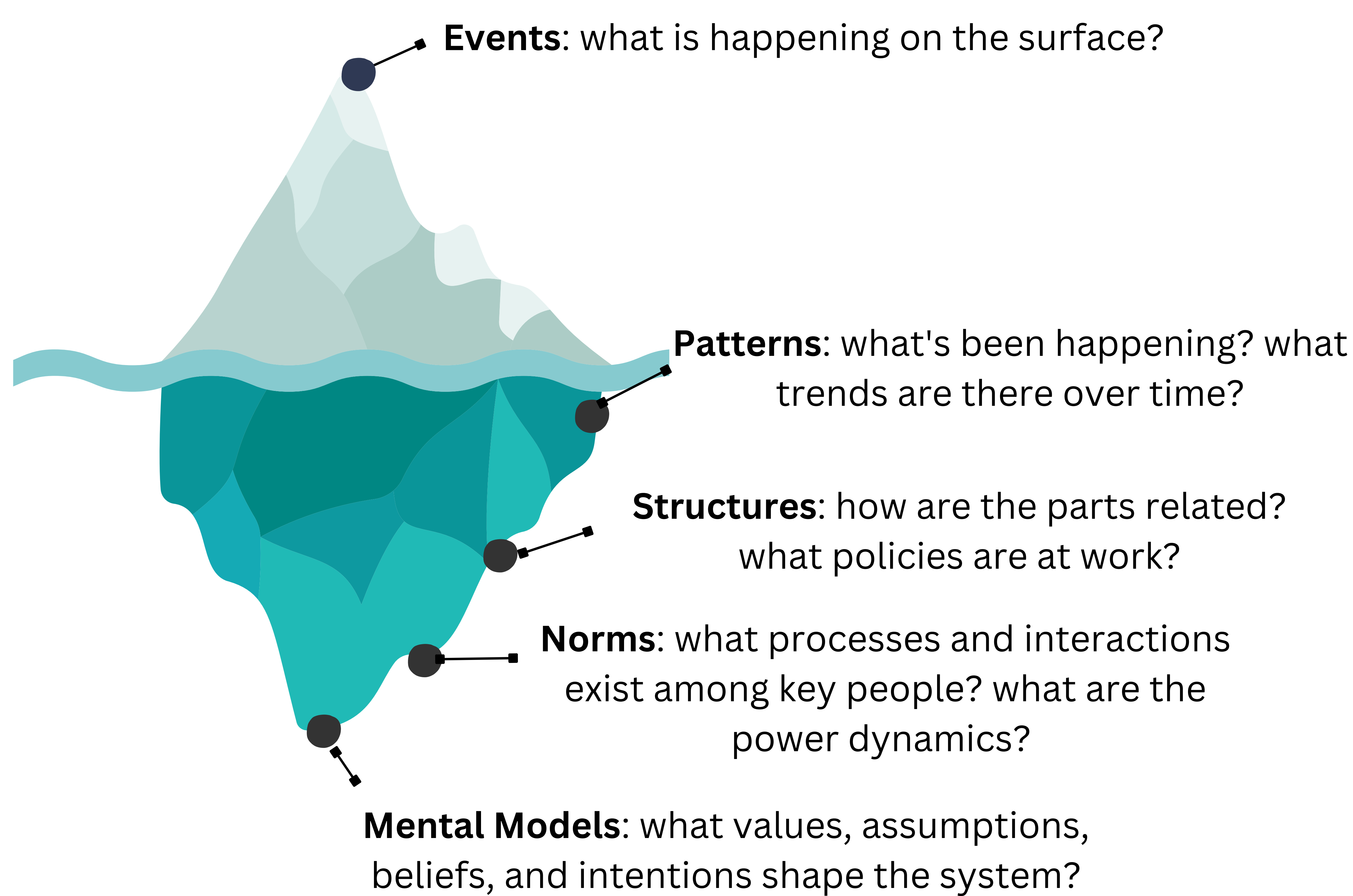
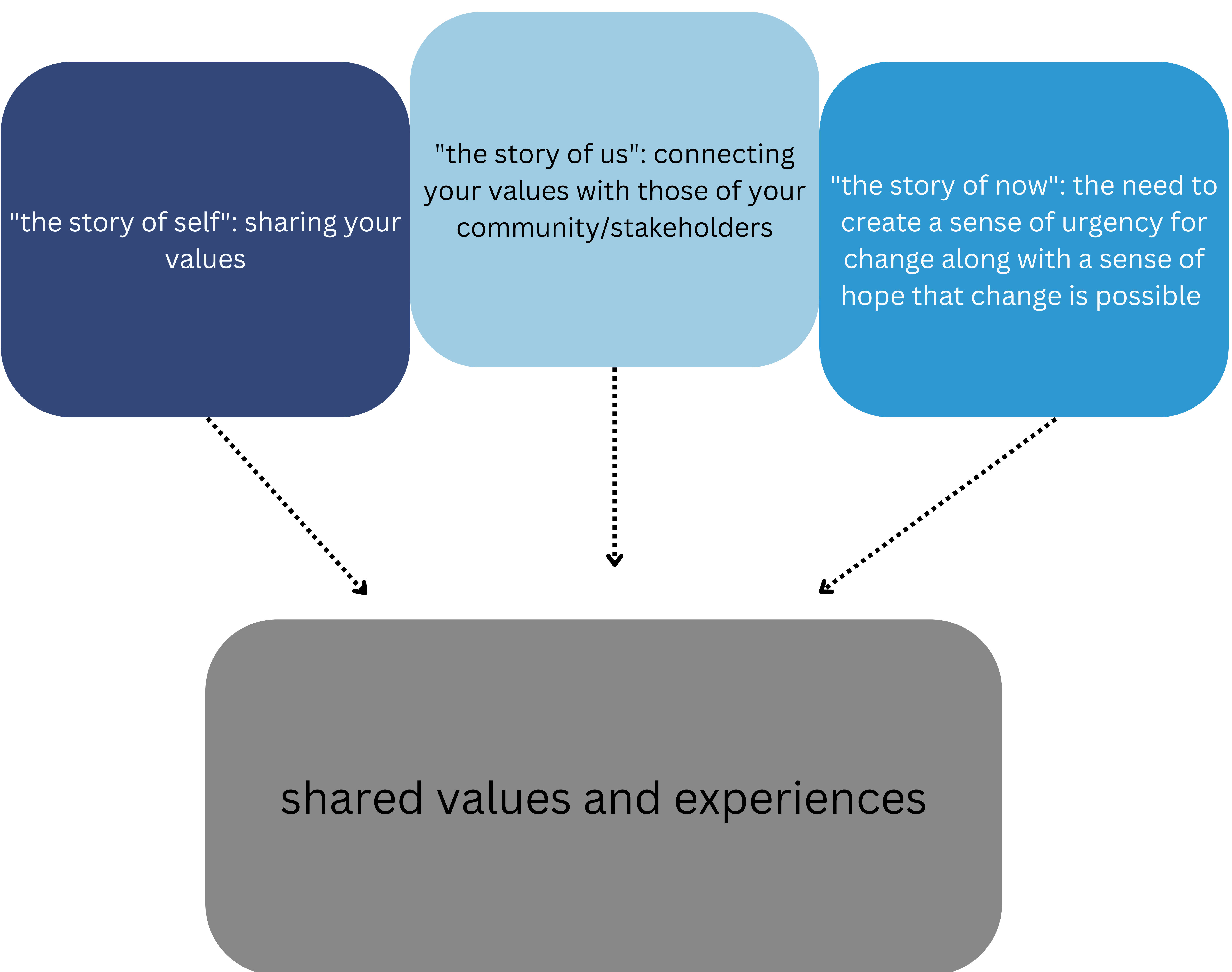
Story provided by Linda Chase of the Jewish Journal

Reflection: Reflection: Ruth and Fred were in grave danger and likely would have perished during the Holocaust if not for the humanity of strangers. Consider the following to understand how the power of mental models drove the individual and collective behavior to the actions of **humanity** that were experienced by Ruth and Fred.

- 1) What key events were happening in society during this time that manifested these **actions of humanity**?
- 2) What structures (government rules, policies, and laws) encouraged individuals and businesses to show **humanity** towards Jews?
- 3) What expectations and norms about **humanity** shaped the behavior of individuals, businesses, and their communities towards Jews?

Reflections

Reflect on the following three elements of a "public narrative storytelling framework" in the stories from this exhibit as well as in your own lives today.



The stories presented in this exhibit feature themes and mental models that were common during the time of the Holocaust. Our mission in creating this exhibit was to encourage everyone to analyze and examine the mental models present then and those present today in our society. Consider the following:

1) How did these actions and trends of **hate, isolation, and humanity** influence the thinking and behavior of individuals, businesses and communities during the Holocaust? How are these actions influencing behavior today?

2) What **mental models** shaped the actions of **hate, isolation, and humanity** that led to the Holocaust? What **mental models** can you see today?

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This exhibit began and now ends with a short - anonymous - survey, where you can share your thoughts and ideas. Our intention for this exhibit is that you will be able to see beyond the stories of **hate, isolation, and humanity** to recognize the mental models present and understand how they not only drove the **actions** that led to the Holocaust but also drive the **actions** of the world we live in today.



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About the SIE CoLab

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