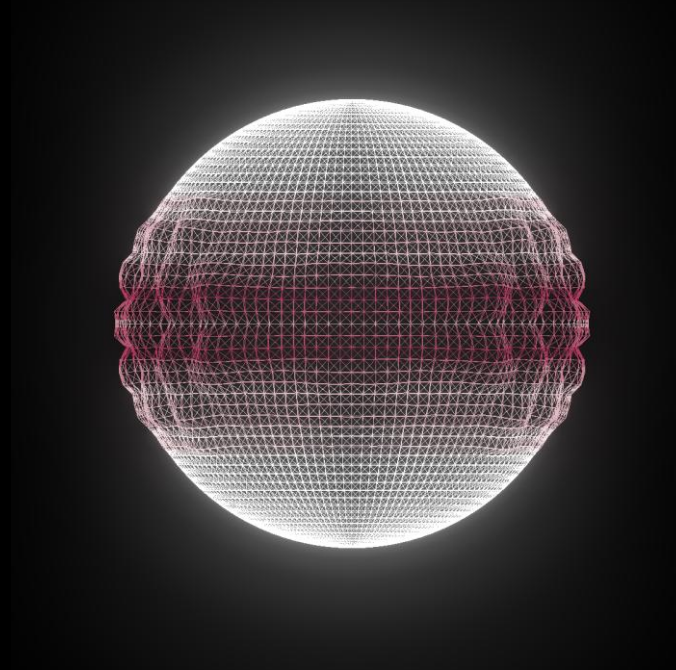


This is the English translation of the article ‘Kann Zoë Më den Titel von Nemo verteidigen? Etwas ist sicher: Sie hat den anspruchsvollsten ESC-Song’

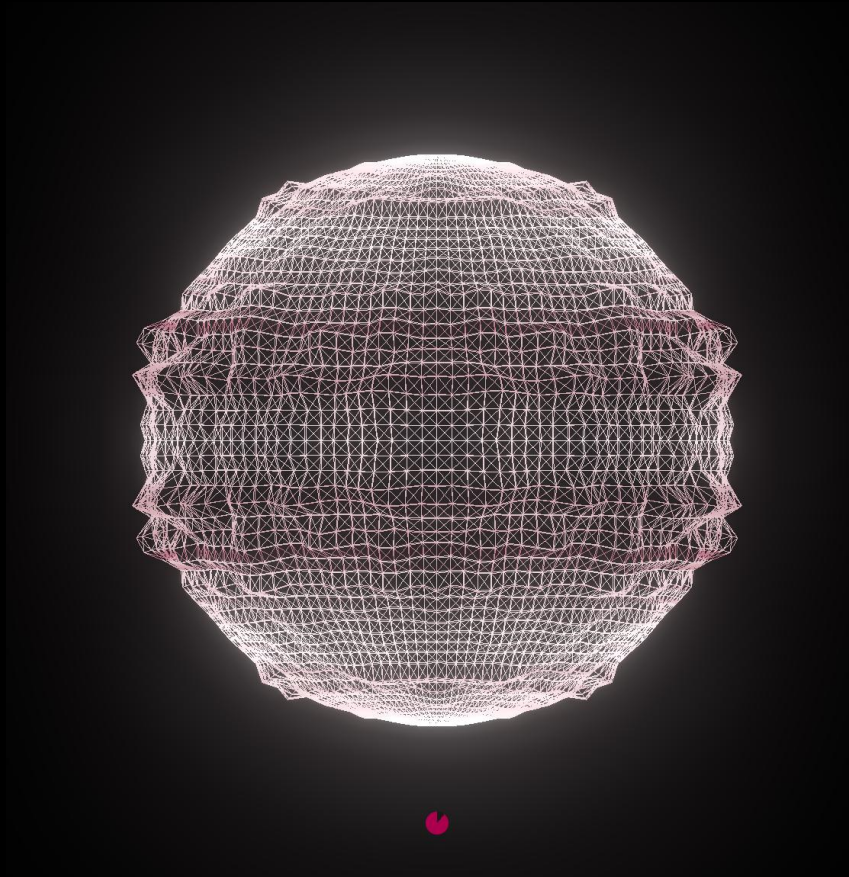
Switzerland has the most unusual ESC song – Germany has one of the loudest. This audio analysis proves it

Simon Huwiler, Roland Shaw

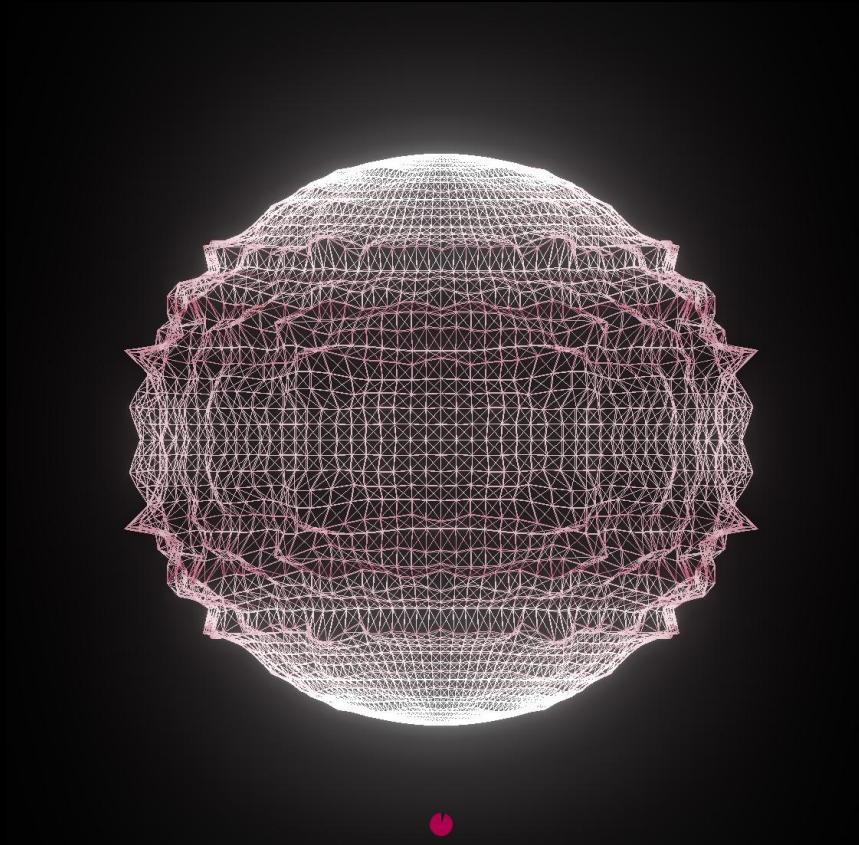
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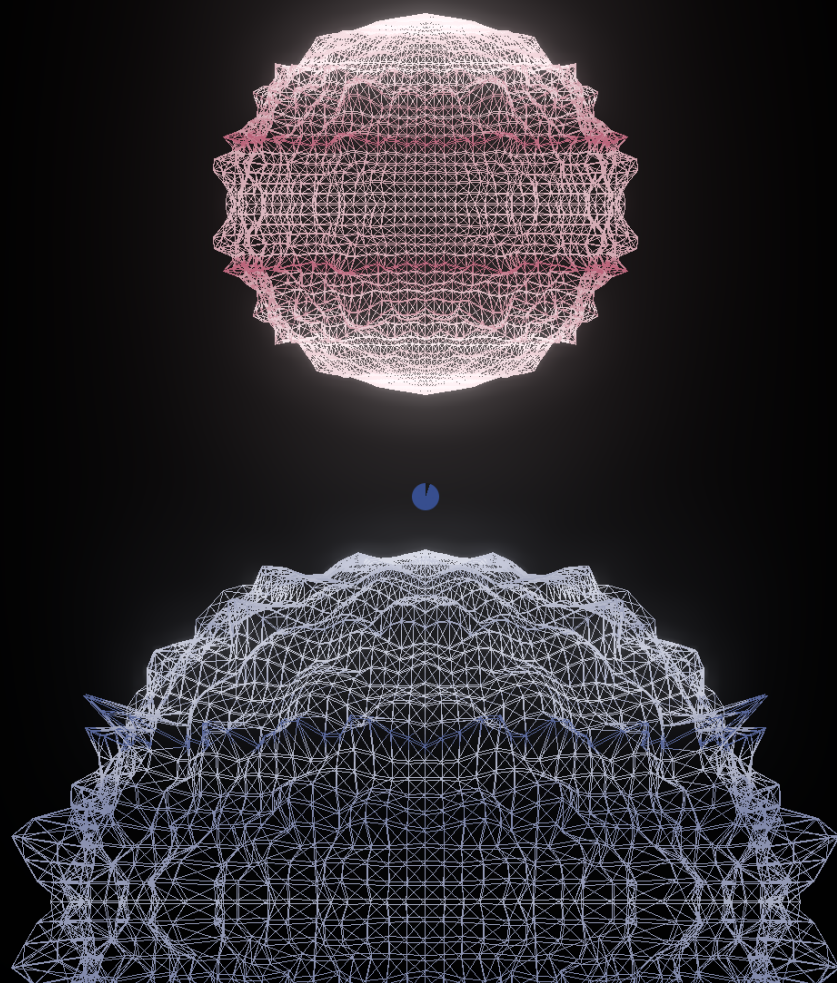
Switzerland is trying to defend its title at the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC). In ‘Voyage’, Basel singer Zoë Më sings about emotional hurt and unrequited love. Below is the beginning of the ballad. The sphere in the background indicates the intensity of the pitch. The bass notes are in the middle, at the equator, and the high notes are at the poles.



‘You throw words at me that suffocate me,’ she sings in French. Zoë Më’s voice is accompanied only by piano and pizzicato (plucked) string instruments. It’s rather unusual for a song to start so quietly at this year’s ESC. But it’s the chorus that really highlights how unusual ‘Voyage’ is.

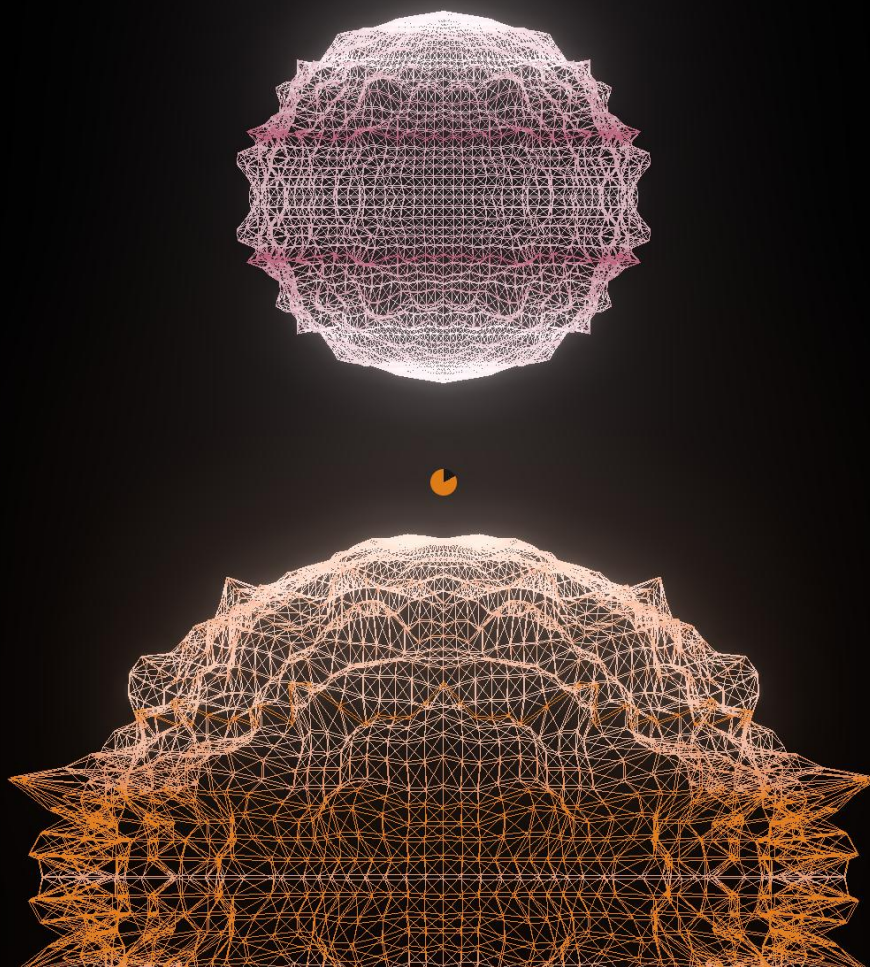


Usually, this is when things start to get loud. Not so in 'Voyage'. While the protagonist sings about a journey, the orchestration of Switzerland's ESC entry remains delicate, almost transparent. This can also be measured precisely. But first, let's take a look at Switzerland's competition.



This is 'Kiss Kiss Goodbye' by Adonxs from Czechia. The song seems significantly louder than "Voyage", although the two songs differ only slightly in terms of measured volume. One factor that makes 'Kiss Kiss Goodbye' sound loud is its sound density.

This means that many frequencies are played simultaneously. And in this year's ESC entries, the sound density is remarkably high. So high, in fact, that the Czech entry is only in the middle of the field.



At the top of the density scale, in second place, is the German ESC entry: 'Baller' by Abor & Tynna. Not only does the protagonist 'shoot holes in the night', but so does the bass.

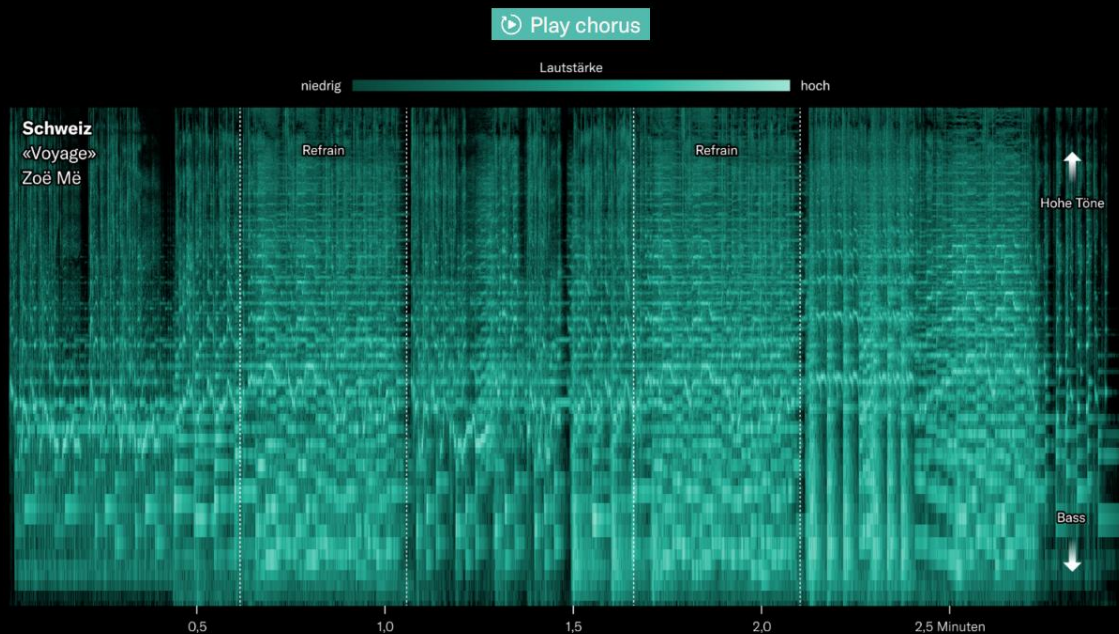
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The ESC is thus following a general trend that researchers described years ago for pop music: songs are becoming louder, using simpler melodies and fewer different instruments.

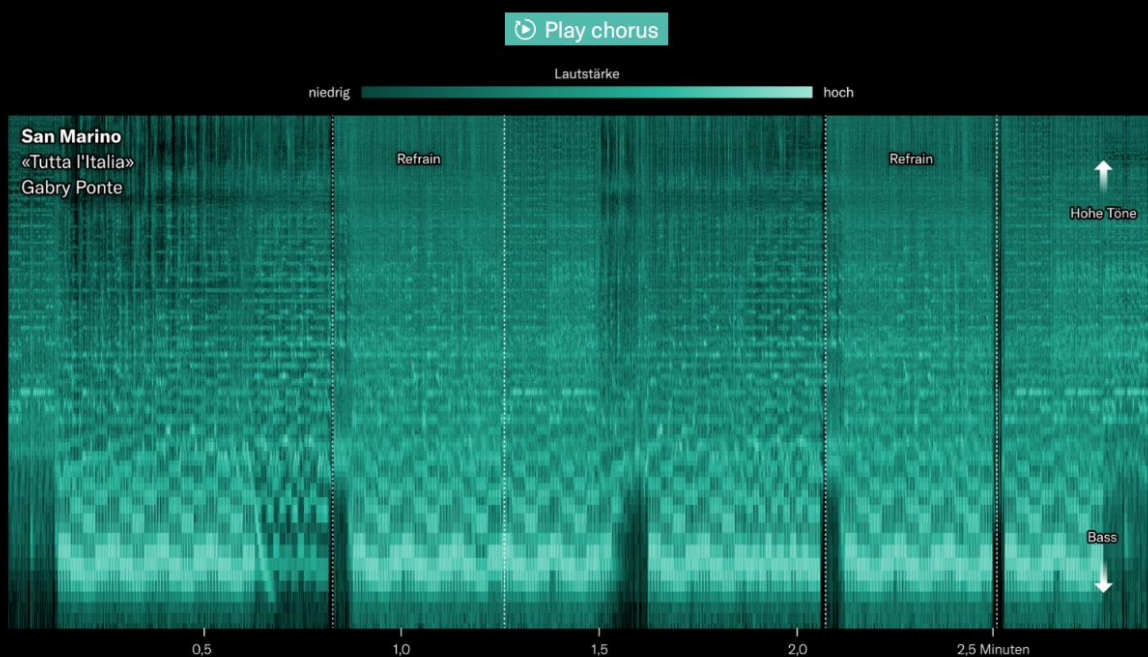
When the bass permeates everything

Spectrograms clearly show how dense and simplistic many ESC songs are. They translate an audio signal into an image: the longer axis represents time, the shorter one frequency (i.e. pitch). Volume is shown by colour intensity – the stronger the colour, the louder the sound.

This is what the Swiss ESC entry 'Voyage' looks like as a spectrogram. The verses and choruses are clearly recognisable, as with almost every song. Even individual backing vocals can be distinguished.



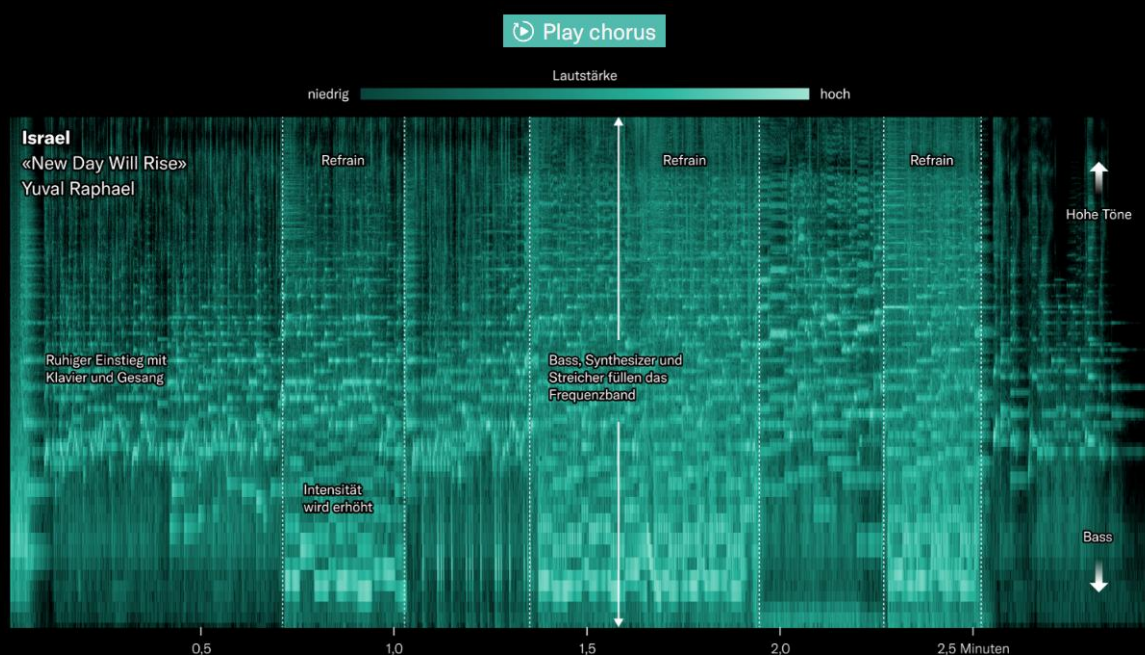
By comparison, there is 'Tutta l'Italia' by Gabry Ponte. This anthem to Italy – which, however, is being entered into the competition by the microstate of San Marino – is a classic dance-pop track, enriched with accordion and mandolin sounds. And the song sounds just like the spectrogram looks: a wall of sound.



However, there are also ESC entries that lie somewhere between the musical intensity of San Marino and the delicate chanson from Basel. Hardly any song illustrates these two worlds better than the Israeli entry 'New Day Will Rise'.

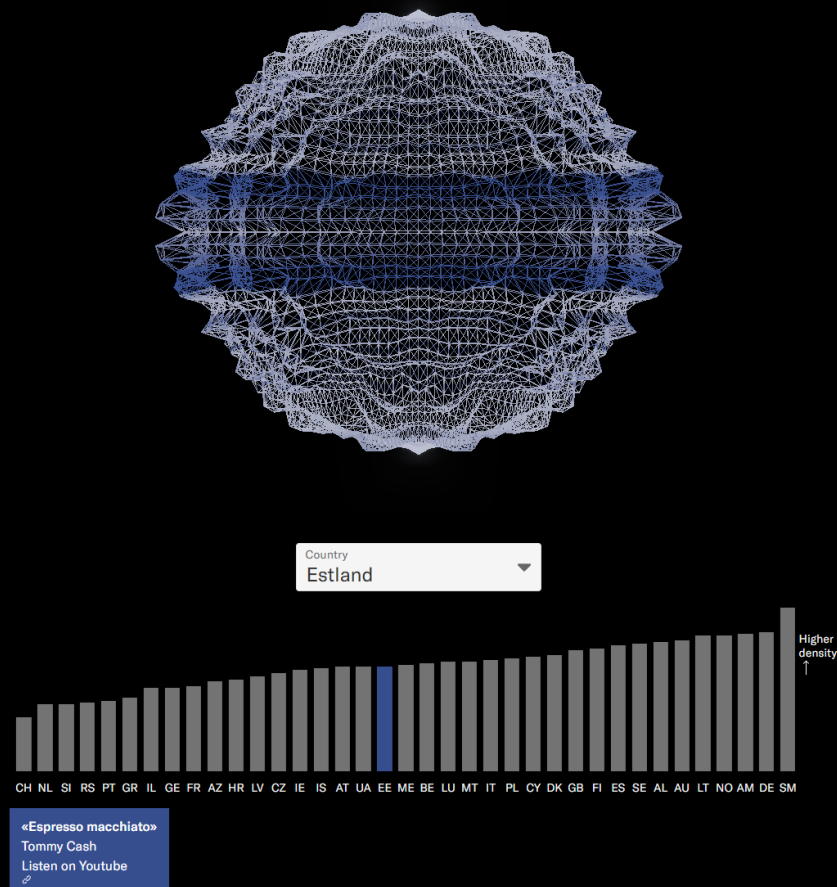
Yuval Raphael, who survived the Hamas terrorist attack on 7 October 2023 during the Supernova Festival, sings about healing and hope.

Like the Swiss entry, the song begins in a minimalist style with piano and vocals, but then develops into a dense, space-filling statement with synthesizers and percussion.



Whereas the ESC is usually dominated by sensory overload, Zoë Mës's 'Voyage' offers 2 minutes and 59 seconds of musical relaxation. Technically speaking, it is the most extraordinary ESC song of the year.

Browse through all the songs from this year's ESC and see how the entries differ in density. You can select a country or click on a bar.



Methodology: The spectral complexity of the songs was measured. To do this, the audio files were first broken down using Fourier transform (STFT). Then, the number of active frequency bands was measured for sub-sections (frames). The spectrograms and the animated sphere display the frequency (Y-axis) logarithmically, because the ear perceives pitches accordingly.

Original Article:

<https://www.nzz.ch/visuals/esc-2025-kann-zoe-me-die-schweiz-zum-sieg-singen-alle-songs-in-der-analyse-ld.1883459>

Article with vizualisation in english :

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