

THE CREATIVE AND INCLUSIVE CITY: SOLO IN FACING ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC) ERA¹

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Abstract

Along with Indonesian cities challenge in facing ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) era, the current top-down model immediately requires an inclusive structural change. The concern of this article is to assess the successful elements of Solo's tourism agenda as city resilience scheme. Drawing on empirical research in densely populated and tourism kampong, Laweyan, by focusing especially woman and elderly's participation, the author proposes that assistance program applied by local government on such issues generates socioeconomic revitalization catalysts and promotes social sensitivity to diversity in society. What is offered is a sustainable model of community base management in pursuing Solo, the heart of Java, as the creative and inclusive city.

Keywords: city, inclusivity, community base management, civil society

1.1 Introduction

It has been a common sense that South East Asia is now undergoing rapid change and modernization. On economic growth, one of South East Asian countries, Indonesia, surprisingly features Gross Domestic Product upsurge (The Economist, 2015) – even though once in time experienced economic depression and political disaster, this country proved capable in overcoming either internal or external economic menaces. However, modernity cannot be solely linked to economic growth. All that we know, Indonesia is now facing liberation and democratization of political system. The establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) becomes an arena to strengthen Indonesia's bond and collaboration to countries member regarding economic reinforcement. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is intensifying efforts to realize by 2015 the ASEAN Economic Community and implement the initiatives to achieve a single market and production base, allowing the free flow of

¹ The research on which this article draws was conducted as partial section of thesis project at graduate program of sociology, University of Indonesia and my anthology-book *OudeSolo*.

goods, services, investments, and skilled labor, and the freer movement of capital across the region².

The impact of AEC as modernity consequence is certainly different in many societal aspects. Perceived by spatial aspect, modernity widely concentrates at capital city and regional center. Democratization and the rise of middle class group then reflects characteristic of political and social change that radiate many cities. On behalf of modernity, Jakarta, a political and economic hub, becomes pivotal factor in generating changes upon cities in Indonesia by its international integration policy. Consequently, primate cities turn into metropolis, and have intertwined connection with the state and 'global metropolis community'. For the rhythm of Jakarta dominates, therefore, it reforms some primate cities' characteristics in Indonesia, including Solo.

Moreover, the primate city such as Solo is inevitable to globalization, national integration and localization. Those three elements rooted and widely spread beyond metropolis aspect; they correspondingly construct a distinguished urban quality. They, at the same time manifested in the city so that subsequently compose ambivalence as well. However, Solo is not global, local or National City, yet rather than combination of those three. Despite it is considered as alienation locus of human being and corrupted life style – which is in strong opposition with Solonese genuine culture, the Solo develops as global modernity platform and national identity awareness.

Nowadays, the landscape of Solo is strongly reflecting globalization impression in any forms: high buildings, malls, apartments, luxurious hotels and chamber of commerce alongside outlets with global-postmodern fast food restaurants. Even though this phenomenon causes equation of cities' faces around the world, it won't be precise if we talk about globalization in universalism, Westernization or Americanism terms only, for globalization is not monolithic process, yet it's a connection of the enormous processes. The similar characteristic is, that these processes need global connection and shape global network. As pointed out by Castell and Hall (1994), aside from financial network and global industry production, there is also an informal manufacturing, just like textile. Although information technology brings through control, coordination and long distance interaction doesn't mean global network is free from spatial concept. The

² Source: ASEAN.com (2015)

surprising paradox is, in world economic, which relies on information flow as production infrastructure, the city turns into economic development agent.

As it established, multiethnic groups have inhabited Solo. Furnivall's work in 1940s stressed that city is a site of multicultural society; a site where various groups legitimate a standardized life and cultural style. Aside from ethnical groups, settled foreigners set theirs as well. In recent years, along with rapid modernization, some particular settlements rise and base their value by social differentiation, in example: middle class clustered houses.

Here in Solo, localization plays pivotal role in accommodating those who cannot actualize their resources yet must compete with some 'giant groups' and becomes a city's resilience scheme counterpart. Laweyan, a small kampong located at northwestern Solo, becomes an epic portrait of tourism alongside ASEAN Economic Community agenda with batik production. Batik commodity strongly explicates that localization will not be declined by national integration or globalization – indeed it becomes more stimulated by global integration-base of modernization process. Modernization requires city citizen relocation to add value of land use to be more profitable. Laweyan then articulates this juncture as nostalgic motivation to improve not only economic lucrativeness but also their legitimation in generating pilot model of Solo in facing ASEAN Economic Community Era.

1.2 A Portrait of Urban Setting: Solo and Laweyan

Solo, a densely populated city about one million people, gives impression to exemplify the restless process of 'development' that is so ASEAN and Indonesian cities typical. Situated in the inner of Java, it has the atmosphere of a once-quite primate city that has been impolitely surprised by the tremors of modernization radiating from Jakarta, Indonesia's economic and political hub. Multimillion-dollar textile factories contest for cheap workforce with small batik workshops that are preceded much as they were in the nineteenth century. At night, hundreds of makeshift food stalls selling everything from spit of traditional snack and drink and toast take over the pavement, obfuscating the modern department stores, banks and hotels that local officials proudly point to as symbols of Solo's urban development.

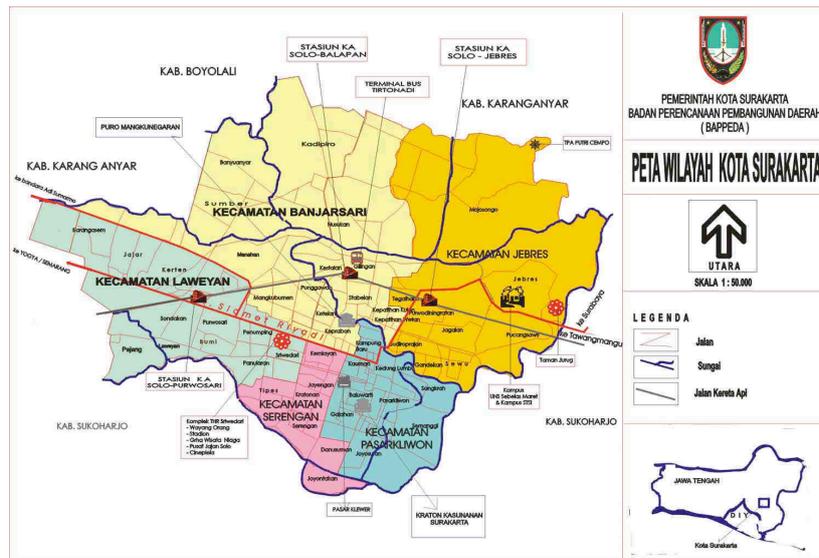


Figure 1 Map of Solo
Source: BAPPEDA Surakarta

According to Brenner (1998) “Solo and Surakarta are interchangeable terms. Both designate the same city, although Surakarta tends to be used in official context, whereas Solo is used more commonly in daily speech” (p. 3). On the other hand, the tendency of using ‘Solo’ term in this article is mostly interlinked to an academic consideration. Many remarkable researchers and scholars such as Suzanne April Brenner, Benedict Anderson and even more Drajat Tri Kartono incline to use ‘Solo’ as their popular lexicon to depict Surakarta so far. Meanwhile, ‘Surakarta’ term will be cited as platform of official policy such as RPJP (Long-term development planning).

Solo is as well considered as a center of Javanese culture. Many Westerners have been evenly persuaded of Solo’s cultural supremacy and genuineness. In 1904, for example, the Javanology expert H. H van Kol inscribed the Residency of Surakarta, the colonial region that contain the city of Solo:

“Here vibrate the heart of Java, and nowhere else does as much of Javanese life, of Javanese customs and tradition, still exist as in these lands where the old architecture of the Hindus worked its most beautiful temples, still an object of respect and admiration for anyone who has a feeling for beauty and art. One still finds the flower of the Javanese nobility here, and language and religion are preserved in the forms truest to the original” (1904, p. 1149).

Van Kol's expression a extensive value amongst Dutch colonial official and researchers that Solo, particularly the royal house of Sunan³, was the sincerest successor to the respected tradition, linguistic and artistic cultural of pre-islamic Java, which had survived at that time in their 'finer' Indianized forms⁴. The principle that Solo was a storehouse of these consecrated cultural custom, although in rather debauched forms, provided an official colonial character of legality to Solonese tradition and in specific to Solo's aristocratic elites, who were perceived as the caretaker of high Javanese culture.



Figure 2 The Royal House of Solo (the palace)
Source: National Geographic Indonesia

By now, Solo still entices those in pursuit of 'factual' Javanese culture; Solo's teachers of Javanese mysticism and meditation, attract apprentices from around the world and others come from overseas to learn Javanese dance and music. What had enticed to this city, nevertheless, was slight its aristocratic atmosphere or its prestige as a conserve of its everyday life. In urban multiracialism standpoint, Solo is beyond all, a city of divergences. It is a site of aristocrats, but also of bazaar wholesalers and street peddlers, mystics and university students, veiled Muslim woman, showy transvestites, high-heeled prostitutes and drearily liveried civil servant also ethnic Chinese and Arabs

³ Solonese's king

⁴ For two valuable discussions of the development of the Dutch colonial field of 'Javanology', which located the golden age of Javanese culture and literature in pre-Islamic past and designated the Javanese aristocracy, particularly those associated with the palace of Solo, as its heirs, see Tsuchiya 1990; Florida 1995. Pamberton also notes that the practices of Solo's elites became Javanology's model for the standardization of generic 'Javanese' practices just as the dialect of Javanese spoken in Solo became the model for a standard 'Javanese' language to be taught in schools.

(most locally born), a minority of Indians and Indonesians who have migrated to Solo from enormous parts of the archipelago. In addition, there is a small but frequent attendance of overseas tourists, students and counselors. This lively and sometimes inexplicable combination of people and life style does not undermine from Solo's famed cultural genuineness – for this is Solo looks like.

Solo is one of the prominent centers of batik production in Java, and Laweyan, the vicinity in the southwest corner of Solo has confined the largest attentiveness of batik workshops in Solo. In the middle of all the city's efforts at development, abortive or successful, contemporary Laweyan has another sense of modernity. People in the community are now being upheld economically by thriving business, wealthy entrepreneurs and constantly employed workers through batik production. Modernity has also entered the community through commodities: cars, motorcycle, piped water, radios and eventually cellular phone are standard features of many Laweyan households, yet on the opposite side, some members of public are still believing in ghost story inside old buildings.

What is it that caused Laweyan different from other vicinity of Solo? Unlike particular ethnic groups in Indonesia, for whom commerce is a well-received, even honored, way of life, Javanese are normally not recognized as traders. As Clifford Geertz points out on his study of two Indonesian market towns: "The markets has tended to form its own rather separate cultural universe in Java while 'the status of the trader in the wider society has been ambiguous at best, pariah-like at worst'" (1963, p. 44). Brenner (1998) confirms that specifically in this weightily agrarian district of Java, detached from the old ports of trade on the north coast of the island, well-constructed residents of Javanese merchants are moderately infrequent, and only a few ever outdid the earlier prosperity of Laweyan. Materially, the vicinity was discerned by its large, high-flown homes, which spanked of old prosperity. Situated the edge of town, in a place that once in time recognized 'village' rather than 'city' in the past memory of its older residents (but which is now quite urban), the assets on which the homes and workshops were built were also much more expansive in Laweyan than those habitually discovered in the center of the city, where land was at a best. Accordingly, the narrative of Laweyan is now being framed into urban economic growth through tourism scheme – and batik is considered as its means.

1.3 City Branding and Tourism as Surakarta's Resilience Scheme

City branding is one of urban economic development utilizations. As such, the city planners and related stakeholders derive it from marketing practices. As a product, merit and organization, the city needs strong as well different branding and reputation in order to overcome city competition in seizing surplus values whether at local, regional, national and global level.

The impact of AEC will be precisely different on some parts of ASEAN. The city is the main capital in economic activity. According to many experts, city is the real contributor to economic development of the state. While in national realm, the state merely plays role in evaluating. High-competitiveness city becomes a sensitive site of capital, sophisticated manufactures, best talents, technology, tourists, events and middle up citizen. The city uses marketing practice especially to pull those elements. For regional, location or city needs brand image support.

AEC's blue print spreads the ideas of democracy, strengthens citizen participation requisition and pursues regional management of the ASEAN countries to be more independent. Consequently, the role of central government weakens and the local given special autonomy to manage their affairs, meanwhile the central, manages strategic ones. In line with autonomy policy, the regions then ignite local identity reinforcement and slant development planning. It recently becomes distinguish vigor of regional unique selling and city resilience scheme in facing global competition such as AEC.

Regional autonomy provides wide-range opportunity to resources and ideas utilization in maximizing economic development, while the autonomy strengthens inter-regional competition. Correspondingly, they also sue some regions to be more innovative in managing competitiveness. Realizing the enormous benefits of competitiveness (comparative, competitive even collaborative) of regions won't gain positive impact if they don't have well-managed reputation. Thus, the image of city branding is inherent part in generating resilience scheme. Solo consciously draws upon this opportunity to develop city policy innovation and planning as a flagship of urban governance whether in public or private sector, including tourism.

For urban planning in city branding designated based on political process that involved many parties' magnitudes, Surakarta with its resources comes to a beginning

point of the interests' seizure area. As one of tourism cities in Central Java, Surakarta has very distinctive tag line that refers to its goals. Those are Sala BERSERI (*Bersih, Sehat, Rapi, Indah*)⁵, Solo The Spirit of Java and Sala Kutha Budaya⁶, which utilized to be branding effort of Surakarta as central Javanese cultural point.



Figure 3 Solo The Spirit of Java logo
Souce: <http://desaingratis.com>

This effort then legitimated by RPJP (Recana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang)⁷ vision of Surakarta in the year 2005-2025. Hereafter, the vision becomes fundamental philosophy of RPJM (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah)⁸ of Surakarta in 2005-2010. During Joko Widodo and FX. Hady Rudyatmo's government (2010-2015)⁹, Solo has been pursuing its long-term program to be a cultural city that accelerates social welfare based on Javanese spirit. There are nine derivative missions in legitimating the long-term program. Specifically, the three correlated missions epitomize Solo's city branding in tourism, those are: (1) Javanese character, manner and custom development through education, exemplary, events exertion and supported programs, (2) Strengthen city characteristic through Javanese accentuation and preserve cultural assets, both tangible and intangible ones and (3) City brand image development through tourism, trade and cultural spots regulation and generate both national and international events.

Based on missions carried, tourism discourse is indicated as an important scheme in solo, in which state and local actors in this case become managing agents. As

⁵ Bersih = clean, sehat = healthy, rapi = well-organized and indah = gorgeous

⁶ Solo as cultural city

⁷ Long Term Development Plan

⁸ Mid-Term Development Plan

⁹ Joko Widodo released his position as Surakarta mayor in 2013 and became Jakarta governor. FX. Rudyatmo (ex-vice mayor) then replaced him until nowadays.

excerpted before, AEC has inevitably given remarkable consequence in cities around the ASEAN and world widely including Solo. The agendas are internationalizing and framing the face of the city with market activity. Market agenda is furthermore rationalized into various forms of regulations and policies by the state. Indubitably, there are several market consequences that provide their own styles to various regions in Indonesia. And the biggest striking challenge of this issue is how to find a resilience model. Solo, with deep-rooted cultural resources then entered into this vortex. In addition to the stipulation in conjunction with the city government's long-term development plan 2010-2025, The Creative City that is girded by Solo through United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of Indonesia at least helps to perpetuate it.

Some kampongs that are considered potential as tourism program implementers ogled as spaces that can contribute local revenue (PAD¹⁰); one of which is Laweyan, a batik kampong with high historical and cultural value. However, the most interesting one from field data obtained is a portrait collaboration between these co-existences: Laweyan and Solo's government. This section below will also demonstrate the way market (in the face of Creative City) forms Solo and Laweyan resilience scheme.

1.3.1 Laweyan's Responses in Perpetuating the Narrative of Tourism in AEC Era

The Creative City concept was born in the late twentieth century. It has spatial context interlinked to creativity, individual and industry creativity pursuit and suggests economic development. It is a home for creative class (Florida, 2002), which serves as structural change machine, economic catalyst revitalization, private and public partnership facilitator and source of urban success story. And Solo as well as Laweyan, indeed, has creative class with productive well-trained labor in accelerating both economic and social welfare on behalf of tourism. And these both spaces previously have identified and reckon their cultural resources as the most favored element. Correspondingly, according to Anholt (2011), there are six activities areas or ducts in aligning

¹⁰ PAD (Pendapatan Asli Daerah)

place branding (The Creative City) with spatial concept, the chart below will figure it out:

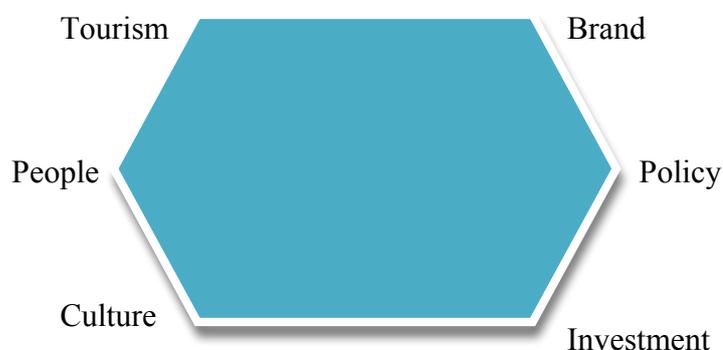


Figure 4 Six activities areas for place branding by Anholt Simon, Competitive Identity cited on Nigel Morgan, Annete Prichard and Roger Pride. *Destination Brand: Managing Place Reputation*. 3rd Edition. 2011. Oxford: Elsevier

Tourism, which is framed into Creative City discourse exposures some co-existing elements: brand, policy, investment, culture and people. It then shows that Laweyan is an intersection terrain of these six elements. City branding as the spirit of Java and the political landscape which provides an opportunity to generate social inclusivity, community base management, eliminating top-down model through many policy faces, a good investment from local actors, culture and human resources furthermore become important aspects of economic movement locomotive for Laweyan in addressing AEC. Here are six elements proposed by Anholt (2011).

a. Tourism, Brand and People: The Establishment of FPKBL as Promoter of Social Sensitivity to Diversity and Socioeconomic Revitalization Catalyst

The impression of the past history of Laweyan ignited by 25 September 2004 when FPKBL (Forum of Kampung Batik Laweyan Development) established as the rise of batik production symbol. A local actor, Alfa Fabela Priyatmono, through his architecture undergraduate thesis in 1980s realized an idea of kampung batik, which is based on history, environment and human ecology. He said:

“Yang asli sini kan sebenarnya istri saya. Saya pindah ke sini mulai tahun 1985. Jadi hampir 30 tahun. Jadi dulu waktu tahun 1985 saat masih skripsi dan berkunjung ke Laweyan, saya merasa tertarik untuk mendesain sebuah kampung batik yang berbasis pada budaya sejarah dan ekologi manusia. Berlanjut ke tesis di tahun 2000an, saya bikin morfologinya. Saya tidak bisa bilang kalau ini adalah ide yang muncul dari saya, cuma saya serasa menghadapi apa yang saya pikirkan...” (Interview 8/11/2014).

(Well, actually my wife is the part of Laweyan community. I moved here since 1985. So I’ve been here for almost 30 years. When I did my undergraduate thesis and visited Laweyan, I was inspired to designate kampung batik, which is based on culture, history and human ecology. Later in 2000s, I made a morphological study of it. I cannot say that this is my idea, yet I’m just feeling that I face is what I have thought). (Interview 8/11/2014).



Figure 5 Alfa Fabela Priyatmono, a local actor of Laweyan and the owner of Batik Mahkota Laweyan

By now, the FPKBL is followed by hundreds of both batik merchants and merit services. Most of them are local actors in pursuing Laweyan on tourism realm (including youth and woman batik merchants). Basically, the FPKBL aims to re-develop Laweyan batik manufacturing alongside city acceleration agenda, which is relied on tourism in Solo. The arrangement from business is furthermore gradually done as product variation, crafting, network, capital and communication pattern with the local government. Later on, the economic interests of Laweyan batik merchants meet economic tourism interests of local government feature an intersection of the Laweyan’s batik business beat.



Figure 5.7 Batik workshops in Laweyan during mid-day
(Personal documentation)

The elderly participation in utilizing provision traditions of the past continues to be maintained. Consequently, the independence of batik entrepreneurs is slowly pursued up. Network marketing tied back through the ropes of trust that had been built earlier. With a capital of skills that have been passed down, sheets of batik re-held back and sketched with various motifs. They folded into variety of packaging, by those who carry on the business and at the same time feel the onus of maintaining it, as well as by those who begin again after helplessness survive in the midst of changes that occurred two decades ago due to lack of national economy.

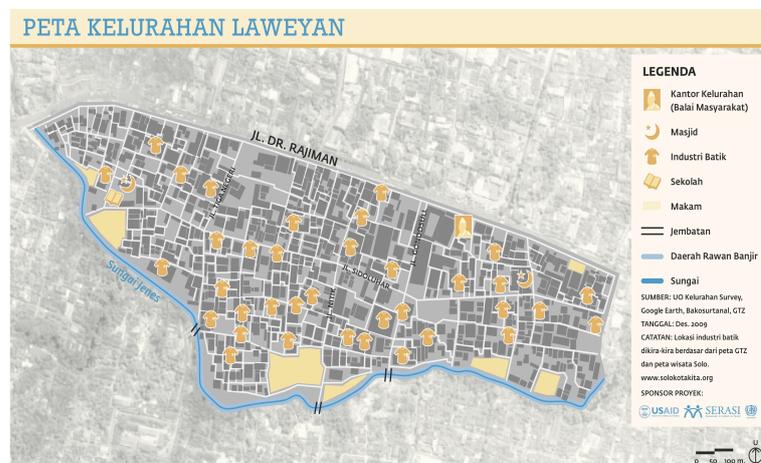


Figure 6 Map of batik production and workshop in Laweyan
Source: solokotakita.org

Some workshops back alive with the productive activities of Laweyan generation that have continued in studying various sources of modern knowledge, so that modern management pattern then appears in various parts of the houses in Laweyan. They are moving in unison, between those who carve wax with those who utilize big machines producing sheets of batik clothes. Everything is in simultaneous motion, among those who are since in the morning doing *batiking* with those who meet their needs to batik. Momentum to start reviving batik felt there is concurrent with the spirit of change that goes on. Although it is tough, yet the beat is still being maintained by the generation who ever 'forgot' batik and its glory long time ago.

**b. Investment, Policy and Culture in Kampung Batik Laweyan:
Kelompok Sadar Wisata as Community Based Management Model**

In line with Laweyan dynamics, by the stipulation of tourism ministerial regulation number PM.03/PW.007/MKP/2010 concerning cultural heritage preservation; Surakarta government then initiated Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis, or Tourism Awareness Group), which existed in several potential tourism kampongs such as Laweyan. The top priority is to build a partnership between local government and those kampongs. Sadar Wisata is a condition that emphasizes on participation and support of all components of society in encouraging the establishment of favorable climate for tourism growth and development, while Sapta Pesona is the elaboration of Sadar Wisata concept associated with the support and community's role as a host in an effort to create conducive environment and atmosphere that can encourages the growth and development of tourism industry through revitalization of safe, orderly, clean, cool, beauty, friendly and memory elements.

Identity that is always attached and constructed continuously about Laweyan is cultural identity, and a program associated with it, is the policy of tourism package to manage. Through beginning program related to tourism facilities development and various places revamping, a tourism

information center then built in Laweyan's administrative office. Preparation program travel packages and travel conscious cadre for all stakeholders to reform (such as repair and maintenance) in Laweyan get started.

Dalem Tjokrosoemartan is a hotel that provides wedding, meeting and tourism package in Laweyan. Long time ago, the building was actually batik manufacture owned by rich merchants called Tjokrosoemarto. According to one source he was the richest merchant in Laweyan, yet his generation transformed it into lodging and event organizer by now. This clearly shows us that tourism in Laweyan is not merely interlinked to batik and historical site. As the researcher stressed above that the logic of market gradually alters the narrative of progress. It has multi dimension to show but of course the instruments of it can also be revealed.

Most both batik workshops and lodging services in Laweyan provide debit and credit payment. The instrument to serve is by using banking merit such as debit and credit machine. This phenomenon then articulates that tourism has very deep connection with marketing scheme. The global instrument affects Laweyan's way in seizing the narrative of AEC Era.

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