

FUSING ECONOMY, ECOLOGY AND ETHICS IN TOURISM MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

The major unbalance of the world that we live in comes from the fact that the economic activity circumscribed to a profit logics does not pursue with the same perseverance and rigor the objective related to the environment and to the development of the human being in its complexity. In this article, the solution that we are proposing is to protect resources by promoting the tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management, which targets, apart from economic objectives, also the objectives aiming at improving the involved persons and the surrounding world, by shaping the economic system in such a way so that the resources and support systems of life should be maintained, according to the thesis promoted by Lester Brown. While the traditional management is concerned with the quantity, competitiveness, growth, the Eco-Bio-Geo-Management considers particularly the quality, collaboration, preservation. The article departs from the current state of tourism in Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar Euro-Region, result of practicing the traditional management, the detailed subject of the first sub-chapter. Adepts of the idea according to which data gathering should also include the description, explanation, observation integrated in a systemic research, within which the manner of thinking seems to occupy the central place, as part of an unique, specific spiritual model, built in time, determining the motivation to use resources of a territory (zone, central area, region), we have proceeded to the work method accordingly. The second sub-chapter shows the negative impact of the traditional tourist management on the resource base with examples and data. Thus, in the foreground appear the arguments pleading for a new type of tourism management, namely the Eco-Bio-Geo-Management, a concept that is detailed in the third sub-chapter. The proposed model is based on systemic observation, statistic data and practical experience acquired from directly collaborating with the authorities and with the economic factors of the Euro-region. In the end, the conclusions are presented, which also open new research perspectives.

Key words: economy, ecology, ethics, tourist management

JEL classification: M10

1. Introduction

The idea of development has evolved in time from a process that has been defined simply as „economic growth” to an understanding based on the self-achievement of individuals in society, seen through full life paradigms. This latter approach is circumscribed to the sustainable development and to the „eco-bio-economy vision,

as scientific, economic and philosophic attempt, dedicated to the sustainable development of mankind's welfare, under all its forms, by an economy of the future, placed in the service of people's life, by rationally using environmental resources". We are also bringing to the foreground the idea uttered by the father of eco-economy, Lester Brown, namely that only those who are capable of shaping their economic and social system in such a way that natural resources and life support systems are maintained, will register sustainable development.

The sustainable development is one of the most important concepts of the XXI century, and its purpose is to reconcile the economic expectations with the social, cultural and ecologic challenges of the global world. The major unbalance of the world that we live in comes from the fact that the economic activity circumscribed to a profit logics does not pursue with the same perseverance and rigor objectives related to the environment and to the development of the human being on its whole. The discrepancies between economy and ecology are mainly due to the fact that the processes that occur in nature are cyclical, while the productive systems have a linear character, using the energy and resources of the planet, turning them into products that afterwards become wastes. It results that the sustainable model of production and consumption must also be cyclical, imitating the processes of ecosystems. To build such cyclical models, it is necessary to fundamentally change the manner in which we are looking at business and economy. We are highlighting at this point the fact that the economic growth make sense only if it provides a better life for most individuals in society.

Inspired by the ideas of the sociologist Daniel Bell, who was speaking, in his writings, of three types of poverty: poverty in assets and money, moral poverty and poverty of knowledge, we believe that, for a sustainable welfare, we should travel the road backwards: we should accumulate knowledge that is suitable for the new reality at the same time as we should undergo a moral restoration to finally achieve welfare. It is obvious that problems have occurred in the way the contemporary society works. These problems have manifested into violence during the latest huge crisis that affected all mankind. Other problems are about to erupt. We are witnessing a resource crisis, generated by their permanent degradation. The reality marked by the so fresh destructive effects of the calamities comes with convincing arguments in favor of the needs to make a deep change in the human attitude and behavior towards the resources that are necessary to support life and to maintain welfare.

We are all hoping and waiting for solutions. In our case, the solution that we are suggesting is to protect resources by promoting tourism, which is the object of this article, and more specifically, the "green tourism". This is possible by perseveringly learning and practicing the tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management. To accomplish its mission, the tourist eco-bio-geo-management must be both the science that knows, and the science that acts, idea circumscribed to the logic of the type "both-and". A logic of the type „either-or" would generate a "neither-nor" result. In our vision, the tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management is the management that may answer the problems of the future in an intelligent, harmonious, integrated and innovative manner, also preserving the resources that are so necessary to live and to provide welfare.

Based on the general welfare assumption, the Eco-Bio-Management is rather meant to be a religion, a religion of the social progress. It will succeed, we believe, only to the extent to which it will use with discernment and with morality the

knowledge acquired by mankind. The Eco-Bio-Management exceeds the science of management by the fact that its goal is not only to improve production, to increase productivity or the added value, but more particularly to thoroughly aim at improving the involved persons and the surrounding world, by shaping the economic system in such a way so that the resources and support systems of life should be maintained. While the traditional management is concerned with the quantity, competitiveness, growth, the Eco-Bio-Geo-Management considers particularly the quality, collaboration, preservation. The economists cannot walk alone on this ground. The current background asks us to think and build sound cooperation platforms between political decision factors, scientists, opinion leaders, communities and business environment.

This article is structured in three parts, followed by conclusions. The purpose of the first sub-chapter is to analyze the current state of tourism in the Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar Euro-Region, as a result of practicing traditional management. Adepts of the idea according to which data gathering should also include the description, explanation, observation integrated in a systemic research, within which the manner of thinking seems to occupy the central place, as part of an unique, specific spiritual model, built in time, determining the motivation to use resources of a territory (zone, central area, region), we have proceeded to the work method accordingly. The second sub-chapter shows the negative impact of the traditional tourist management on the resource base with examples and data. Thus, in the foreground appear the arguments pleading for a new type of tourism management, namely the Eco-Bio-Geo-Management. The proposed model is based on systemic observation, statistic data and practical experience acquired from directly collaborating with the authorities and with the economic factors of the Euro-region.

1. Analysis of the current situation of tourism in the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region

Tourism is generally considered to be a means to develop localities and destination regions, due to the money flow brought from abroad and to the created jobs. We are underlining at this point the fact that the tourist development of an area knows various levels, and that its impact is determined by a complex of factors: economic, social, political-legal, cultural, legislative. The development determined by tourism, either good or bad, may be best judged by the persons that are directly affected by the social, cultural, ecologic changes and by the effects on the jobs and on incomes, which is possible only after a certain time. By tourism, a series of natural and anthropic resources will be capitalized, such as relief, landscape, climate, thermal waters, vegetation, cultural objectives, elements that cannot be capitalized in other activity fields. Taking these elements as landmarks (that attract most tourists), real tourist resorts may be created, in various areas of a region, which will generate the economic and cultural development of said area, and consequently, the creation of better living conditions. The catalyzing part played by tourism considers:

- the regional economic development;
- the development of the regional labor force market;
- the development of infrastructure and equipments;
- the stimulation of investments and businesses.

The Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region was created at the end of 2002 on the initiative of Bihor County Council (Romania) and of the Hajdú-Bihar Local Self-Government (Hungary), which recognized the important part played by the cross-border cooperation in the fields of joint interest for the European integration process. A major field of interest was tourism. The natural attractions of the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region consist in the thermal waters, the mountain area, the national parks, the natural reservations, the existing rivers and lakes (for Bihor county) and in the balneary and thermal resources, national parks and natural reservations (for Hajdú-Bihar county). The man-made or anthropic attractions consider architectural and historic monuments, religious centers and holy places, museums, traditions and popular customs, gastronomy, capitalized to the maximum by the organization of events, conferences, leisure activities and sports competitions.

According to the data gathered from the official websites of Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar counties, in 2013, in Bihor county, 238,476 tourists were registered, of which 87.41% Romanians, and in Hajdú-Bihar county, 291,743 tourists, of which Hungarians represented 75.44%. The number of foreign tourists registered in Hajdú-Bihar was 2.38 times bigger than the one registered in Bihor county. This is due to the fact that, on the one hand, the tourist packages of Hajdú-Bihar are more diverse and even personalized (tourist packages for newly-weds, tourist packages for retired persons, discounts for children (even until 10 years of age), additional services (apart from meals and accommodation) included free of charge in most tourist packages (massage, city tour, a romantic dinner, free tickets to the famous Hajdúszoboszló open-air swimming pool, etc.), and, on the other hand, the quality-price ratio (as regards tourist offers) is better in Hajdú-Bihar than in Bihor. The analysis of the activity of hotel units of Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar, departing from the data obtained from the Bihor Statistic County Direction, for Bihor county, and from Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Debrecen, for Hajdú-Bihar data, show several important aspects. From the analysis of the obtained data, we may notice that Bihor county has a lower number (approximately by 30%) of hotel units than Hajdú-Bihar county. However, the number of the occupied staff is almost 40% bigger, a phenomenon that we also notice as regards the turnover. Also, the gross investments in tangible assets in Bihor county are approximately 75% bigger than in Hajdú-Bihar county. The conclusion that we may draw at this point is that the hotel units of Bihor county are larger than those in Hajdú-Bihar county, and they occupy a stronger local monopoly position than the accommodation units of Hajdú-Bihar, on the one hand due to the Băile Felix and 1 Mai resorts, and on the other hand due to the mountain relief situated on the territory of Bihor county, which does not exist in Hajdú-Bihar. Nevertheless, the expenses related to staff in Bihor county, in absolute expression, are smaller than those registered in Hajdú-Bihar, and the staff of the latter location is better paid, almost double than the staff in Bihor. The turnover/number of occupied staff, although it is limited as efficiency indicator, gives us a landmark. In 2013, the efficiency of the use of human resources for the Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region (total Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar counties) was of 19.75 thousand Euro/person. Despite the crisis of 2008-2009, we notice the tendency to preserve the jobs in hotel units in both counties, thus showing that tourist services are an important resource in the development of the Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region.

In the classification made by the World Economic Forum (WEF), by the value of Tourism Competitiveness Index, Romania occupies position 63 and Hungary occupies position 38 out of 139 countries. The situation is much more unfavorable, if we consider only the classification for Europe area, where Romania occupies position 34 and Hungary occupies position 26 out of 42 States. The natural and cultural resources are considered to be the main sources of competitive advantage for the Romanian tourism. Or, the competitiveness index achieved by World Economic Forum shows that the situation is different than we imagined. The explanation comes from the fact that WEF methodology considers only the natural tourist objectives included in the UNESCO patrimony, the quality of the environment, the diversity of the fauns and the natural parks. Romania occupies a modest 94th position at the world level, mainly determined by the quality of the environment (place 104), by the reduced diversity of the fauna (83) and by the protected areas (place 77). It is true that there is a tourist potential provided by nature, which situates us on the 43rd position. To become more competitive in this chapter, Romania must take measures, must implement strategies to improve the quality of the environment and of the protected areas, and, on the other hand, to start intercessory to identify new natural resources that could be included in the UNESCO patrimony. Also in terms of cultural resources, Romania is behind its direct competitors, despite the valuable cultural patrimony. The cause is represented by the absence of actual actions to animate this patrimony, illustrated, for instance, by the number of fairs and exhibitions that are organized or by the performance of creative industries. As regards the quality of the human factor in the field of tourism, it is generated by the educational system, meant to provide a high-quality training and to determine a better specialization of the labor force working in tourism, an aspect that is currently badly developed.

2. The negative impact of tourism on resources

Any development project should provide balance between the preservation of resources (human, natural, cultural, social) and the economic profitability, considering the needs and specifications of the local communities. We believe that the tourist eco-bio-geo-management constitutes the manner of action that best suits the achievement of sustainable tourist development objectives, by the fact that it favors the protection of the human, natural and cultural patrimony.

The factors that are responsible in the tourism of Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region must permanently consider the negative impact of the tourist development. If this negative impact is not eliminated or reduced to the minimum, it may trigger the downgrading of a tourist destination and, what is worse, it may cause the destruction of the local resources. Some of the negative phenomena that may occur following tourism development, refer to:

- environmental pollution;
- destruction of the beauty and uniqueness of landscapes;
- deterioration of the cultural and social values;
- polarization of the area;
- attraction and use of resources almost exclusively for tourism purposes;
- over-population, crowding, deepening of social inequalities.

The previously mentioned negative effects occur in time. In the following table, we are presenting the life cycle of a tourist destination in relation to the attitude and behavior of the local community towards tourists, as well as with the alterations of the customs and life style of the inhabitants.

Table 1. Dialectic of the evolution of a tourist destination

Stage of the life cycle of the tourist offer	Inhabitants' attitude	Type of tourist/ tourism	Alteration of the environment
1. Exploration	euphoria	explorer/drifter/individual	none
2. Beginning	apathy	mass individual	moderate
3. Development	irritation	mass individual	moderate
4. Consolidation	irritation	mass organized	major
5. Stagnation	hostility	mass organized	major
6. Post-stagnation	hostility	mass organized and individual	consolidated-negative

Source: authors by Andriotis, K., 2006. *Hosts, guests and politics: Coastal Resorts Morphological Change*, Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 1079-1098

We may notice that, in the exploration period (of discovery) of a tourist destination by "drifters" (tourists of the type „forward handle"), the locals have an attitude of euphoria, being thrilled by the novelty appearing in their daily life. We do not register alterations of the human, natural, cultural heritage. In the period of "launching and development" of mass tourist offers towards individual tourists, the locals' attitude changes. The mirage of the beginning disappears, apathy occurs, indifference and later on, irritation, while the changes are more and more obvious. The buildings become more and more numerous, the number of tourists increases at the same time as their mobility and activism. The authorities adopt policies favoring the tourist activity, which, since it is seasonal, leaves the locals to deal with the "residues" of the consumption culture seen as a set-off of the constraints of the daily life "from home". In the consolidation and maintenance stage of an efficient tourist traffic from the economic point of view, the resource exploitation is even more intense and „organized", because it stabilizes the global alterations, worsening them by the massive presence of the organized, mass tourism. Consequently, the locals show hostility, an attitude which consolidates in the post-stagnation stage, when they face the „debris" of a tourist activity that was once so promising. The competition and the spatial segregation appears, with its demonstrative effects, we start to deal with an integral tourism, with maximum connectivity, with man's omnipresence, with a state of saturation.

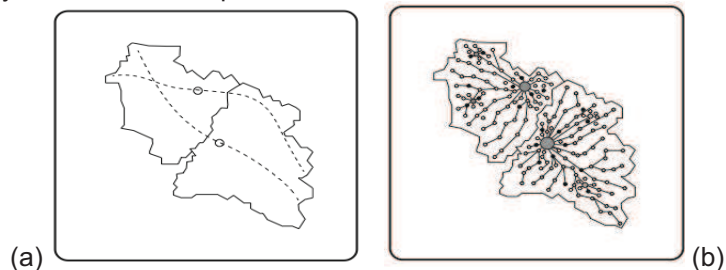


Fig. 1. *Evolution of the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region following tourism development in the traditional standard formula*

(a) Initial situation; (b) Situation after the development and consolidation of the tourist activity.

The fact that the locals are more critical than the tourists in assessing the environmental elements (climate, beauty of the landscapes, preservation of the environment, cleanness of sea water) is proven by a study carried out for the tourist destination Kvarner of Croatia, whose results are synthetically shown in table no. 2.

Table 2. Results of the assessment made by tourists and residents as regards the elements of the tourist offer concerning the environment and the natural resources

Elements of the tourist offer of Kvarner – Croatia (environment and the natural resources group)	Tourists (score)			Residents (score)		
	2003	2006	2011	2003	2006	2011
Climate	4.50	5.22	5.92	4.01	5.05	5.4
Beauty of the landscape	4.45	5.78	5.97	4.27	5.27	5.7
Preservation of the environment	4.05	5.28	5.59	3.54	4.68	4.9
Cleanness of sea water	4.32	5.61	5.43	3.46	4.84	5.1
Average score	4.33	5.47	5.79	3.82	4.96	5.3

Source: Nizic, M. K., Drpic, D., 2013. *Model for Sustainable Tourism Development in Croatia*, Proceedings of 2nd Scientific Conference "Tourism in Southern and Eastern Europe 2013", Vol. 2, p. 165

Tourists' and inhabitants' perception of the elements: climate, beauty of the landscapes, preservation of the environment, cleanness of sea water, has been measured by means of the Likert scale, with five steps, for the year 2003, and with 7 steps, for the years 2006 and 2011. In both cases, 1 is the lowest score, and 5, respectively 7, the best score (maximum possible). We may notice that the tourists are the most critical in terms of cleanness of sea water, and the locals, as regards the preservation of the environment.

3. Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo –Management in the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region – a possible model

Tourism, mainly the mass tourism, directly related to the intelligent use of the resource base of a region, may be developed only in circumstances that show the concern for the quality of the environment and for the social fairness, at the same time as achieving economic prosperity. A new paradigm of the tourist development must be equally grounded on the principles of economy, ecology and ethics. Our research so far, circumscribed to the doctoral and post-doctoral investigations, as well as to certain projects carried out in the Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region, such as: *Summer School Management of the tourist destination, edition I-2007 and edition II-2008, the project Development and integrated promotion of joint thematic tourist packages in the Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euro-region*, financed by the Phare Program CBC 2006/INTERREG IIIA – carried out between August 15, 2008 –

November 15, 2009, the project *Entrepreneurship and equality of chances. An inter-regional model of entrepreneurial school for women*, financed out of the European Social Fund (FSE), the sectorial operational program Development of Human Resources (POS DRU), Priority axis 3 – Increase of adaptability of the labor force and of enterprises, Major intervention field 3.1 – Promotion of entrepreneurial culture, have led us to the understanding of the principles of bio-eco-economy applied to tourism, as one may see in the following figures:

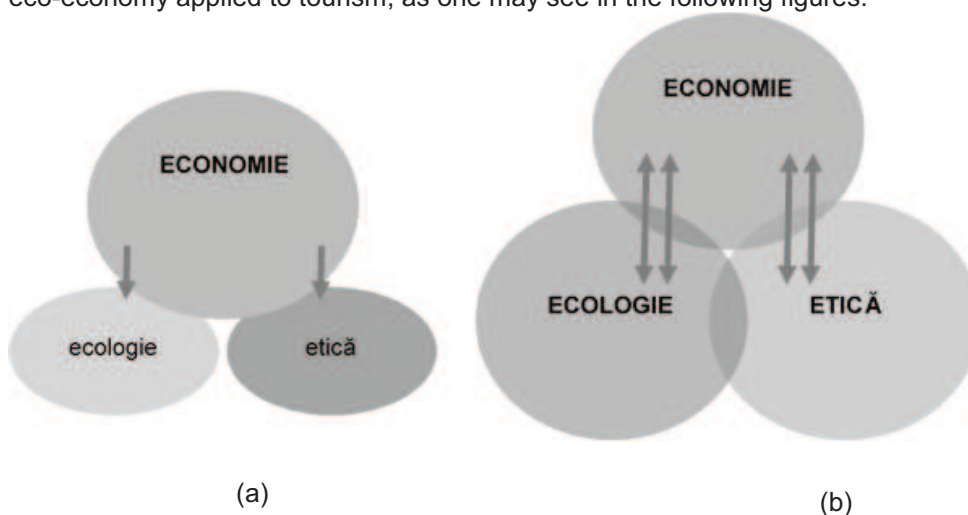


Fig. 2. *Vision of the tourist development*; (a) traditional vision; (b) transformed vision
(in the light of the Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management).

The importance to preserve the resource base is argued by the research made by the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism on occasion of elaborating the country brand of Romania. The final report refers to a study of the European Commission referring to the Europeans' attitude towards tourism, carried out in 2011, which revealed, in a sequence, the following reasons determining the decision to purchase a tourist product:

- environment (nature) – 32% of the respondents;
- cultural heritage – 27% of the respondents;
- leisure – 14% of the respondents;
- gastronomy – 7% of the respondents;
- arts – 6% of the respondents;
- festivals and events – 5% of the respondents;
- others – 7%;
- non-answers – 3%.

In accordance with the data provided by Eurostat – 2009, over 35% of the respondents wish to have experiences, during their holidays, related to nature, they wish to establish contact with the local communities, with the authentic traditions, where they can admire the natural patrimony, all this within destinations performing a sustainable and responsible tourism. This is also confirmed by the research

carried out as regards lifestyle, the concern for health and sustainability, emphasizing the fact that 45% of the Europeans are willing to pay more for green products, 79% are motivated to purchase green products (in general), 75% are motivated to purchase goods with eco certification, and 67% try to influence others to buy green products.

Based on the above data, providing, by the tourists' satisfaction, a certain financial comfort of the economic agents (without being a priority), we believe that the solution for the sustainable and responsible development of tourism in the Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region is represented by the Eco-Bio-Geo-Management. *The basic purpose of the Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management must be to provide an efficient and responsible tourist traffic towards the resources, in conditions of preserving the cultural and social values.*

The model shown above represents a multidisciplinary approach and it aims at obtaining synergy by putting together all the concerned factors, motivated by the "three C": competition (competition by collaboration), creativity, preservation. The Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management aims at shaping the economic and social system so as to preserve the natural resources and the life-support elements. The results of adopting the Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management may be synthesized as follows:

- economic diversity;
- improvement of the locals' living conditions;
- undertaking of projects by the community;
- protection of the human, natural and cultural patrimony;
- strengthening of the feeling of belonging and pride;
- decision-making by community residents;
- valorization of the local history and culture in favor of the community;
- valorization of the local share capital in the tourist network.

4. Conclusions

The protection and preservation of natural and anthropic (man-made) resources represent, in our opinion, the base to have success in the development of tourism in the Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region. It is essential that the rich and unique natural, human and cultural patrimony should be preserved and capitalized without being negatively affected by the development of tourism. This is in the charge of the Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management, as a type of management centered on the idea of thinking and arranging in a correct manner the relations with various resources and economic actors in order to achieve the desired results. The significance to spare, not to exhaust and, therefore, to be able to offer the possibility to have an increased output is fully integrated in the concept of Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management. Thus, the concept is at the crossroads between science and art, between the instinctual-practical activity and the rigorously applied technique. New times demand new ideas and new redefinitions of the terms that populate our daily routines.

The implementation of the Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management provides the grounds for the development of a sustainable tourism and of a responsible behavior, as elements capable of providing a strong future on the economic, ecologic, social and cultural levels. The objective of efficiency is considered and must be reached

provided that all the complex matters included in the triptych “man-product-nature” are managed wisely; in this context, the notion of efficiency cedes its place, first of all, to the notion of effectiveness. The Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management model proposed by us takes into account the piercing and assimilation, in the practice of tourist development, of the concerns for ecology and life support in all its complexity in the localities and regions of destination. The proposed model has three groups of factors as premises, related to knowledge, to the creation of a vision concerning the future of the tourist destination, and to the actual action animated by knowledge and vision. Each group of factors finds correspondence with other factors constituted in sub-groups, aiming at changing for the better, and activating a mechanism that will subsequently become a support-system of integral tourist development. Thus, tourist activities and their immediate and long-lasting results become related beneficently with the nature, society and culture, by responsible behaviors. The tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management is more than a concept aiming at sustainable development. Built on pillars providing sustainability, the concept includes the principles of ethics and of responsible behaviors in the economic, environmental and socio-cultural fields.

The article provides the frame to understand the concept of Tourist Eco-Bio-Geo-Management by the example offered by tourism in Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region. In this approach, it contributes, according to our opinion, to the extension of knowledge in the field of sustainable tourist development in the vision of eco-economy. We intend to continue the research activity by gathering relevant data concerning aspects related to the environment and to the social and cultural dimension in Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar Euro-region in order to test the model and improve it.

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