Entrepreneurial Action in Shaping Education for Entrepreneurship: The Case of the KaosPilots International

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Abstract
The KaosPilots is the name of a small school specialising in training young people to the dedicated carrier as entrepreneurs. The school was founded in Aarhus - Denmark - in 1991 by two autodidacts with no prior training or educational background relating to established institutions running entrepreneurship training and education.

Neutral assessments of the school have indicated that more than 50 percent of the students graduated from the school has started their own business and furthermore that the students exercise a strong entrepreneurial behaviour (Deichman-Sørensen 1997).

Seemingly the school and their recipes for entrepreneurship training are highly successful in terms of the number of graduates starting their own business and the number of graduates taking key positions in established organisations as change agents or creative staff members.

Although the school is seen as the ‘ugly duckling’ among established institutions founded on traditional academic traditions, the KaosPilots have become highly valued and cheered in the business community as well as among a wider public. The school has recently been included in the yearly state budget with a separate line of support. Established institutions have also started to pay attention to the apparent success of the KaosPilots. What is the secret of their recipe?

In this contribution we want to explore how the KaosPilots form their pedagogical concepts of teaching entrepreneurship and enterprise behaviour.

Following the so-called ‘Dogma’ concept developed by Danish filmmakers, this contribution aim to explore the key elements making up the recipes guiding the entrepreneurship training program exercised by the school. Key factors forming a community of learning practice (Wenger et al. 2002) are outlined as well as the critical pedagogical elements on which the education in entrepreneurship rests.

Based on observation study and interview, the paper will shortly reveal the history of the KaosPilots in order to highlight the foundations forming current features of the entrepreneurship training recipe of the school (Kolb, 1984).

The values and operational foundations forming current features of the entrepreneurship training recipe of the school are highlighted to begin with. Next section will explore key elements forming the profile of the training programme. In a short section following, the profile of the training programme and the entrepreneurial spirit encouraged among the students is outlined. In a final section, status of the international expansion of the school as well as those challenges confronting the KaosPilots in developing their training recipes is outlined. The paper is concluded with reflections on the learning community developed by the KaosPilots compared to traditional academic traditions of teaching entrepreneurship. The key question posed is, whether it is possible to implement similar educational programmes at established business schools.
The paper is based on the concept of critical realism.

**Introduction**

Over the last decade discussions have flourished concerning how to introduce - or vitalize - the agenda of entrepreneurship in established higher educations, not least the Business schools (see for example Gibb, 1996; Johannisson, 1991 and Kirby, 2004). While there is a strong consensus concerning the needs to do so, the way to do this is much more filled with ambiguity. Is it possible to alter the established agendas? And is it possible to change the learning perspective from the academic tradition of learning about entrepreneurship to an agenda in which students are involved in a learning agenda for entrepreneurship? Opinions seems to differ on the first issue (see for example Gibb, op. cit. and Kirby, op. cit.), but also seems to agree on the second issue, namely that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible inside well-established academic institutions, with their academic traditions, administrative routines and not least their strategic perspectives of academic credibility, to alter the balance of what is possible and what is impossible (see for example Kirby, op. cit.).

This paper will shortly reveal the history of a small school - the KaosPilots - dedicated to educate young people to carriers as entrepreneurs.

In this contribution we want to explore how the KaosPilots managed to break the waves of institutionalised concepts and practices of teaching entrepreneurship and how the KaosPilots form their pedagogical concepts of teaching entrepreneurship and enterprise behaviour.

**The history of the KaosPilots**

'KaosPiloterne' (The KaosPilots) is the name of a small school specialising in educating and training young people to the dedicated carrier as entrepreneurs. The school was founded in Århus - Denmark - in 1991 by two autodidacts with no prior training or educational background relating to established institutions running entrepreneurship training and education.

Neutral assessments (Deichmann-Sørensen, 1997; Danmarks Evalueringsscenter, 1998 www.evc.dk, Langager, 1994) of the school have indicated that more than 50 percent of the students graduated from the school have started their own business and furthermore that the students exercise a strong entrepreneurial behaviour.

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recipe? Let us begin with a short highlight of the background leading to the birth of the school.

Aarhus is the second largest city in Denmark. The city has 250,000 citizens and every year since 1970 a huge cultural festival has taken place in the city. This festival has evolved into a national and even international event and the city population thus grows enormously during this week. Back in the 1980s an enterprising, youthgroup - the Front Runners - started ‘reinventing’ the Aarhus festival through grass root happenings and eventmaking. Year after year their impact on the festival grew bigger and bigger.

The FrontRunners were in many ways a reaction against the left-wing politics of the 70s and 80s. Their strategy was that the best political argument was action based demonstration, through positive, concrete examples, that ‘anything is possible’. This is not to say, that the issues dealt with weren't heavy - youth unemployment, limited access to higher education, drug abuse or lack of personal self-worth. But despite the seriousness of these issues, the FrontRunners responded with positive solutions - solutions that were creative, innovative and (preferably) cheap. They practiced social entrepreneurship long before the concept became part of the mainstream entrepreneurship agenda.

Within a relatively short period - concentrated around 1989-1993 - a whole fleet of new, small, progressively managed and network-oriented companies emerged out of the activities of the FrontRunners: “MouseHouse” a multimedia company, the culture magazine “Agenda”, the Weekly Guide, the cycle courier company “Cykelbudene”, the house club “Klub Kronstadt” and the legendary, total theatre service provided by “Café Kølbert” just to mention the most outstanding examples of cultural enterprise formation.

Most of the young people engaged had no formal higher education - at least not in entrepreneurship and leadership. Concepts like the bottom line; budgets; creative product development and ‘mission statements’ were learned and understood the hard way - learning by doing - by starting independent companies in the face of the often harsh realities of market forces. On the basis of these initial - yet crucial - experiences of starting “funky business” the FrontRunners realized the need of an education in project management and entrepreneurship. Ambitions were to create the ideal school, which “I would have attended in order to be professionally equipped to meet the challenges I face today?” (Elbæk, 1998).

A small team of the most experienced FrontRunners began sketching the outline of what is the professional and educational philosophy and concept behind the KaosPilots today. So - based on a dream of making the perfect place to learn social entrepreneurship and creative business design the school started in 1991. (www.kaospilots.dk)

The school has changed over the years and today - after 15 years - it has evolved into an internationally well known and highly respected institution – not least in the business and cultural communities - because of the surprising creativity, its ability to provide challenging reality check and the action oriented learning environment. But it is also despised in academic circles for being too self confident and lacking academic depth. However, it leaves no one with the feeling of indifference.
What are the pedagogies and the teaching methods and how does the school stimulate enterprising behavior?

- What are the lessons to be learned?

The KaosPilots values and dogmas’

The founding philosophy forming the ‘KaosPilots’ in many ways has resemblance with the Danish “Dogma 95” film concept. Three Danish film instructors made an agreement in 1995 of making film by 10 rules in order to get rid of the ‘superficial effects hunting movies’ (Hjort, 2001; Kelly 2001). They wanted to retrieve and revitalize the story in the film. “Dogme 95” is a vow of chastity. Basically it is: no artificial lighting, no camera stand, no music added, no murder, no costumes and the story have to by on location. These rules left room for new, young talents and also shifted the competitive balance in favor of low budget films.

Like the Danish Dogme instructors the KaosPilots wanted to make an education with ‘no artificial ingredients’ – the KaosPilots’ founders wanted to make an education which they would have wanted to take themselves. It should be an education that actually trained the core abilities to become a social innovative entrepreneur. To do this 6 values and attitudes have been identified:

- “Playful: Being at the KaosPilots has to be motivating and inspiring”
- “Real World: The students and the staff have to work with real problems, real people and real conflict.” In summary - real projects.
- “Streetwise: The School must never be out of touch with what is happening at street level in our society.”
- “Risk-taking: The program and the staff must be characterized by the will to be brave and take risks.”
- “Balance: There has to be right dynamic and balance between body and soul, between form and content and, not least, between human, time, and economic resources at the school.”
- “Compassion: Human compassion and social responsibility must be the hallmarks of the school.”

(The KaosPilots – Where Creativity & Innovation goes to School, 2004. page 9)

This set of values is a compass when new staff is recruited, and it is also these values used in the evaluation of the success of a student’s projects as well as project ideas initiated by the school.

During observation studies and interviews at the KaosPilots for a period of 2 months, it became clear that these values are well integrated in the daily life among students and staff we observed. In the following we will reveal seven dogmas of “training for entrepreneurship”, the ingredients that forming the learning space and framing the educational program of the school.

The training programme and dogmas at the KaosPilots

The observation study at the KaosPilots can be narrowed down to seven dogmas, which summarize the practical guidelines that form the action orientation and the space for teamwork aiming to produce entrepreneurial minded students.
These seven dogmas make up the foundation on which the special entrepreneurial spirit of the KaosPilots is based, and maybe it can be inspiring to others who want to encourage the entrepreneurial mind in other education. These dogmas are:

- Rituals
- Embodied learning
- Training ambiguity
- Training curiosity
- Out posting - Learning by action
- Appreciative inquiry
- Pedagogic Leadership that “walks the talk”

Rituals
The KaosPilots’ rituals have a fundamental role in forming the culture at the school. In the 15 years the school has existed many traditions have been the same year after year. The shift between chaos and rituals make a balance, which brings safety and positive expectation into the organization.

Every year when the new students start, they go to the same place in the northern part of Denmark. They make the same thing every year and the story of this fantastic trip travels from year group to year group. They know what to expect and they can have solid positive expectations.

They also have a ritual for birthdays. Every time someone has a birthday they have a big cake and the whole school sings and a present is given, a real present that is special and selected especially to the individual. This gives positive expectations and provides a break in a long row of days. It also emphasizes the individual as a special person that is wanted and cared for.

Every year they have a gala party, when the students graduate. It is held at the same place with gala gowns and tuxedos.

The school serves champagne to celebrate unexpected great moments and events at the School. Students and staff are thus reminded that “surprises are not deviations from the path. Instead they are the norm, the flora and fauna of the landscape, from which one learns to forge a path through the jungle. The unexpected is the stuff of entrepreneurial experience” (Sarasvathy, 2001).

Therefore, although these rituals might seem pointless, they serve as community markers in the big floating landscape forming the entrepreneurial domain. Even though they are fixed rituals they can stimulate creativity on the inner lines. The staff does not have to be creative in changing everything constantly; they can concentrate on the inner lines. Maybe the ‘health barometer’ shows “good” when you have strength to let good things become a tradition? The KaosPilots is not a chaotic organization and they fell confident in holding the same positive expectations to some fixed experiences year after year. This is a strong cultural issue and it signalizes a place that is worth being a part of.

Embodies learning
The KaosPilots start from the individual’s inner affective learning process (Damasio 1994, 1999). The education is according to the principal, Uffe Elbæk, a personal growth process. The essential ingredients are not academic skills, though the students also have some theoretical training such as Organizational theory, Management and Leadership theory and Sociological theory. Wenger (1998) theory of Communities of Practice describes this special way to gain knowledge as a situated learning process.
“Communities of practice are everywhere. We all belong to a number of them—at work, at school, at home, in our hobbies. Some have a name, some don’t. We are core members of some and we belong to others more peripherally. You may be a member of a band, or you may just come to rehearsals to hang around with the group. You may lead a group of consultants who specialize in telecommunication strategies, or you may just stay in touch to keep informed about developments in the field. Or you may have just joined a community and are still trying to find your place in it. Whatever forms our participation takes, most of us are familiar with the experience of belonging to a community of practice.” (Wenger 1998). Kolb also describes this learning process, when you go from the concrete experience and convert it into an active experiment (Kolb 1984). Experiences during the study are communicated and the inner affective process is evaluated. If someone has a problem during a work experience they describe the emotional impact the situation brought up. “How did it affect me” or “which emotions did I go through”. The students are continuously encouraged to develop a language for the inner blockage that arises during a process in an organization. They train verbalizing of feelings and by this they get insight into their own emotions, like fear, aversion and passion. Knowledge of own physiological state is considered to be very important when you work with other people because it strengthens the ability to feel what the other person might feel. It strengthens the empathic capability (Stern 1985). During an evaluation of an outpost (practical work in the field) the students’ comments are often things like “I felt the energy shift when...” or “I felt so happy when...”. This provides knowledge of the effects that shifting emotions have on them. It also gives them confidence in other situations because they are able to deal with fear or frustrations in a group. And group dynamics are often filled with fear and frustration! Knowing this and having the proper experience in handling it is valuable knowledge when the task is to navigate in chaos.

Another aspect of embodied learning is the practical way of actually doing things not just reading about them. This action oriented learning process as a driver for the inclusion of text based learning is one of the core issues which KaosPilots teach the students.

Train ambiguity
The ability to tolerate and work with ambiguity is induced in several ways. One of the ways is to work with paradoxes in stead of relying totally on linear thinking (as a puzzle). De Wit and Meyer (2004) points out 4 different strategy tensions: Tension as a Puzzle (one optimal solution point), Tension as a Dilemma (two ‘either-or’ solution points), Tension as Trade-off (one optimal solution) and Tension as Paradox (multiple innovative reconciliations). Students are stimulated to see “the best of both worlds” by setting up tasks as a paradox. They will be more concentrated upon the task and on how to find the burning issue witch holds the balance of the paradox. They will learn to focus on the solution as being not only “one right answer”. In the traditional academic system many instructors ask questions, which has character of multiple choice ‘right and wrong’ answers. This trains the need for one optimal solution. Of course, this is some times the right thing to do but in entrepreneurship teaching many solutions are not found in one optimal solution but rather in the ability to find the paradox. By training this, personal abilities to tolerate ambiguity can be stimulated. Instead of asking “what is the right thing to do in this situation?” ask “what is the paradox in this situation?” This is what Sarasvathy (2001) Label “effectual reasoning” in contrast to causal, linear thinking. In her own wording:
"Effectual reasoning, however, does not begin with a specific goal. Instead, it begins with a given set of means and allows goals to emerge contingently over time from the varied imagination and diverse aspirations of the founders and the people they interact with. While causal thinkers are like great generals seeking to conquer fertile lands (Genghis Khan conquering two thirds of the known world), effectual thinkers are like explorers setting out on voyages into uncharted waters (Columbus discovering the new world)."
Sarasvathy (op. cit., page 2)

**Train curiosity**

Curiosity is at the heart of effectual thinking, since the exploration – more than exploitation – is a key driver for entrepreneurial action. The ability to spot askew angles and challenge own safety by jumping into chaotic processes is thus seen as a basic competence. This is also the ability to see and appreciate opportunities and furthermore to create new opportunities.

The most important issue in the training of curiosity is: You get what you are rewarding. If an organization wants a specific way of acting this specific behavior should be rewarded. By rewarding curiosity you make positive somatic markers (Damasio 1994). The somatic marker mechanism is the way in which cognitive representations of the external world interact with cognitive representations of the internal world - where perceptions interact with emotions (Bechara & Damasio, 2005.)

The hypothesis is that bodily feelings normally accompany our representations of the anticipated outcomes of options. In other words, feelings mark response options to real or simulated decisions. Somatic markers serve as an automatic device to speed one to select biologically advantageous options. Those options that are left unmarked are omitted in the decision-making process (Damasio 1995, 1999). Positive somatic markers according to curiosity are e.g. to have positive expectations when you ask a question.

In contrast, in traditional education, instruction is most often set out to evaluate the students’ ability to analyze and construct thesis that are academically well structured. If an institution rewards the safe and linear thesis and answers this is what you get. And that is perfectly all right if that’s what you want. If you want curious and creative persons who asks questions when they need information and has the courage to expose themselves in asking weird questions it should be rewarded. Teachers reward the students by practicing Appreciative Inquiry as a method.

At the KaosPilots asking questions is rewarded. By observing the KaosPilots it has come clear that the reward is comments like “this is very well analyzed”, or similar positive remarks.

Like Wenger community practice – learning is situated.

“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”. (Wenger 1998)

It's not one particular thing that stimulates the ability to be curious. It is the reaction you get time after time when asking questions. If it is clear from body language that question are not welcome and you are made a fool sometimes, Meta learning or the community practice instituted will be “DO NOT ask questions”. And of course the opposite positive reaction will occur when you feel safe in asking questions because the community expects you to ask and reward questions and curiosity.
So according to Wenger’s theory of community practice, learning is stimulated and formed by rewarding a specific set of characteristics. And curiosity is one of the stimulated things at the KaosPilots.

**Out posting – Learning by action**

Out posting is a means to put the students in unknown fields and force on judgmental decision making and action learning. The students are ‘outposted’ to different places in the world twice during the three years of study. They are encouraged to use themselves in a different cultural context. The students’ assignments are to stay in a foreign place and carry through a social entrepreneurial happening at this location. Out Post projects are often carried out in teams.

When the students evaluate the education the action based learning and field work at the outpost sessions are those elements of their study, which has the greatest value and influence.

**Appreciative inquiry**

Communication among KaosPilots is based upon “appreciative inquiry” (Cooperrider et Al 1995). In all lessons they are trained in the appreciative communication being “Yes AND” and they are taught that it is not appropriate to say “No BUT”.

“Appreciative Inquiry involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to heighten positive potential. It mobilizes inquiry through crafting an “unconditional positive question” often involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. In Appreciative Inquiry, intervention gives way to imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism and spiraling diagnosis, which is discovery, dream, and design. Appreciative Inquiry assumes that every living system has untapped, rich, and inspiring amounts of the positive. Link this “positive change core” directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized”. (Cooperrider & Whitney 1999)

Appreciative Inquiry “AI” is a method that emphasizes inquiry into strengths rather than focusing exclusively on weaknesses, and students are trained in this specific way of communication. They are evaluated in the AI way and comments are given if someone forgets the AI way of talking. If someone circles around in negative discourses, it is pointed out, and the person will have to reformulate.

“The traditional approach to change is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. The primary focus is on what is wrong or broken; since we look for problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them. ...Appreciative Inquiry suggests that we look for what works in an organization. The tangible result of the inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been. Because the statements are grounded in experience and history, people know how to repeat their success.” (Hammond, 1998)

While staying for observation over two months the staff mail list was available and we received 456 mails in two months. Many Mails were passed on with the words “I agree” or “please give me comments on this opinion”. This is one of the strong cultural traits at the KaosPilots. They walk the talk.
**Pedagogic Leadership “walk the talk”**

As described in all the other dogmas there is no distinction between what is expected from the students and what is expected from the staff. Social entrepreneurial action is expected to be a part of the staff behavior. The staff and the external staff have to be strong role models. They shall communicate in a respectful “AI” way and they shall have an entrepreneurial background, i.e. they must be creative in their pedagogical teaching methods and most of all they must be passionate about the KaosPilots. The staff we have studied serves as strong role models both when it comes to teaching and leadership.

The seven dogmas are the ingredients in the making of a social entrepreneur – a Kaospilot. In the next chapter we will try to outline some of the reasons why this program is so efficient.

**The entrepreneurial spirit among students - self-efficacy**

Entrepreneurial spirit in students arises from the mix of the seven dogmas. Chell et al (1991) ask the question as to whether entrepreneurship education is for entrepreneurs or simply about them. Entrepreneurship education at the KaosPilots is FOR entrepreneurs not ABOUT them.

The spirit and the urges for making things happen is a constant growth in self-efficacy (Bandura 1986). Self-efficacy is “...beliefs in one’s capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situation demands.” (Wood & Bandura, 1989)

Several entrepreneurship theorists have proposed that self-efficacy may play an instrumental role in the new venture creation process (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994; Scherer, Adams, Carly, & Wiebe, 1989). The venture creation by students from the KaosPilots according to evaluations (www.kaospilot.dk) is 50%. According to this number the entrepreneurial spirit is very much alive at Kaospilot.

Research has demonstrated that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a potential key variable in determining whether an individual, who is already psychologically predisposed for entrepreneurship, will actually put forth the necessary effort (both cognitive and behavioral) to turn intentions into reality (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994)

Perceived self-efficacy concerns people’s beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control of their own functioning and of events, which affect their lives. Beliefs in personal efficacy affect life choices, level of motivation; quality of functioning; resilience to adversity. Efficacy self-beliefs play an important role in self-regulation of motivation. Bandura (1986). Bandura states that Self-efficacy is stimulated by 4 things:

- Mastery experiences (Succeeding step by step to break the limits of rule based action and rely on judgemental decisions)
- Modeling (seeing people similar to oneself manage task demands successfully)
- Social persuasions (being in environment that has a defined set of values. They set goals for themselves and plan courses of action designed to realize valued futures.)
- Judgments of own physiological states (inferences from somatic and emotional states indicative of personal strengths and vulnerabilities. People motivate themselves and guide their actions anticipatorily from the exercise of
forethought. They form beliefs of what they can do. They anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions).

A mastery experience comes step by step by making tasks harder. By evaluating the project and pointing out (by the instructors) what was good about the task, the learning progress is given a manifest that points out the individual’s growth. At the end of the education they have many mastery experiences.

Modeling is provided in the staff and in invited people during the education. The instructors or “team leaders” are role models that walk the talk, and they are recruited from the values on which the KaosPilots are based. The KaosPilots have a few staff members, the rest are invited specialists that work as rolemodels, such as for example John Kao from San Francisco. The students also meet directors of companies or organizations, who also provide a basis for modeling.

Social persuasion is everywhere at the school. The students measure their success from being involved in social entrepreneurial projects. They are always encouraged to start a new project or venture.

Judgment of own physiological state is stimulated from the constant talk of emotions and how group process influences. They train their ability to communicate emotions and physiological states, which also gives them confidence in stressed situations, where it is often important to be aware of inner physiological states.

Discussion
What can establish academic institutions learn?
Many forces have driven the KaosPilots to be enrolled in the traditional academic system. In the past they have been a private run and funded school. However in order to gain credibility as well as financial means for consolidation and expansion, the school has for some years obtained some national state funding. For political reasons a continuation of this state funding is now given on conditions that the school is supervised or guarded by the Aarhus School of Business. One of the challenges implied will be to maintain the approach from which teachers and team coaches are recruited. Today recruitment is based on the values set by the KaosPilots and not from the academic standards practiced at the business schools.

Yet another ‘futurible’ thing confronting the KaosPilots is the growing demands for credibility (from government) in terms of academic and theoretical standards embedded in the mainstream agenda of higher educations in Denmark. Some critical voices argue that “we know what you are trained to become, but what are you trained in?” The KaosPilots are trained to take action force, to lead complex processes and to be socially entrepreneurial. This embodied learning style, which is more a way of mastering entrepreneurship as if it is an art – like when you learn to play the violin – you must practice to learn. This unique “entrepreneurship as a form of art” is very hard to incorporate in the traditional academic system and the specific elements involved in the process have to be clear and explicit otherwise they will drown.

KaosPilots compared to established educations
Traditional academic educations (in Denmark as well as in other countries) most often run entrepreneurship educations ABOUT entrepreneurs (Chell et. Al 1991; Johannisson,
The KaosPilots, as described, make entrepreneurship education FOR entrepreneurs. The emphasis on developing self-efficacy is the center of the KaosPilots organizing, in the traditional system it is the academic analytic ability that is rewarded. And as it most often comes: You get what you reward! If you reward the theoretical, analytical academic thesis you will get puzzle solving analytic academics. Now, the question is, if it is possible in competition with other agendas to gain “space on the shelves” of established higher educations and further more if it is possible to alter the tracks of learning at these institutions.

As Chia (1996) has noted, business schools cannot make unique contributions to entrepreneurship in the business community simply by vocationalising management and business programmes. As he states:

“Rather it is through adopting a deliberate educational strategy which privileges the ‘weakening’ of thought processes so as to encourage and stimulate the entrepreneurial imagination”.

(Chia, op cit. page 426)

In this light, it seems not to be accidental that educational initiatives like the KaosPilots evolve outside the premises of established institutions. One might even ask; if politicians want to promote the agenda leading to higher levels of entrepreneurial competence and initiative, whether they should consider to promote the set up of independent, entrepreneurial institutions giving birth to a new generation of entrepreneurship educations having entrepreneurship action in the heard of their agenda.

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