How Does the Diffusion of Kampus Merdeka Innovation Work at the University?
A Perspective from Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

This study explains how the policy innovation adoption process runs in higher education. To provide this description, this article formulates the question of how Kampus Merdeka policy initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture in early 2020 was adopted and implemented at the higher education level. With a new policy context, it is important to look at the responses and complexities that arise from higher education when these changes are adopted. To analyze this phenomenon, researchers used a case study method at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional (UPN) Veteran Yogyakarta. The innovation diffusion theory framework is presented to get a detailed picture of the policy adoption process. Based on this research, the diffusion process of Kampus Merdeka innovation at UPN Veteran Yogyakarta has shown some complexity, especially biases in the preparation of Kampus Merdeka schemes such as cross-study program learning, off-campus learning, partnership, and internship equivalent. In addition, the ecosystems such as information system, human and financial resources have yet to be touched upon in the diffusion of Kampus Merdeka in state universities in which, still have the status of work units.

Keywords: *Kampus Merdeka, Innovation Diffusion, Policy Adoption.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies of higher education in Indonesia after the fall of Soeharto regime have discussed a lot of the dynamics of the ups and downs of governance aspects. The fall of the restrictive regime opens up new hopes for universities to reconstruct proper governance to strengthen their competitiveness. The pressure of regime for decades have contributed greatly to the production of knowledge and human resources that are oriented towards the behalf of power [1].

Universities have been an accomplice to the authorities in the form of a bureaucratic work unit with a work program depending on the regime's existence. The legacy of post-reform higher education development that has not been ideal has led to various lawsuits such as privatization [2] [3], the crisis of identity—dependence on universities in developed countries— [4], intellectual banality [5], weak competitiveness [6], the complexity and interlocking intellectual in terms of power [7].

However, this analysis has not yet seen the dynamics of the 4.0 industrial revolution which is currently a concern for higher education globally. These developments have encouraged universities to produce learners who have literacy, skills or competencies with a general emphasis on cross-cultural competence, creativity and critical power [8]. This demand then urged the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) to develop the concept of Merdeka Belajar (independent learning) from basic education to higher education. This is in line with the essence of the vision of Indonesian education in 2035, which is to build superior human resources, have global competence, and behave in accordance with Pancasila values, namely noble, independent, critical, cooperative, and creative [9].

At the higher education level, the concept of Merdeka Belajar is specifically spelled out in Kampus

Merdeka policy. This policy seeks to minimize the broken link that occurs between the quality of higher education graduates and the needs of the global world [10]. The concept of Merdeka Belajar encourages a learning system based on students to become real learners who are skilled, flexible, and resilient (agile learner) [11].

Nevertheless, indications of the complexity in the adoption process is felt by the universities with the status of the work unit (satker) which uses a bureaucratic style. The work units of campus have high limitations, especially in the development of human resources, assets, finance, research, community service, and work program management because the system is fully centralized by the Ministry. This condition makes management operations very rigid, complex, and slow in responding to the dynamics that sometimes occur [12]. Whereas, the implementation of Kampus Merdeka requires academic support and governance of higher education that is comprehensive, professional, agile, innovative, democratic, autonomous, and transformative.

Based on this background, this research tries to answer questions about the main issues that arise as challenges and the form of Kampus Merdeka policy adoption. The approach used in this research is innovation diffusion. The innovation diffusion in several approaches is understood to have a paradigm of expanding solutions to real problems in the world [13]. The use of innovation diffusion cannot be separated from the context of Kampus Merdeka, which is one form of innovations in response to the problems of higher education in Indonesia.

Some studies in higher education that use an innovation diffusion framework are Mintrom and Vergari [14] in the article "Policy Networks and Innovation Diffusion: The Case of State Education Reforms". This study looks at the urgency of the Policy Network in the diffusion of education policy in the USA. As a result, the context of policy networks, especially the external ones, can drive the agenda-setting process. Meanwhile, the internal scope is not only agenda setting but acceptance of introduced policy innovations. Another study was conducted by Rodrigo Lozano [15] in the article "Diffusion of sustainable development in universities' curricula: an empirical example from Cardiff University". He conducted research on the adoption process and the diffusion of sustainable development in the curriculum at Cardiff University. The findings of this study indicate that although some study programs may be 'innovators' in certain dimensions, however, when the indicators of sustainable development are used, it does not make the study programs become innovators.

Meanwhile, Alonso-Almeida et al. [16] examined the process of innovation diffusion in sustainable

development, especially aspects of sustainability reporting in universities. From this research, it is concluded that the diffusion of university sustainability reporting is at an early stage and no massive diffusion has occurred even though the awareness of youth and university stakeholders is increasing. Therefore, a further persuasion strategy is still needed to explain the benefits and urgency aspects of sustainability reporting for community empowerment.

However, the study of innovation diffusion in education is still dominated by research results in developed countries. Thus, it does not describe the management complexity of higher education in developing countries which globally ranks far behind. By choosing the context of higher education in a developing country, namely Indonesia, it is hoped that this research can take a deeper picture of the complexity of the innovation diffusion in the centralized model introduced by the central government.

One of the campuses currently concerned about the adoption process of Kampus Merdeka is Universitas Pembangunan Nasional (UPN) Veteran Yogyakarta that have identity as the state defense university [17]. Therefore, this momentum becomes a social laboratory used by researchers to describe it in this paper. The use of innovation diffusion approaches in some approaches is understood to have a paradigm of expanding solutions to practical problems [13]. The innovation diffusion framework aims to provide a comprehensive description of how this policy is interpreted, translated, and adopted as a policy at UPN Veteran Yogyakarta.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The innovation diffusion has been developed as a theory in communication science. The academician who is considered a pioneer in this field is Everett M. Rogers [18] [19]. Based on the definition developed by Rogers, diffusion has at least four basic elements, namely: innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems. First, innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as novelty by individuals or other units in adoption. The novelty that is contained is closely related to the expression of persuasion or the decision to adopt. This is based on an assessment of innovation attributes, namely relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. In some practices, there are re-invention activities, that is the extent to which innovations are changed or modified by users in the adoption and implementation process.

Second, communication channel is a way of sending messages from one individual to another about innovation, thus this method is expected to influence someone to adopt or reject it. There are at least two aspects in communication process, that is heterophily, the extent to which interactions that occur in

communication have different attributes such as belief, education, social status or the like, hence, there is a difference in the communication effectiveness. Meanwhile, homophily, the extent to which individuals interact with other people who have the same background, making the communication process easier.

Third, time is as a marker for the diffusion process to be carried out or stopped. The time dimension in diffusion studies is the innovation-decision process, innovativeness, and adoption in a system. The innovation-decision process is a choice made by someone after receiving knowledge about innovation, whether to adopt or reject it. There are at least four stages, namely: 1) knowledge, 2) persuasion, 3) decision, 4) implementation, and 5) confirmation. Innovativeness is when individuals or units adopt innovation and then compare it with other members of the system. In this stage, there are categories of people who adopt, they are 1) innovators, 2) early adopters, 3) early majority, 4) late majority, and 5) laggards. This categorization is based on the rate of adoption, which is the relative speed that members have in adopting innovations. If these conditions are entered in the cumulative frequency and at a certain time, it forms a distribution in an S-shaped curve. Adoption in a system is the number of system members who adopt the innovation within a certain time period.

Fourth, social system is a group of units that interact with each other to be involved in problem-solving to achieve a common goal. Members of the social system can be individuals, informal groups, organizations, and/or subsystems. In practice, the social structure system, norms, opinion of leaders and agents of change, types of innovation decisions, and the consequences of innovation affect the adoption process. Furthermore, there are three types of innovation decisions, they are 1) optional innovation-decision; 2) collective innovation-decisions, 3) authority innovation-decisions, and 4) sequential combination. The process of the adoption decision has various consequences for individuals and organizations. The consequence is that there are three classifications, namely: 1) desirable versus undesirable, 2) direct versus indirect, and 3) anticipated versus unanticipated. This change is usually introduced as a change agent appointed by the organization or member in the social system by explaining various consequences that are visible, direct, and prepared anticipation.

3. METHOD

This research is based on an empirical study at UPN Veteran Yogyakarta using a case study approach. The reason for choosing UPN Veteran Yogyakarta cannot be separated from its status as a work unit university (satker), thus, its management is more bureaucratic than a public university with the status of a

Public Service Agency and a Legal Entity. With the status of work unit, it is hoped that it can illustrate how complex the problems are in terms of administration and academic planning. Another consideration is because the university leaders commit that the adoption of Kampus Merdeka will be able to be implemented in the 2020/2021 academic year.

Data were collected in August-September 2020. There were two types of data used, primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from direct interviews with two Independent Campus Development Teams and seven study program administrators in four faculties at UPN Veteran Yogyakarta. Secondary data were derived from presentation data held by Kampus Merdeka Development Team and the Formulation Results of Kampus Merdeka at the study program level, includes some information about activity targets, developed models, information systems, educational cooperation, human resources and financial systems.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. *Kampus Merdeka: Centralized Diffusion System*

This section will discuss the context of the Kampus Merdeka Policy from the perspective of policy diffusion. This is used to provide clarity about the existing context and diffusion process assigned by the Ministry of Education and Culture to higher education. The character of the diffusion mechanism in this process can illustrate how policy innovation in this regime is formed, developed, disseminated, persuaded, and implemented. The form of regulatory provisions, programs, branding, reward, and punishment is a representation of this ongoing process. This set of programs can be the big portrait of how educational problems are captured by the regime, how innovations are offered, and how it is transmitted as a transformation step towards higher education.

Before discussing this matter, it is essential to answer why Kampus Merdeka is important to discuss in the current context. Kampus Merdeka is part of the Jokowi government's promise that the second term will be directed at developing human resources. The desired direction is to support relevant superior human resources in facing the challenges of the times over technological developments and their implications for the challenges of the labor market. The key to this effort is especially in higher education institutions, in which they educate human resources of the nation before entering the real world/work. Higher education is considered to have the fastest impact on changes in superior human resources with the potential of the applied learning system.

However, requirements are needed to prompt the goal, such as higher education institutions should move more quickly, adaptively, and agilely to be contextual in formulating curriculum, developing knowledge and skills as well as technology. This ecosystem is essential to encourage the birth of technological and social innovations from the academic community. Thus, universities are asked to change their business process in providing education which gives students the right to study with various models such as cross-study program learning, off-campus learning, and other learning activities outside of campus including internships in the industrial sector, community service, individual projects, etc. It is expected that students will have the more relevant capacity and skills to the needs of society and the job market [20]. This policy provides leeway for universities to adopt and interpret it to the study program level.

Even though this rule has been established since January 2020, universities have yet to find the right formula. They still refer to the guidance provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The difficulties in the adoption process cannot be separated from the policy innovation mechanism of Kampus Merdeka which uses a vertical and centralized approach. This condition refers to the policy that is purely formulated and introduced by the central government to be adopted and applied to universities in Indonesia. The approach is executed in one direction by waiting for the initiative ordered by the Ministry of Education and Culture itself. The information source is in the hands of the ministry which is subsequently revealed to be legal regulations in the Permendikbud as well as a summary guide by the Minister, Directorate General of Higher Education, and other officials. The information was conveyed in the form of socialization and roadshows conducted by stakeholders at various educational forums. However, those are just basic introduction, not the technical level grounded on the study programs or students, which means they should be more technical and complex.

In this approach, several characters will influence the adoption process of the higher education institution itself. According to Rogers, some of these characteristics are very much embedded in the context of the diffusion process in a centralized manner. First, the degree of centralization of decision-making and power, that is, all decision-making control of the policy of Kampus Merdeka is determined by the government or in this case the Ministry of Education and Culture. Second, the direction of diffusion is top-down, that is, it is directed from the Ministry of Education and Culture's experts/expert team supervised by the Directorate General of Higher Education to the higher education academic community. Third, the source of diffusion comes from R&D activities carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture's expert

team. Fourth, the one who decides the diffusion innovation of Kampus Merdeka is the board of the Ministry of Education and Culture, especially the Directorate General and Minister as well as the appointed technical team. Fifth, the importance of clients in directing the diffusion process depends on the encouragement of technology by emphasizing the needs created from the innovation itself. Sixth, the number of re-inventions of diffusion will have a low adoption rate and there will be re-invention of innovations that spread among policy adopters.

Seeing that, the success of the policy adoption process of Kampus Merdeka depends a lot on the Ministry of Education and Culture itself. Since there is no comprehensive best practice or pilot project for the success of the innovation, sources of information related to the benefit arguments, process and implementation stage, standardization of provisions, studies of implications, and resolutions offered become important for adopters. For adopters, this is something new to do with the existing conditions at different university levels. Some higher education institutions may already have several models mentioned by Kampus Merdeka, yet other models are still not understood or implemented. In this case, policy networks and policy entrepreneurs, which usually advocate important issues and lead the ideas to be implemented, are yet to be seen or established. As stated by Rogers, if the implementation and coordination are not controlled comprehensively, the diffusion process will have a low adoption level due to difficulties in the adjustment process and will be less compatible with the context of innovation needed by universities.

4.2. *Diffusion Complexity of Kampus Merdeka*

Kampus Merdeka Policy has at least four aspects of change, namely: 1) the convenience of opening new study programs, 2) the changes in the higher education accreditation system, 3) the changing universities to become legal entities, and 4) the rights to study three semesters outside the study program. Of the four aspects, the thing that is considered the most urgent is the preparation for the adoption of three-semester learning activities outside the study program. The reason is, this includes facilitating learning that involves students and supporting stakeholders of this program.

Based on the program, the scheme that must be given to students is 1-semester learning activities or equivalent of 20 credits outside the study program at the same university, and a maximum of 2 semesters or equivalent of 40 credits learning in the same study program at different universities, learning in different study programs at different universities; and/or learning outside the university. The options for facilitated activities include 8 activities, namely

internships/industrial practices, projects in villages, student exchanges, research, entrepreneurship, independent studies/projects, humanitarian projects, internships at schools.

Therefore, several important aspects that should be adjusted such as curriculum, learning schemes, sharpening concentration, interdisciplinary lectures, decreasing the "class" of taught subjects, subject equivalence, determining learning activities outside campus, academic supervisors, learning evaluation, and cooperation partners. Those are several important issues that arise at the study program level.

Faculties and universities need to be involved in preparing ecosystem aspects and supporting infrastructure such as cooperation, partnership models, information systems, financial systems, human resources systems and academic guides. Even though the policy structure is open to reflect the higher education on learning, social environment, ecosystem, and infrastructure, this formulation process is not easy because of technical problems, strategic aspects, and social dimensions in terms of modification.

In preparing for this idea, UPN Veteran Yogyakarta appointed Kampus Merdeka Formulating Team in June 2020. This formulating team was led by the Deputy Dean of UPN Veteran Yogyakarta. This team received the mandate to prepare an Independent Campus scenario to be adopted by study programs. From the resulting formulation, there is a bias from the clause set by the Ministry of Education and Culture, in which, in filling in 3 semesters outside the study program, it can be done in semesters 1 and 2 by choosing 8 credits of national compulsory courses and 6 credits of university courses.

The selection of these courses was used as cross-program courses with a total of 14 credits. Thus, the remaining credits can be taken from compulsory study program courses. While the other 40 credits can be taken by participating in learning at other universities as well as activities such as internships, research, entrepreneurship, etc. This scenario is formulated in order to reduce the study program course if students choose Kampus Merdeka scheme. This scenario was also based on a scheme adopted by one of the state campuses in Malang which is also preparing the formulation for Kampus Merdeka. Meanwhile, ideally, the cross-study program within the university is carried out for compulsory courses and study program options that can be carried out in semesters 3 and 4.

The formulation team of UPN Veteran Yogyakarta is optimistic that this policy can begin to be applied to new students of the 2020/2021 academic year, even though the academic information system and academic guidance at the university level have not supported the implementation of Kampus Merdeka. In addition, the mechanism for appointing academic lecturers, lecturer workloads, learning evaluation systems, cooperation partner systems, budget transfers, and student support service systems has not been updated by the University Leaders.

Study programs that tried to compile an Independent Campus program also experienced the same complexity. Because the University Team's interpretation is biased, the approach used tried to follow the rules set by the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, to accommodate compulsory concentration and department courses, the off-campus learning activity scheme is only able to provide 1 semester which is placed in semester 6. Not to mention about the asymmetrical partnerships in several new study programs, therefore, to encourage off-campus learning activities is more difficult rather than a well-developed study program.

Moreover, it is feared that exchange activities will only accumulate in the favorite study programs of big universities, thus the study program with a low rank sends more students rather than being the target of student exchange. Although there is an assessment scenario with the course equivalence method (structured form) and/or acquired skills (free form) in the internship program, this assessment method is deemed unable to meet learning outcomes. As a consequence, there is a proposed scenario that students will be given additional courses while doing internships or participating in outside learning activities. Furthermore, the choice of learning activities outside the classroom offered by the study program will not entirely be given to students with consideration of relevance and equivalence with learning outcomes in the curriculum.

According to Rogers, this bias phenomenon is due to the implications of innovation that must be spread and adopted by all universities rapidly. Additionally, this bias occurs because in these innovations, it is not allowed to make re-invention or rejection. The university has not received important information and understanding regarding the diffusion of these innovations for adoption. This complexity should be an important signal to be captured by policymakers as a reflection process towards Kampus Merdeka program. Ignorance, termination and rejection, neglect of re-invention, anti-diffusion programs to prevent the bad effects of the Free Campus policy are important as mechanisms for improvement. Reading into the important aspects of this program to ensure that diffusion in higher education institutions is a must when this program becomes an obligation as a part of an external quality assurance system.

4.3. Communication in the Diffusion of Independent Campus

This part explains the communication system that has been built during the diffusion process. This is essential to explain because the complexities that arise in the adoption of Kampus Merdeka cannot be separated from the choice of communication methods formed between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the university. This review will start from the centralized communication character used by the Ministry of Education and Culture in the diffusion process, then to the formulation process at the university level, especially at UPN Veteran Yogyakarta.

In introducing Kampus Merdeka program, the Ministry of Education and Culture has at least issued various regulations including National Higher Education Standards (SN Dikti) through Permendikbud No. 03 of 2020; Establishment, Change, Disbandment of State University, and Establishment, Change, Revocation of Private University No. Permit. 07 of 2020; Accreditation of Study Program and University through Permendikbud No. 5 of 2020, Guide Book of the Independent Learning-Independent Campus, as well as Guide to Preparing Kampus Merdeka Curriculum. If we trace these various provisions, they were generated in the last 10 months. Delivering the contents of this provision is carried out through statutory channels, launching in front of the public and socialization events in the form of online seminars to campuses regarding the substance of Kampus Merdeka program.

The fundamental problem of Kampus Merdeka diffusion from a communication perspective is that policy information is not complete or fragmentary. The design of Kampus Merdeka looks like a patchwork of problems that arise when universities try to implement these innovations. This policy is not prepared comprehensively by looking at the projected needs when it is adopted by universities. If we trace the relative advantage that will be received by the adopter, it still does not show how far the best practices are, the prerequisites needed, and the benefits. The feedback process is minimal because it is limited to socialization/seminar activities. Therefore, this process is still less participatory and constructive, especially for universities with high complexity such as a unit work (satker). As yet, higher education is considered an independent subject that can automatically run on its own after being given directions.

In this context, the communication process that is built needs to highlight aspects of the emancipation and empowerment of higher education institutions. It is not enough to just do it in the same direction as the homophilic context where the communication convenience is formed because of the same social background and profile as the administrator of higher education. In this diffusion system, there needs to be an understanding that the relationships and interactions formed represent active communication involved in problem-solving in order to become a common goal in advancing higher education.

The same goes for the process of compiling Kampus Merdeka curriculum scheme at the study program level. It is still common to find that this process is the result of the lecturer technocracy because it is more expert and scientifically legitimate. Students are still not placed as stakeholders in determining the scheme of learning activities outside the classroom. Students are still seen as objects of socialization of the previously formulated Independent Campus program. Meanwhile, the academic program being drafted is labeled "independent learning". In other words, discursive and democratic communication is still hard to be discovered since the beginning of this policy.

4.4. Development Agenda

This part will explain what important agenda can be done by the Ministry of Education and Culture together with Tim Perumus Kampus Merdeka Universitas. It aims to describe emerging issues and further innovations that can be pursued and raised. The author argues that the innovation of Kampus Merdeka needs to be followed by other innovations as the first step in making changes in higher education in Indonesia. The quality gap between universities is the main consideration of why this agenda needs to be followed up by policymakers in the future.

In case thar Kampus Merdeka has the goal of changing students into true learners, it should also be applied to the decision-makers of this innovative program. Innovation does not only stop when it is executed by the higher education institutions but also should be applied to the Ministry of Education and Culture itself. The success of the adoption process did not stop when this policy was launched, but it should be until the implementation and evaluation process for the improvement of the Merdeka Kampus Policy are administered. The habituation in diffusion is an alarm that the presence of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Team of Kampus Merdeka in leading the innovation adoption process is prominent. The context of each university, especially with its legal status such as PTN BH (Legal Entity State Universities), BLU (Public Service Agency), and especially the Satker (work unit), is important to be operationalized.

The response of each university status needs to be examined, whether Kampus Merdeka is accepted or rejected, how the adoption process is, what aspects the main issues are, how the infrastructure needs to be prepared, and how the ecosystem should be built to

create teamwork. Those cannot be separated from the concern that there is a too big gap among universities. Therefore, it requires a collective solution to provide answers to higher education problems from the list of problems that have arisen.

This gap can be seen, for example, from the academic information system owned by the campuses with the status of Satker (work unit) and PTN BH. Whereas, in the future, this system will be the footing of students' mobility when taking student exchange programs. Another thing, for example, is the student service system. Several universities in the PTN BH campuses already have One-Stop Service, Digital library, e-learning system, on the other hand, in other PT (university), the luxury is not yet fully affordable. Likewise, the financial system of both university statuses.

The PTN BH will flexibly organize the flow of students' learning activities on and off-campus. In contrast, Satker Universities must project and record all financial outflow activities which seem to be very convoluted and slow in changing them. Moreover, there is a schematic gap in terms of lecturer systems, services, and other systems as well as human resources, especially lecturers who have yet to be directed to possess relevant skills in leading students when participating in off-campus learning activities.

A bit of this complexity can be used as an evaluation material for the Ministry of Education and Culture's Team of Kampus Merdeka by collaborating with the University Team. This is done to form a strong policy network to easily encourage "underdeveloped" campuses to catch up on advanced campus management and facilities.

The communication channels that are built need to be a concern, thus they can help each other. Agendas such as monitoring, evaluation, research, development, and assistance can ensure the implementation of the innovation of Kampus Merdeka. This context can be deepened by some understanding of where the adoption of innovation is accepted or rejected, how the initial decision of this innovation was adopted or rejected by each university, what policies affect the adoption rate, what policies have implications for the adoption of these innovations, how innovation which is owned by a university that rejects and innovations that have been replaced before, how current higher education innovations are on a global scale, what kind of research and program development agenda can ensure the adoption of each university to run well. The innovation will not work unless the higher education support systems provide further innovation on the adoption of Kampus Merdeka.

5. CONCLUSION

The process of innovation diffusion of Kampus Merdeka at UPN Veteran cannot be separated from the centralized model developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Approaches that call for rapid diffusion and less than optimal communication processes contribute to the quality of adoption itself. This can be seen from some biases in the selection of Kampus Merdeka schemes, such as replacing the cross-study program with national and university compulsory courses, planing the "independent" schemes for 1 semester of off-campus learning activities, limiting the options of off-campus learning activities, adding more courses unless the equivalent of off-campus learning activities meets the learning outcomes.

In addition, this research observes the complexity of problems, for example, the lack of academic guideline revisions, the delay of academic information systems, and the lame, limited partnership scheme. Therefore, it requires a change not only at the university level but also the Ministry of Education and Culture to lead the diffusion system of Kampus Merdeka. Seeing the complexity of university, it requires further innovations that can work comprehensively to optimize the successful adoption of Kampus Merdeka.

This research has only looked at the innovation adoption at the policy level. Further research studies examining the process of innovation development from the user side, that are students, lecturers, and education staff at universities, should be done to strengthen the success of Kampus Merdeka.

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