



## Design for Impact: Wake Wadho, A Cultural Branding through Collaborative Design Model in Ngada Regency, East Nusa Tenggara

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**Abstract.** Wake Wadho is a trans-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaborative model that combines design thinking and rapid ethnography implemented in three traditional villages in Ngada, Middle Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. This collaborative model was born from a pilot program (IKKON) run by the Indonesia Creative Economy Agency (BEKRAF RI). This collaboration involved people from various backgrounds, such as design, art, and anthropology. The three traditional villages in Ngada Regency required more comprehensive action involving facilitation and empowering activities to develop a sustainable and creative ecosystem. The program activities were reviewed based on social, cultural, economic, and geopolitics aspects. This paper illustrates the usage of design as a tool to create sustainable livelihoods. It describes a collaborative design model that combines anthropological and design approaches to create an 'Experience Journey' (EJ) consisting of two categories: a service design recommended as a tourism scheme and a sustainable lifestyle product as a tangible product design. This output aimed to emphasize the part of empathy within the design process by considering the sociocultural aspect of the community's everyday life. Furthermore, the products have authentic and inspiring stories behind them. The initial output was wrapped up in Wake Wadho as a cultural brand.

**Keywords:** *collaborative design model; experience journey; interdisciplinary collaboration; responsible lifestyle product.*

### 1 Introduction

Local communities and artisans who base their activities on local values from their culture can inspire designers and experienced creative economy actors by working together to produce good and economically viable products [1]. In 2016, the Indonesian Creative Economy Agency (BEKRAF) launched the

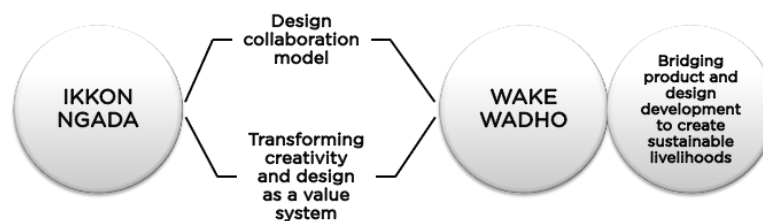
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Innovation and Creativity through Collaboration across the Archipelago (IKKON) program. The IKKON program encourages sustainable development in selected rural or urban areas by collaborating with local communities (artisans) and experienced designers. The collaboration in the IKKON program also aimed to be a medium for designers and other creative agents to explore resources and execute product development in remote areas across the archipelago based on their potential. The IKKON program tried to reinforce multiculturalism in Indonesia, which is extremely rich in natural resources and local values, by encouraging interdisciplinary teamwork. The IKKON teams comprised professionals with practical expertise in several fields: anthropologists, designers (fashion, product, interior, graphic), photographers, and filmmakers. The teams were mentored by experts in the creative industry and activism. In the program's pilot project, five regencies in Indonesia were selected by the steering committee. The five areas were Sawahlunto (West Sumatera), Pesawaran (Eastern Lampung), Brebes (Central Java), Rembang (Central Java), and Ngada (Middle Flores, East Nusa Tenggara). Each of those areas were handled by different team over a period of four months. They each selected specific cases based on the characteristics of each site.

The IKKON Ngada team collaborated with the Ngada community (local artisans, local leaders, local government, and related creative people). Ngada is a regency in the middle of Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Since 2007, Ngada has been separated from its sister regency, Nagekeo. The geographical area of Ngada is stretching from Riung on the northern to Aimere on the southern. This regency in middle Flores Island, with Bajawa as its capital, has an altitude of  $\pm 1000$  masl and a tropical climate with rain and fog. The Ngada people live in traditional villages full of local wisdom, existing cultural attractions, and a potential creative economy sector.



Source: The IKKON Ngada Team

**Figure 1** Initial idea of IKKON Ngada Program.

Furthermore, the IKKON Ngada team was selected according to a collaborative team model and with a multi-village approach to develop the creative economy sector. This pilot project in Eastern Indonesia focused on initiating beneficial

collaboration between experienced designers and local artisans in creating product development guidelines. The collaboration bridged product development and design to create sustainable livelihoods for Ngada communities.

The IKKON Ngada team was challenged to achieve the targeted goals under cultural, geographical, and multisectoral constraints. Hence, the team members also had to collaborate with people from other backgrounds or with different expertise within the team to map out an appropriate strategy considering the time limits and the targeted outputs, such as business, product, human, community, sustainability, and brand linkages. The team implemented a Quick Win-Integrated Strategy to achieve the future program's sustainability. The Quick Win-Integrated Strategy involved short, medium, and long-term linkages between the team, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the local government, and the communities. Furthermore, this strategy succeeded in expanding the number of consumers, business partners, sponsorships, and networks of other creative industries at the national and international levels.

## **2 Combining Design Thinking and Rapid Ethnography into Design**

“Connecting anthropology and design can be a valuable strategy” [2].

Before we lived in with the community to conduct the fieldwork, we did a desk review and brainstormed ideas to learn more about the characteristics of the Ngada people, culture, and environment. In the field, our anthropologist created a new strategy to get valuable information about the Ngada and how they live with targeted findings using rapid ethnography. The team was doing rapid ethnography with three key ideas. Firstly, narrowing down the focus in the field before entering the area. Secondly, using multiple interactive observation techniques. Thirdly, using the collaborative data analysis method. These key ideas are in line with Rodgers & Mike [3], who explain that rapid ethnography is an efficient and effective way to achieve a relatively deep understanding of peoples' habits, rituals, and meanings around relevant activities and artifacts.

Rodgers & Anusas in 2008 describe the rapid ethnographic process based on three main ideas [3]. Firstly, narrowing down the focus of the field before starting the research. The field's focus can be highlighting important activities and determining key informants. Secondly, using interactive observation techniques to increase the likelihood of finding relevant design user behavior. Thirdly, utilizing collaborative and computerized data analysis methods. Using

immersion (live-in and participant observation), the team can understand how people live, how people carry out daily activities, the meaning of rituals and traditions, and how they respond and adapt to each condition. Thus, the team could create valuable interaction, engagement, and trust with the local community [2].

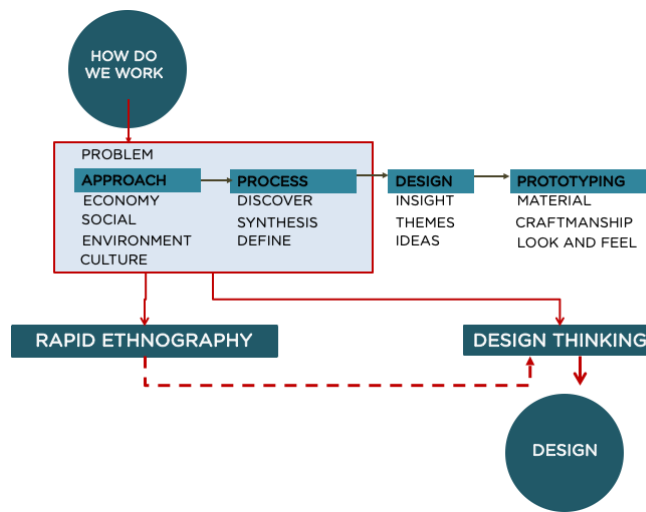
In Ngada, the team played the role of anthropologist in doing participant observation, deep listening, making casual conversation, in-depth interviews, and group discussions. These methods gain what is called an 'emic' perspective or the 'community's' point(s) of view without imposing a conceptual framework [3,4]. The team recorded detailed field notes with deep data from the local people's perspectives and culture. We explored tangible culture in the form of architecture, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art, and artifacts, as well as intangible culture in the form of folklore, traditions, language, knowledge, and rituals. Also, the natural heritage was explored, including culturally significant landscapes and biodiversity [1,2,4].

From the data collected in Ngada, the team found that some of the traditional habits or traditions have already changed into modern and new habits and are no longer conducted as part of the cultural tradition by the community. Unlike other indigenous regions, Ngada (Bajawa culture) has no writing culture; it has exclusively relied on oral culture for generations. As a result, most young people no longer connect to the ancient knowledge and traditions of Ngada culture, so these are threatened to disappear slowly. The team interpreted that Ngada has strong cultural characteristics but inadequate opportunities to transfer them to the creative industry.

Seeing this problem, the design team realized that collecting data from only one perspective was inappropriate. The team decided to try a new method based on an experimental combination of rapid ethnography and design thinking. The team reconstructed oral culture to record the Ngada people's values, reviving the memories of the culture, renewing design and product development, and empowering the ecosystem from upstream to downstream [1,2]. In this case, the design process began from the first time the team members interacted with local people. This means that the design thinking step was conducted simultaneously with the process of rapid ethnography research.

Design thinking borrows participant observational techniques from the ethnographic approach and reconducts them to create actionable solutions. Design thinking observes how people interact among groups and cultures, so this approach requires empathy [3]. The team had to describe a series of memorable and meaningful activities as input for designing products. The products must contain typical Ngada values to provide a specific experience to

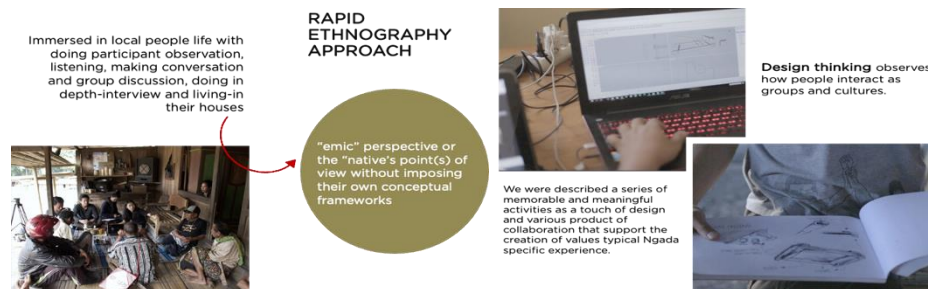
the consumer. The new method encourages each team member to conceptualize the program. Those who use design thinking access their nascent creative capacities [5]; while running this process, the team members also have their notes, which explain the feelings they experienced during their interaction with the users (indigenous people in traditional villages). Based on the collected notes, it could be concluded that all team members were impressed by their new experience, which possibly cannot be experienced again anywhere else. It was a valuable experience that none of them could explain directly in the same way. Thus, the team discovered that cultural tourism in traditional villages could be the best entry point to introduce the values, characteristics, and uniqueness of the cultural identity of Ngada [1,2].



**Figure 2** Collaborative design model (source: The IKKON Ngada Team).

The team developed a new term, ‘Experience Journey’, as a key concept to guide its further work. Experience Journey means the journey that was experienced directly by the local people, which was precisely the same as our own experience while interacting with them in this project. Experience Journey was used as a design scheme to explore, learn, and understand the cultural values and ways of living in the Ngada community so that we could develop new products and experiences. According to Graffam it is generally held that the better a problem that needs to be solved is understood, the more likely it is that the right solution is found. Graffam’s explanation is also related to the conceptual framework of design anthropology. Design anthropology explains understanding how people use a specific thing to solve a specific problem to contribute significantly to impactful design recommendations [6].

According to Bichard & Ventura [7], the role of a designer is not only to create products but also to act as agent of change, which requires taking on the role of an anthropologist. Thus, design anthropology offers the opportunity to provide a deeper understanding of the broader sociocultural issues that affect the mediation design process between designer, manufacturer, and design partners. The anthropologist acts as a collaborative partner for the designer in the design process. This collaboration is also an embodiment of social design, which helps in achieving benefits for the community.



**Figure 3** Rapid ethnography approach and design thinking, (source: The IKKON Ngada Team).

Concerning experiences as part of the output, the team decided to develop various products inspired by Ngada cultural practices and the spirit of Ngada cultural values. Besides that, the team also developed a service system to support the tourists' experience, supported by various workshops for the Ngada community. Promoting everyday life and cultural practices is considered a Quick-Win Integrated Strategy. The practical activities are activities that are usually done by the villagers and are attractive for tourists and can potentially become an Experience Journey for them. It is an expression of the concept of new luxury. Fisk [8] explains that the concept of new luxury can be extended into a new paradigm, characterized by the luxury of time, creativity, experiences, and being human.

### 3 'Experience Journey' as a Model for Collaboration Between Local Artisans and the IKKON Ngada Team

Both design and art, and the anthropology field contribute to ecosystem activation in the creative process. However, to produce a robust relationship with the users, the villagers are encouraged to be involved in the design process. The team members began the research by following the villagers' everyday activities from sunrise to midnight. Along with the anthropologist, the design and visual documentation team took notes and documented the activities one by one, such as weaving, cooking, guest welcoming, dining, sleeping, and so forth.

The process ranged from clarifying the meaning of the activities through discussion, estimating duration, and confirming possibilities of tourist involvement with the villagers' activities. This process helped the design team to discover tacit knowledge and later define the design statement [9]. From this collaborative process, we developed potential scenarios to put in the tourism scheme. Furthermore, the team developed other scenarios starting from questions such as 'What if cultural products are involved in the attraction?' or 'What if the tourists could experience cultural products as part of their activities while staying at the traditional villages?'

After extensive participative observation, the design process resulted in two varieties of products, i.e., tangible and intangible products. Both product types represent kinds of experiences available for tourists when visiting the megalith villages. While the tangible products represent villagers' craftsmanship that can be seen and accessed physically, the intangible products can only be experienced when tourists enjoy the hospitality of the villagers and spend time together with them in their homes as a service design. Every product has its own story, telling its value through the making process or the interaction between the guest (tourist) and the host (villager).

### **3.1 'Experience Journey' as a Service Design**

As part of the collaboration, the team members transformed their experience of interacting with the villagers into a service design. The included activities were ordered in a sequence and categorized in several groups of activities. The sequence of activities were then wrapped in a service design called 'Experience Journey.' Through the designed activities, tourists are able to explore the traditional villages during a short visit or stay overnight.

The Experience Journey, as part of the design outcomes, provides an understanding from the visitors' perspective, and can also be developed into a future tourism service, including determination of destinations [10]. The team designed an Experience Journey as a trip consisting of a sequence of activities, starting from a scenario where tourists or visitors arrive at Turelelo-Soa Bajawa Airport followed by various attractions and activities. The whole sequence was designed to imprint impressive activities that contain stories behind the process. This is in accordance with the aim of the team to ensure that the Experience Journey is not merely a patch on the tourists' trip [1].

For the purpose of prototyping, the team eventually selected three villages to represent more than twenty traditional villages in Ngada. Considering the local

hosts' readiness and the variation of activities in the villages, it was not easy to make a selection. The team meticulously sorted out the activities, brainstormed with the local hosts, built sequences representing each village's characteristics, and then translated this into a cultural tourism package. The three villages offer authentic characteristics as displayed in the villagers' daily activities. The three selected villages were Bela Village in Langa district, Bena Village in Tiwuriwu district, and Tololela Village in Jerebu'u district. Bela has a vast bamboo forest and an attractive wooden spinning toy called a *gasing*. Bena village has the vibrant natural colors of their *ikat* weavings, hanging all over the facades of the traditional houses. Meanwhile, Tololela together with the vibe of the musical instrument *bombardom* offers delicious authentic dishes along with wicker artisans.

In the designed activities, the team arranged packages for cultural tourism trips. The first package offers a short trip that allows the tourist to experience a glimpse of some village activities. The second one offers a one-day trip, with more activities that can be accessed by the tourist until the end of the day. The last package offers an overnight trip. After going through the sacred Mate Manu ritual, the tourist stays overnight in a *sa'o* (traditional Ngada house). Each of the trips ends with souvenir shopping.



**Figure 4** (a) Sequence of activities in Bela Village, and (b) Experience Journey in Bela Village (source: The IKKON Ngada Team).

### 3.2 Product Design for 'Experience Journey'

The team also prepared tangible product designs that carry the spirit of local cultural values and knowledge. Considering the potential of local craftsmanship and the availability of natural resources in Ngada, the tangible product design was designed to support the experience offered by each village. The design process invites cultural artifacts, natural resources and the story behind them to be developed into contemporary products that produce a unique experience that represents each village [1,2]. The output in the form of tangible products was



targeted at tourists who visit the traditional villages and participated in the Experience Journey package, carrying values of local culture intertwined with a contemporary spirit.



**Figure 5** Product design for Experience Journey,  
(source: The IKKON Ngada Team).

The tangible products were arranged to be part of a collection of cultural products that tourists encounter during their visit, such as coffee sets, cutlery, and wicker products. Also, the tangible products involve the Tourist Information Center (TIC) as the place for product showcasing within the traditional villages. The TIC is a facility to welcome guests, complete with several services related to providing information about the village, attractions and activities, and tourism packages available in the village. The TIC also provides displays for the products made by the villagers, which can be purchased by tourists. Souvenirs and products available at the TIC cover a range of community products, crafts, and other commodities, such as spices and coffee. The team completed the information tools available in the TIC by creating a tourism guidebook containing village profiles, a tour package, and official contact information.

A range of daily products were redesigned and displayed to enhance the interaction and hospitality services in the village. A coffee set is one of the output products that were available in the Experience Journey. The collection of a bamboo stirring scoop, a measuring scoop, a sugar spoon, a *tuku* (traditional coffee jar), and a bamboo tray were prepared to be used during the cultural tourism trips. Another collection that was part of the Experience Journey trip was bamboo cutlery. Bamboo materials were taken from the *woe* (bamboo forest) and processed into basic cutlery such as a bread knife. The bamboo-based coffee set and cutlery products are available for purchasing by visitors as souvenirs at the TIC.



**Figure 6** (a) The TIC in Bela Village; (b) bamboo coffee set, (source: The IKKON Ngada Team).

Beside tableware, the team produced products that reflect the main activities in the village, i.e., a mini weaving loom for the weaving of *ikat* bracelets. These products were inspired by the threatening blockage of local knowledge transfer over the generations. The mini weaving loom was designed to meet challenges related to the traditional weaving method, such as the long time it takes to make an *ikat*, the high price, and the difficulty to learn the technique. A smaller version is more practical in use, even for people who have no experience with weaving. The mini weaving loom can also be used to produce unique souvenirs, such as mini *ikats* that can be used as a bracelet.



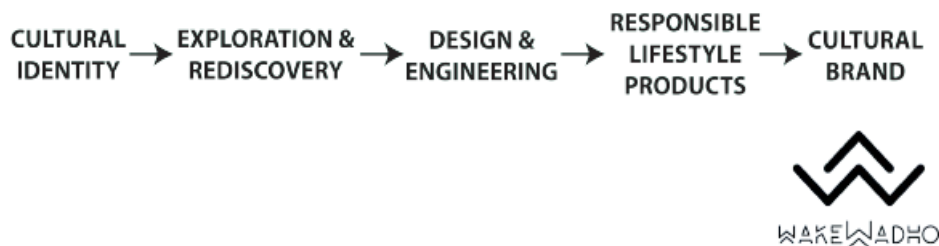
**Figure 7** (a) Mini weaving loom and ikat weaving bracelet, and (b) wicker product (source: The IKKON Ngada Team).

The last tangible product line within the Experience Journey trip is a wicker product. Inspired by the traditional wicker work in the villages, this wicker work uses *mage* (coconut leaves) and *daun lontar* (palm leaves). The leaves are intricately woven into daily products such as *bekha* and *wati*, traditional plates of the Ngada people. The team also transformed the traditional plates into mug covers. Besides that, coconut leaves that are traditionally used as baskets for

fishing or harvesting were transformed into storage containers for villagers' things such as *sirih pinang* or a weaving kit.

#### 4 Wake Wadho, Creating a Cultural Brand

To achieve the Quick-Win Strategy goals of the project, the team developed external products to reach wider exposure in the market by creating a cultural brand. This external output is a platform for presentation, and promotion for all the products inspired by the people of Ngada culture in the global market. The team were keen to build an ethical cultural brand (Wake Wadho) by integrating a design ecosystem (containing market, material study, and design quality) and artisans as small medium enterprises (SMEs). The Wake Wadho support artisan communities in the villages by providing knowledge on materials, quality control of craftsmanship, and the production process. After a deep discussion with the community leader and local agents, the team decided to use the brand name Wake Wadho, meaning 'to awaken the sleeping soul.' This represents the spirit of partnership between the artisans and the designers along with the encouragement of developing natural resources and local values to enhance economic as well as social and cultural benefits. Also, it helps the cultural brand to develop sustainable lifestyle products.



**Figure 8** The process of transforming cultural identity into a cultural brand.

The products that were developed for Wake Wadho basically represent several ideas: timeless design through simplicity (everlasting aesthetic), fair-trade and ethical principles by using organic-based materials (sustainable lifestyle), well-maintained product quality and craftsmanship with limited production quantities (excellent craftsmanship), and introducing new ideas seasonally (contemporary design). The products were developed using a design thinking approach. In a review, Kelly [11] has stated that design thinking is meaningful beyond aesthetic or visually attractive products. It allows us to encompass creative new ways while addressing different kinds of personal, social, and business challenges. As a collaboration model, Wake Wadho creates several values through its products, i.e., social value (equal partnership to ensure a sustainable impact), business value (guarantee a uniqueness, quality, resulting in added

value), and product value (delivering products that have symbolic, functional, and experiential value) [1,2,12].

## **5 Collaboration for Impact: Conclusion and Reflection**

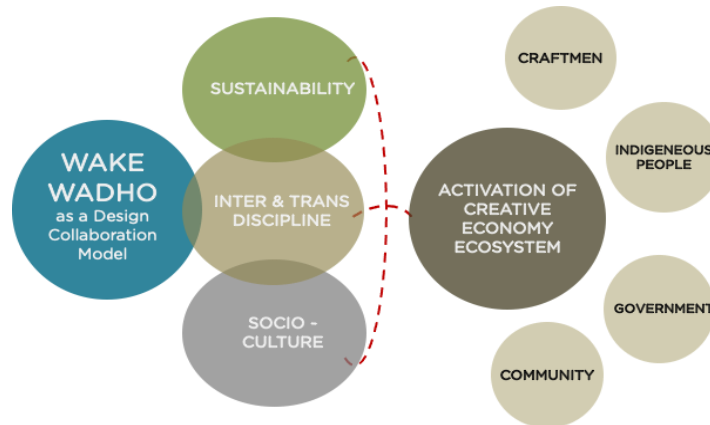
As an interdisciplinary collaboration, design thinking combined with anthropological study resulted in a prototype model, an ‘Experience Journey’ (intangible product), product design within service design (tangible products) and a cultural brand as a contemporary global platform. As part of the design thinking method, all of the products were tested in the traditional villages. In line with ethnographic research, such a prototyping stage provides feedback to improve the quality-of-service design, as Veggel explained: “An ethnographic research project can be quickly designed and cost-efficiently implemented to collect the very specific data needed for a particular design project” [13].

The prototyping process invited the community, tourists, and government delegation to participate in the simulation stage. In this simulation stage, all the involved team members along with tourists and other participants were invited to try out the Experience Journey in the traditional villages, involving the activities and attractions. During the simulation, the participants were allowed to provide feedback. This helped the team to evaluate and improve the sequence of activities for further service design development.

Reflecting on this project, Experience Journey was an impressive experience for the local people and the IKKON Ngada team while also representing the local culture. The experience can potentially be developed into a transfer of knowledge and recommended as a service system for tourism, which is also closely related to the design and anthropology field. The Experience Journey and Wake Wadho accommodate collaboration to activate the creative economy ecosystem. The ecosystem has an impact on the production and supply chain, community activation, capacity building, and rural area management. Thus, the outcome of this collaboration has a holistic impact from upstream to downstream.

Throughout the IKKON program, the indigenous communities in three traditional villages along with the team members jointly explored the process of designing an Experience Journey, a collection of tangible products, and prototyping the cultural trip by experiencing the sequence of activities. At the end of the four months long program, the team formulated feedback and recommendations for the local government, including a strategy to boost sustainable tourism and the creative economy potential, which successfully emerged from the interaction between the parties and was developed by design thinking. Likewise, Gunn & Donovan [14] explained that the common thread of

design and anthropology can be seen in their ability to interpret daily activities; through another person's world, we can imagine ourselves.



**Figure 9** Representation of Wake Wadho as a co-design model, (source: The IKKON Ngada Team).

Finally, 'empathic design' is a relatively new design discipline. Designers who played the role of an anthropologist have concluded that their subjective worldview and experiences are insufficient to profoundly understand the user [14,15]. The team believes that, today, design has to create sustainable solutions. It must be innovative and have a financial impact to solve economic as well as social problems. Design also needs to be more empathetic towards human needs, innovative in the face of emerging sociocultural issues, and as a tool of change that affects not only the creative execution of the design but also the people who experience its impact.

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