Bricolage or breakthrough? Entrepreneurial responses to tourism development in a regional tourism destination

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The Evolutionary Economic Geography (EEG) framework contributes to the study of tourism destination evolution by focusing on the various circumstances and events through which tourism destinations develop over long periods of time. Our research objective is to investigate how players in tourism destinations shape development pathways when they face stagnant or lock-in situations. Applying the concepts of path dependence and path creation, we explain how path shaping mechanisms such as bricolage (the process of combining available resources to create innovative outcomes) and breakthrough (a process where actors attempt to generate dramatic outcomes to deviate from existing pathways) occur using two destinations in the two regencies of the Toraja region of Sulawesi, Indonesia, as a case study. Understanding cultural tourism destination pathways requires frameworks capable of interrogating ethno-political structures and histories and assessing how they influence developmental pathways that generate regional transformations. Our investigation indicates: strong path dependence in tourism, due to cultural, political, and economic conditions, inhibits breakthrough development; that the strength of path dependence at a regional level strongly influences the path shaping processes at the firm level; and that a breakthrough developmental process in tourism does not exclude bricolage.

Keywords: path dependence, path creation, bricolage, breakthrough, tourism development, Indonesia

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Introduction

The varied ways in which tourist destinations evolve (i.e., develop, stabilize and either decline or undergo a renewal) have always been of interest to tourism scholars representing various disciplines. Although various approaches and frameworks have been used over time to explain what different (groups of) actors in tourism destinations do to develop new attractions or renew established ones to attract tourist visitation, evolutionary economic geography (EEG) has proved to be of particular relevance to this research agenda. Further to Brouder and Eriksson’s (2013) call—see, also, Brouder (2014a; b)—for an adoption of evolutionary perspectives in research on tourism development, scholarly work on how tourist destinations evolve at the meso-level and what individual tourist firms do at the micro-level to shape that evolution has significantly increased in profile (Brouder et al., 2017; Brouder & Fullerton, 2015; Flood et al., 2023; Ma & Hassink 2013; 2014). This paper contributes to this agenda.
More specifically, the paper focuses on the Toraja region—a famous tourist destination in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, that is known for various cultural attractions. We apply selected core concepts of EEG—namely, path-dependence and path-creation—to investigate how two distinct tourist destinations in two different regencies of Toraja—Lolai Village in Toraja Utara (TU) and Burake Hill in Tana Toraja (TT)—have developed in recent years, what trajectories of growth they have been following, and what factors have shaped their development. Our main focus here is how actors within regions (i.e., both those operating at the regency (local government) level and those associated with lower scales, for example family-run tourist firms) mindfully shape tourism development in their respective locations in order to overcome stagnant situations. In order to comprehensively understand the role of entrepreneurs in initiating new paths of tourism growth, we also apply the concepts of ‘bricolage’ and ‘breakthrough’ (Garud & Karnøe, 2003) which we utilize here as contrasting forms of path-creation. Although these two concepts are not originally associated with EEG, they conveniently complement our EEG perspective adopted in this study. This also applies to the notion of spatial bricolage, as developed by Korsgaard et al. (2021).

Toraja largely relies on ethnic and ancestral cultural tourism. The local culture in Toraja is not only the region’s main attraction, but also a substantial feature of the regional economy, the local society, and the local governance system. Therefore, we pay particular attention to the historical and contemporary industrial, social, cultural and ethno-political structures in both Toraja locations, and investigate their influence on tourism development in the region. Amongst them, we specifically recognize the importance of family and cultural ties, including those with Torajan migrant populations living outside the region, and their contribution to cultural tourism development in Toraja. Following the UN World Tourism Organization, we define cultural tourism as tourism motivated by learning, discovering, experiencing and consuming cultural attractions, services and products. Since the Indonesian word for ‘ethnic’ (suku bangsa) can be translated as ‘part of the nation,’ indicating an official understanding of Indonesia as ethnically diverse yet nationally unified (Jones, 2013), cultural tourism in Indonesia revolves around ancestral and ethnic traditions and attractions associated with various ethnic groups. Another important feature of cultural tourism in Indonesia pertinent here is that Indonesian ethnic cultures of larger groups are usually affiliated with lower levels of government, often resulting in state sponsorship and organized promotion of ethnic cultural activities. As, in the Indonesian context, cultural tourism is distinct from religious tourism, our analysis below also touches on activities that in other contexts could be construed as religious tourism.

The paper demonstrates how cultural relationships as well as various political and social factors, in and outside Toraja, influence cultural tourism development in the region, and how these processes may differ between locations within the same region depending on the conscious decisions of local tourism stakeholders. While Lolai Village in TU has exhibited patterns of bricolage and has been subject to relatively strong mechanisms of path-dependence, Burake Hill exemplifies a breakthrough type of path-creation with a rather limited influence of various path-dependencies. However, our findings suggest that bricolage and breakthrough can also occur simultaneously as breakthrough strategies can often be accompanied by elements of bricolage. As such, the paper demonstrates the usefulness of EEG in research on cultural tourism development in locations based on strong cultural and ethnic traditions as an appropriate framework for interrogating various past and present social, cultural and ethno-political factors influencing how new paths of growth emerge. At the same time, the
paper demonstrates the compatibility of the concepts of bricolage and breakthrough with evolutionary perspectives on tourism development.

The remainder of this paper consists of five sections. Section 2 briefly introduces evolutionary economic geography (EEG) as a theoretical paradigm and highlights its applicability to tourism studies. This section also discusses the concepts of bricolage and breakthrough and how we combine them in our analysis with an evolutionary perspective. In order to set the scene and discuss the broader context, section 3 provides key background information on Toraja—our chosen case—and tourism development in the region. This is followed by section 4 which explains the longitudinal methodology used in this research, and section 5 that presents the results of our investigation. Section 6, in turn, offers discussion and conclusions that distil the main contributions which this paper makes.

Tourism destination evolution

Evolutionary economic geography (EEG) and tourism studies

Evolutionary economic geography (EEG) is a theoretical paradigm concerned with the development and transformation of the economic landscape over time and the various processes and mechanisms by which this transformation (or evolution) happens (Boschma & Martin, 2007). By combining various concepts of evolutionary economics (Arthur et al., 1997; Hodgson, 1993; Nelson & Winter, 1982; Witt, 2003; 2006) with attention to the spatial dimension of economic processes, EEG offers a specific theoretical perspective on uneven geographical development and its genesis (Boschma & Frenken, 2006; Boschma & Martin, 2007; 2010; Coe, 2010). As such, it views the economic system as dynamic and subject to change while the processes of economic development are deemed irreversible (Boschma & Martin, 2007). Importantly, as Boschma and Frenken (2006) argued, the assumptions of EEG can be applied to various levels—the micro-level of firms and their routines, the meso-level of sectors and networks, and the macro-level of economic systems.

However, similarly to evolutionary economics, EEG is not a coherent body of theory. Instead, various approaches, concepts and ideas have been developed over time under the broader EEG umbrella (Boschma & Martin, 2007; 2010; Coe, 2010; Martin & Sunley, 2006). Two core evolutionary concepts that offer a basis for the following discussion deserve particular attention here: path-dependence and path-creation. Although various versions exist, path dependence is most commonly understood through the work of David (1985, in Martin & Sunley, 2006) who recognized that the transformation of every system is shaped by the legacy of its own past. In other words, historical decisions and choices validate a particular path and commit the system to it, while foreclosing alternative paths even if they are superior and more efficient. At the micro-level, the notion of path-dependence addresses how firms’ decision-making processes and behaviour are influenced and restricted by their past experiences and the overall pre-existing industrial structure (Boschma & Frenken, 2006). Economic geographers have further developed this understanding by observing that the processes of path-dependence are also inherently place-dependent (Martin & Sunley, 2006; Martin, 2010).

By contrast, the notion of path-creation counterbalances the semi-deterministic nature of economic development implied by the concept of path-dependence. The idea of path-creation draws attention to how new paths emerge and how the forces of path-dependence are (or can be) overcome (Coe, 2010; Martin & Sunley, 2006;
Martin, 2010). Five different mechanisms of overcoming path-dependence (or ‘de-\locke\ng) can be distinguished: the creation of a new endogenous path, the harnessing of heterogeneity amongst actors (such as between agents, institutions and social networks), the transplantation of new technologies or solutions from elsewhere, diversification into technologically related industries, and the upgrading of existing industries (MacKinnon, 2012; Martin & Sunley, 2006).

Initial understandings of path-creation assumed that new paths emerge in an adventitious, serendipitous way (Martin, 2010) and usually because of historical accidents and random events (Garud & Karnøe, 2001; Garud et al., 2010; Meyer & Schubert, 2007). Over time the notion of path-creation has also accounted for conscious and deliberate choices of actors (firms, entrepreneurs, institutions, etc.) (Martin & Sunley, 2006; MacKinnon, 2012). In this respect, economic evolution can be defined as ‘an ongoing, never-ending interplay of path dependence, path creation and path destruction that occurs as actors in different arenas reproduce, mindfully deviate from, and transform existing socio-economic-technological structures, socio-economic practices and development paths’ (Martin & Sunley, 2006: 408). The concept of mindful deviation is thus an important category of path-creation. It shows how actors mindfully deviate from the structures in which they are embedded and how they actively attempt to modify the existing pathway. One of the important catalysts for these processes is novelty— including innovations, new firms, new industries (Boschma & Martin, 2007). The continuous interplay of path-dependent and path-shaping processes and the role of novelty in fostering the evolution of economic landscape are the main ideas from EEG which this paper adopts in the empirical analysis below.

Because of its applicability to research on how the economic landscape evolves over time, EEG as a framework also quickly found a way into tourism studies. In particular, evolutionary concepts gained recognition in research on tourism destination evolution which can be traced back to Butler’s (1980) seminal tourism area life cycle (TALC) model—see Ma and Hassink (2013) for a more comprehensive discussion. The first papers explaining the merits of applying EEG to the tourism industry included Brouder and Eriksson (2013), Brouder (2014a; b), Ma and Hassink (2013; 2014) and Ioannides et al. (2014). Brouder (2014a) noted the significance of applying EEG in tourism studies:

Furthermore, low-technology service sectors are under-researched in EEG and the tourism economy offers prime empirical material for such studies. It is also clear that evolutionary approaches to tourism research will not only enhance the theoretical development of tourism studies, but also strengthen the relevance of EEG by testing it in a very different context (Brouder, 2014a: 5–6).

Since then, EEG-informed research on tourism has proliferated, parallel to the development of the EEG theoretical literature. The concepts of path-dependence and path-creation (as well as a multitude of their sister concepts) have played an important role in advancing this scholarship. For noteworthy examples, see Chavez et al. (2023), Gill and Williams (2014; 2017), Sanz-Ibáñez et al. (2017), and Niewiadomski and Brouder (2022). Ma and Hassink’s (2013: 98 – 9) observation that the development of a tourism destination is ‘a dynamic open path-dependent process, by which products, sectors, and institutions co-evolve along an unfolding trajectory’ is a common denominator for these studies and, as such, an important foundation for our analysis below. More specifically, our analysis adopts the concepts of breakthrough and bricolage, both of which are viewed here as distinct categories of mindful deviation (and hence path-creation) and to which the following sub-section turns.
Bricolage and breakthrough

Although the notions of breakthrough and bricolage (Garud & Karnøe, 2003) do not originally derive from the rich palette of concepts associated with EEG, they both denote two distinct strategies which entrepreneurs can adopt to create a new path or adjust an existing one, and they therefore conveniently complement the idea of mindful deviation. As such, they represent two different ways in which entrepreneurs can use their agency to overcome path-dependence.

According to Garud & Karnøe (2003), breakthrough can be defined simply as a process by which actors attempt to generate dramatic outcomes in order to deviate from the existing pathway. As such, breakthroughs are relatively abrupt and radical in nature. For innovative breakthroughs to occur, significant financial investments may be required and new knowledge may need to be obtained (Garud & Karnøe, 2003). In this respect, the concept of breakthrough more closely corresponds with transplanting new technologies or solutions from elsewhere and upgrading existing industries rather than the other mechanisms of de-locking identified by Martin and Sunley (2006).

By contrast, the concept of bricolage requires a more detailed discussion. Although the notion of bricolage originates from the work of Levi-Strauss (1967) in the field of anthropology, it gradually gained recognition in the social sciences, particularly in research on entrepreneurship and innovations (Davidsson et al., 2017; Fisher, 2012) and, as such, it can be deemed compatible with various evolutionary perspectives, including the EEG framework. While Garud and Karnøe (2003: 278) adopted the notion of ‘bricolage’ in rather loose terms ‘to connote resourcefulness and improvisation on the part of involved actors’, Baker and Nelson (2005: 333) defined it more precisely as ‘making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities’. Such an understanding of bricolage is very often contrasted with ‘engineering’. While engineers normally obtain the right inputs for every task in order to achieve an intended design exactly as planned (in a somewhat similar way than in ‘breakthrough’ strategies), bricoleurs deploy whatever is available and use these resources in ways they were not originally intended in order to solve problems and generate innovative outcomes in the context of resource scarcity (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Davidsson et al., 2017; Fisher, 2012; Yachin & Ioannides, 2020). As such, in contrast to sudden and radical ‘breakthroughs’, bricolage strategies allow trial-and-error development and leave enough space for micro-learning processes. For instance, Garud and Karnøe (2003) contrast bricolage in wind energy in Denmark, where trial and error led to the slow and steady development of reliable wind turbines through small steps and multiple collaborators, with the entrepreneurial approaches in the USA, which pursued a research-intensive approach underwritten with large subsidies and fewer actors. Bricolage approaches, like the Danish wind energy sector, usually unfold step by step in an incremental way, all of which also deems them more likely to succeed than breakthroughs (Garud & Karnøe, 2003).

It is also essential to specify what constitutes resources in bricolage strategies. Although the initial definitions of bricolage tended to concentrate on more concrete resources such as physical materials, finances, knowledge, skills and human capital, the importance of other, ‘softer’ and more intangible resources—like social networks, community and institutional structures, social and cultural values, symbols, heritage and traditions—has also been recognized over time (Kang, 2017; Yachin & Ioannides, 2020). This shift is particularly significant in cultural tourism, as we will demonstrate. By recognizing that whatever is available ‘at hand’ is largely determined by the local context, Korsgaard et al. (2021) also added a spatial dimension to how
bricolage can be conceptualized. They subsequently coined the term ‘spatial bricolage’ which they defined as ‘making do by applying creative combinations of the resources at hand in the immediate spatial context to new problems and opportunities’ (Korsgaard et al., 2021: 148). See, also, Korsgaard et al. (2015) for a nuanced discussion of how the local context can support and shape entrepreneurship. As such, bricolage strategies will always be place- and context-specific while the geographical context can be—and often is—an important resource at hand (Korsgaard et al., 2021; Yachin & Ioannides, 2020). Therefore, the characteristics of (spatial) bricolage—as a form of mindful deviation—place it much closer to ‘the creation of a new endogenous path’, harnessing ‘heterogeneity amongst actors (i.e. agents, institutions and social networks)’ and ‘the upgrading of existing industries’ as possible mechanisms of overcoming path-dependence.

Importantly for this paper, the concept of bricolage has, also, gradually found a way into tourism studies. For instance, Baláž and Williams (2005) used this term to refer to the diversity of international tourist flows in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) before a number of CEE states joined the European Union. They applied the concept of bricolage at a macro level to conceptualize international tourism in CEE as an aggregate of various diverse components—that is, different kinds of tourist activity; see, also, Hall (2008). As such, their interpretation of the term differed from how this concept is understood in the entrepreneurship literature discussed above. The first authors to apply this concept to research on tourism evolution were Yachin and Ioannides (2020) who explored how tourist firms in rural areas in Sweden mobilize various resources to promote sustainable tourism. Although our research took place simultaneously to Yachin and Ioannides’s (2020) work, we recognize and draw from their analysis too. In this respect, we apply the concepts of bricolage and breakthrough to Toraja—a regional tourism destination in Indonesia that recently moved out of stagnation. We use these concepts to explore how new types of tourism attractions emerged, what resources individual firms employed to foster their emergence, and how their emergence created new paths of tourism growth for the respective locations at the regional level. Before our findings are presented, the following two sections provide background information on the Toraja region, and discuss the methodology adopted in this research project, respectively.

Background: history and geography of tourism development in Toraja

Toraja as a tourist destination

Toraja is in South Sulawesi, 1500 kilometres east of Indonesia’s capital, Jakarta (Figure 1). The coffee producing region is a 10-hour drive from South Sulawesi’s capital, Makassar (Figure 2). Since the early 1970s, Toraja has also been a cultural tourism destination (Volkman, 1985; Adams, 1984; Yamashita, 1988). It is famous for its traditional funeral ceremonies, burial sites and distinctive tongkonan ancestral houses that have boat-shaped and oversized saddleback roofs. Most Torajans are Christians who, also, observe their aluk to dolo (way of ancestors) tradition. Their funerals and tongkonan ancestral houses reflect a traditional Torajan cosmology (Adams, 2006; de Jong, 2013). Torajans are an ethnic and religious minority in Sulawesi where the population is dominated by Bugis, Makassarese, Mandarese and other Muslim ethnic groups. Torajans have successfully developed a cultural tourism industry, distinguishing themselves as a regionally significant ethnic group (Adams, 1993; 1997). Toraja consists of two regencies: Tana Toraja (TT) in the south, and Toraja Utara (TU) in the north.
Toraja was bound by the TT Regency, until 2008 when TU separated. TU’s territory is the location of most of the Torajan tourism industry and well-known attractions.

Tourism trends in Toraja since the 1970s
From the 1970s to mid-1990s, Toraja enjoyed strong growth in international tourist visitations (Figure 4), peaking in 1994. A dramatic decline occurred from 1996 with the collapse of the Suharto regime, followed by violent religious conflicts in neighbouring regions like Poso, Central Sulawesi, in 1998, and Ambon, Maluku, in 1999. In 2001, visitation plunged to less than 30 per cent of the peak because of religious violence (Adams, 2006: 16). The 2000s saw further visitor stagnation with the Bali bombings in 2002 and the unsuccessful applications by local government to establish Toraja as a World Heritage site (Adams, 2003; Abe, 2013). From 2009, domestic and international visitor numbers grew to more than 130 000 in 2015 (Pemerintah Kabupaten Toraja Utara, 2016a; Pemerintah Kabupaten Toraja Utara, 2016b) but were still less than half the 1994 peak (Figure 4). In 2016, domestic tourist visitations increased dramatically (Figure 5) thanks to the uptake of Instagram, Facebook and other social media, and the emergence of ‘selfie tourism’—individuals posting photos of themselves in particular locations (Magasic, 2016; Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016).

Meso-level tourism development in Toraja
Our investigation focuses on Lolai Village in TU regency and Burake Hill in TT because both have experienced growth in visitations across the study period as well as the development of new tourist attractions in 2015 (Figure 3). Lolai and Burake have been exposed to similar exogeneous environments throughout their development. They are located within the same geographic area (Toraja), and share similar historical, cultural and economic backgrounds. Both Burake Hill and Lolai are close to the capital cities of their provinces (Makale and Rantepao, respectively) and rely on their high elevations and vistas as a basis for attracting tourists alongside cultural attractions. However, Burake Hill is a shorter distance to the capital city than Lolai and is now part of the peri-urban fringe of Makale while Lolai is geographically separated by steep terrain from

Figure 1. Map of Indonesia.
Rantepao. Our research aims to explore different responses to a variety of complex external stimulants, and the path shaping processes that ensued as a result.

Lolai is located atop steep mountains north-east of Rantepao, the capital of TU (population 28,000) and it is known for iconic cultural attractions. Until 2015, Lolai’s major industry was arabica coffee and vegetable production. Limited work meant that many Lolai residents left Toraja to find employment and send remittances home (pers. comm., Lolai landowners, January 2018 and January 2019). In 2016, driven by the rising popularity of social media and selfie tourism, large numbers of domestic tourists and Torajans living across Indonesia began travelling to Lolai to view scenic panoramas (TRIBUNnews.com, 2016).

Burake Hill is a village located near Makale township (population 39,000) in TT. While Lolai is a mountain village an hour from a small city, Burake is a neighbourhood located on the fringe of Makale that developed a tourism industry at the same time as Lolai. Since the opening of a giant statue of Jesus Christ atop Burake Hill in 2015, visitations there have increased dramatically as tourists visit the statue and
take pictures of the mountains and Makale. Statistics show over one million domestic tourists in 2016 and 1.2 million in 2017 (BPS-Statistics of Tana Toraja Regency, 2018). While this figure is likely to be inflated, it is ten times the 2014 visitation rate.

Monitoring path shaping processes at the two sites

This investigation followed Garud et al.’s (2010) research method of studying processes in real time by following the actors to see how actions formed. We applied a longitudinal narrative approach to monitoring path shaping processes, to identify the real time complexity of responses by the local tourism industry to endogenous and exogenous influences.

We conducted fieldwork over three visits to Toraja in January 2017, January 2018 and January 2019. During the latter two visits, we interviewed the main stakeholder groups and individuals associated with Lolai Village and Burake Hill developments. We applied purposive sampling techniques (Patton, 2002) and focused on key individuals associated with the tourism industry in Toraja. Interviews were undertaken in Makassar (the capital city of South Sulawesi province) and in Toraja as well as over the phone (see Table 1). We initially identified key informants through local government
recommendations and the past experiences of one of our research team whose company had previously run tours in Toraja. We expanded this group using a snowball sampling method.

Figure 4. Tourist arrivals in Toraja Region.

Figure 5. Tourist arrivals in TT and TU Regencies.
Sources: BPS-Statistics of Tana Toraja Regency (2016a; 2016b; 2018; 2019), BPS-Statistics of Toraja Utara Regency (2018; 2019), Pemerintah Kabupaten Toraja Utara (2013a; 2013b; 2016a; 2016b). TT Regency visitation numbers between 2016 and 2018 show dramatic growth on previous years. The key reason for this is likely to be that the TT Regency government commenced gathering data on Burake visitations in 2016. These visitation numbers include local residents of the Toraja region visiting the site, perhaps, multiple times.
Interviews in Makassar captured tourism operators and workers who arranged tours and transport to Toraja as well as one provincial official. Interviews in Toraja were with business owners and workers associated with tourism-related businesses (tours, transport, hotels, restaurants, attractions, souvenirs) as well as three people working for the local tourism office and two people working at the tourism industry organisation (DMO Toraja). Twenty interviews were conducted in TT and nineteen in TU. Nine interviews were conducted in Lolai and seven interviews in Burake Hill. Participants identified selfie tourism as an important contemporary path shaping phenomenon. The interviews were conducted in person with a local research assistant who typed up the transcripts in Indonesian (three of the authors speak Indonesian). The transcripts were thematically coded using an inductive method in Atlas.ti by one member of the research team (Cope, 2010).

Table 1. List of the interviews and interview locations in January 2018 and January 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Toraja</th>
<th>Makassar</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Total Interviews</th>
<th>Total interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation (owner)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport construction manager (site manager)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism attraction (including owner, executive and management)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMO (executive)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour guides</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire car driver</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event organizer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry organization (executive)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local royalty (traditional aristocrat)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regency government (middle management)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torajan emigrant business (owner)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPO (management level)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial government (middle management)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant &amp; café (owner)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souvenir shop (owner)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some numbers are overlapping due to the multiple roles of the interviewees.
We conducted site visits to tourist attractions to monitor infrastructure development, business activity and visitation. We also used secondary data from ethnographical studies by anthropologists who specialize in the region undertaken since the 1970s to assist with understanding past path-shaping events and path-dependence in the Toraja tourism industry (Volkman, 1985; Yamashita, 1988; Adams, 2006; de Jong, 2013). A limitation of our sampling methods for interviews could be a bias towards larger organizations and informants in senior positions as involvement in the tourism industry and seniority were two preferred criteria for interview participants. However, interviews were undertaken with residents who ran small enterprises at both attractions in 2018 and 2019.

The primary ethical concerns in this research are confidentiality and risk of economic and social harm to interview participants (Dowling, 2010). Due to the presence of public sector support for the Toraja tourism industry, some participants working in the private sector could harm their relationships with the tourism district office if they were publicly critical. Confidentiality is an important consideration here. Participants’ identities have not been revealed either directly or indirectly.

Comparing legacies and path shaping mechanisms

Our research on Lolai Village and Burake Hill reveals different levels of path dependence and divergent path-shaping processes. We focus on the historical developments of the two attractions since their establishment, as well as the entrepreneurs’ ongoing responses to the exogenous and endogenous processes each location has been experiencing, in particular the role of the two local governments (regencies). An important point to note at this time is that in 2008, when Tana Toraja was divided into two regencies, the established tourism agency (located in the north) became part of the new TU Regency government, whereas TT Regency had to develop their own tourism agency.

Lolai Village (TU)

In 2015, the family owner of tongkonan Lempe held an opening ceremony marking the rebuilding of the tongkonan house following his retirement and return home. Photographers from a Makassar-based newspaper attended and found the morning clouds covering the township of Rantepao below them, producing a great spectacle. They named the spot ‘Land Above the Clouds’ (Negri di Atas Awan) and Lolai quickly became known as a selfie-tourism spot. Lolai continues to be propelled by mass-media reports of visits by Indonesian Government Ministers and visitors’ photographs and comments on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and other social media (pers. comm., Lempe landowner, January 2018). The unexpected increase in new types of tourists can be attributed to the exogenous impact of social media in the Toraja region. By 2017, tongkonan Lempe received 1000 visitors per day on holidays and weekends, rising to 3000 visitors daily over Christmas. Almost all visitors were domestic tourists from neighbouring regions such as South and Central Sulawesi Provinces and Kalimantan.

One of the owners of tongkonan Lempe explained that the tourism boom following the tongkonan’s construction was unplanned and unexpected:

It was not our intention to make this place a tourism attraction. We wanted to build a tongkonan, which represents the Torajan people’s identity (pers. comm., Lempe landowner, January 2018).
Initially, neither the owners nor the TU Regency government actively promoted the location.

Our story went viral via social media and word of mouth. [...] They came to see this place and uploaded [photos on social media]. It’s ‘automatic’ promotion! (pers. comm., Lempe landowner, January 2018).

While a traditional cultural ceremony was the catalyst for a new pathway, a combination of other factors, such as the popularity of selfie tourism through social media and exposure of visits by politicians through mass media, propelled Lolai into the tourism spectrum in an unintended way. By early 2019, four different selfie sites were operating in Lolai.

Entrepreneurs of Lolai Village

Tourism development in Lolai has largely been driven by entrepreneurs, a key category of actors in any path creation process. Once they recognized tourism potential presented by selfie tourism and Lolai’s panoramas, tourism entrepreneurs in TU mindfully adopted (or imported) capital and other resources to support the development of the business. All primary investment funds came from family members who worked outside of Toraja, indicating the importance of kinship networks.

There is no loan from the bank. [...] No obligation to pay back each month [to the bank]. We don’t have to chase profit targets (pers. comm., Lempe landowner, January 2019).

Some members invested profits from other businesses they ran into the initial project. Entrance and parking fees from the viewing platform were reinvested to build an accommodation facility in Lolai. Two similar selfie tourism viewing sites in Lolai Village (Pongtora’ and To’tombi) emerged in similar ways. They were established by retired migrant workers with no tourism experience who returned home, and were funded by earnings from outside of the region (pers. comm., senior member of Lolai community, January 2018).

The operational structure of tourism sites in Lolai Village follows the pattern for most privately owned cultural tourism sites in the Toraja region. These sites are generally based around a cultural attraction (such as a tongkonan) that are run by a land owning family through a foundation (yayasan in Indonesian). While the focus in Lolai Village is on a new type of tourism that gives rise to a new path of destination development, the internal management structure is common to ethnic cultural tourism in Toraja.

Bricolage in Lolai

The evolution of tourism attractions in Lolai has taken place in stages. Both the Lempe and To’tombi locations became known in 2015 through social media and television. Lempe started charging visitors entrance fees in 2015 to view the landscape and rest under the tongkonan. Infrastructure and investment were minimal. In 2016, Lempe’s owners built toilets and temporary shops, established paid parking spaces, and began offering space to pitch tents for small shops. To’tombi opened a similar fee-charging viewing site and established cafe stalls in 2016. Demand from visitors propelled further investments through family networks in infrastructure and services (pers. comm., senior Lolai community member, January 2018).
In 2017, Lempe’s shops became permanent. Pongtora built and funded a sealed road to their site from the main road, a restaurant, semi-permanent tents, and monuments for self-tourist shots. To’tombi built a modest villa accommodation. Tourist numbers continued to grow, requiring further investment in basic infrastructure. Investment levels at this stage were rapidly expanded across multiple locations, and income generating businesses fuelled further development.

In 2018, Lempe established self-contained villa-style accommodation on a former parking lot and commenced construction of an upmarket hotel and restaurant. To’tombi completed a sealed viewing platform. The TU government made a larger contribution to development at Lempe through the construction of sealed roads to Lolai Village that were completed in early 2018. Entrepreneurs began focusing on up-market visitors who would stay beyond very early morning viewings. Lempe’s upmarket restaurant-hotel complex, which includes a glass bottomed viewing platform, was completed in 2019.

Lolai’s development as a tourist destination exemplifies bricolage. The village developed through a series of scale-up steps (Garud & Karnøe, 2003) and family-based financial networks that altogether added up to a bricolage-like creation of a new path. Such a scale-up approach encompassed ‘ongoing learning, thereby allowing firms to concentrate on solving and learning from a small number of manageable problems between steps’ (Garud & Karnøe, 2003: 285). Lolai’s operators noted that their tourism products constantly needed to be re-shaped according to tourists’ preferences, with each step enabled by new injections of knowledge, experience and funds. Importantly, Lolai’s evolution as a tourist destination heavily relied both on the local culture and the natural environment (i.e. ‘the resources at hand in the immediate spatial context’; Korsgaard et al., 2021: 148), and is a clear example of spatial bricolage (Yachin & Ioannides, 2020).

Although the bricolage development of Lolai can be conceptualized as a mindful deviation, its evolution has not been free from various path-dependencies. While the TU Regency government supports activities that encourage ancestral and ethnic cultural tourism, in particular infrastructure development, site maintenance and marketing costs, it requires, in return, that tourism locations pay 40 per cent taxes on sales revenue other than food and drink. Lolai operators feel that they do not receive sufficient support to justify this level of tax:

We are still in a tug-of-war with the TU government. Recently the government said that they had to take 40 per cent tax. I said to them that it was too much. It’s really bad, a kind of robbery! [...] Ke’te Kesu’ gets help directly from the government [as a tentative World Heritage site], so there’s no problem for them [to pay 40 per cent of sales tax]. It’s been supported as cultural preservation [by the government]. That’s why they pay mandatory contribution (pers. comm., Lolai landowner, January 2019).

Lolai operators say the taxes are unfair, as the local government provides financial support to most cultural-tourism sites for renovations and maintenance costs, roads and signage, and actively promotes the sites, but affords very little of the same support to Lolai.

We haven’t received any support for this location from the [TU] government yet. They only have upgraded roads. [...] Making roads for residents is the government’s responsibility anyway (pers. comm., Lolai landowner, January 2018).
Negotiations between the TU Regency government and owners of a tongkonan in Lolai broke down in 2017. Operators closed the site between March and July in protest against the TU Regency government’s approach (pers. comm., local journalist, January 2019).3

Tensions between Lolai tourism operators and the TU Regency government expose the processes of path dependence that are maintained by local regulations and affiliations between the state and ethnic Torajan cultural practices and locations. Most tourism in TU Regency shows strong path dependence based on TU Regency support for ancestral and ethnic cultural tourism due to state investment in infrastructure and maintenance of large cultural attractions. Lempe’s bricolage process of path creation was fostered by a new technology (selfie tourism), based on the physical geography of the site rather than expensive-to-maintain cultural attractions, and utilized local financial and social support networks rather than state sources and networks. Diverging from the existing ethnic cultural tourism path through bricolage is therefore more difficult than expected if new endogenous paths are unwilling or unable to replicate the existing state-society dependencies within the cultural tourism sector.

Burake Hill
Burake Hill is a 40-metre statue of Jesus Christ located 1700 metres above sea level. The project was initiated and funded by TT Regency government. Construction costs of Rp27.8 billion (approximately USD 2 million) render the statue one of the most expensive tourism developments across the Toraja region (Kus Anna, 2018). The Burake Hill tourism project was proposed at a tourism strategy meeting held by the Regent of TT in 2011. Attendees agreed that new types of tourism—‘religious tourism’, ‘agritourism’, and ‘nature-based tourism’—should be explored as TT Regency lacked well-known ancestral and ethnic cultural tourism sites.

They [i.e., famous cultural tourism sites] are all concentrated around Rantepao [the capital town of TU Regency]. [...] I thought our tourism attractions should be different from the ones in Rantepao. Their sites are all cultural ones (pers. comm., senior Burake community member, January 2019).

Attendees agreed TT needed an iconic tourism monument; the creation of a giant statue of Jesus as a major ‘religious tourism’ attraction was proposed.

Proponents at the strategy meeting saw the statue as an expression of Torajan religious identity. The group decided the statue should be at a sacred location, visible from Makale, the capital of the Regency. Burake Hill matched all these requirements.

There is an old spring here [in Burake Village] where people have been baptized. This location has been important for local Christians. What we needed here was an iconic object like a statue of Jesus (pers. comm., senior Burake community member, January 2019).

Originally the prime objective was to increase Torajan migrant visitation and reinforce Torajan identity. However, Burake Hill was not intended to be a major selfie-tourism site. Its development began in 2012 with the construction of an access road and the giant statue of Jesus Christ that was subsequently opened to visitors in 2015 (Kompas. com, 2018). A key member of the strategic meeting group noted the TT Regency governments’ surprise that the site was visited by Muslim tourists as well as Christians: ‘60 per cent of the visitors are Muslims. They come to see Jesus. We did not expect this’ (pers. comm., senior local Burake community member, January 2018). It has since become a popular selfie-tourism site for both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists.
In 2018 the TT Regency government responded to the large influx of selfie tourists by opening a glass-bottomed viewing platform at a cost of Rp4 million (approximately USD 280,000). Further plans are underway to build an amphitheatre, prayer spaces, and a 300-metre elevator. The platform has not been as popular as expected, possibly because the entrance fee may be too expensive (pers. comm., TT Regency government officer, January 2019).

Entrepreneurs of Burake Hill

The TT Regency government has been a key driver of entrepreneurship supporting tourism development in the region. It has developed the statue, adapted its plans for the site following the unexpected influx of diversified tourists and initiated ways to further encourage new businesses. As Garud and Karnøe (2001: 2) noted, ‘entrepreneurs are embedded in structures that they jointly create and from which they mindfully depart’. In this respect, the TT Regency government adjusted to the influx of selfie tourists. A retired TT government official said:

[My largest achievement as a government officer was] creating religious tourism in Toraja. We had only been selling so-called cultural tourism, for example traditional festivals. But after we conducted surveys we found that tourists’ wants were not limited to this. So, we started nature tourism, but that was also not enough for tourist visitation. Then we built the statue of Jesus (pers. comm., January 2018).

The government mindfully deviated from pre-existing cultural tourism products to a new type of religious tourism through the Burake Hill complex, and then adjusted to the emerging selfie tourism. As Gill and Williams (2014: 547) stated, entrepreneurs break from the pre-existing structures ‘by taking deliberate and conscious actions to reframe their thinking’. Thus, breakthrough requires a mindful deviation to enable new path creation.

The TT Regency government manages the Burake Hill site through agreements with traditional landowners. Communal systems of property ownership endure and Burake Hill land ownership remains with local people.

This location belongs to my grandmother [i.e., ancestor], so this land belongs to our family. The land where the statue is located still belongs to my grandmother. It cannot be sold (pers. comm., Burake landowner, January 2018).

TT Regency has found ways to lift local economic benefit through working with local landowners to start tourism businesses. After Burake landowners opened small temporary stalls near the entry to sell snacks and drinks, the TT Regency government covered construction costs for permanent shops. Stall owners are satisfied with the arrangements proposed by the TT Regency government, as these businesses have flourished since Burake Hill opened.

According to the [TU] government, each shop costs Rp62 million [approximately USD 4,400], but they are all free for our family. [...] We signed the contract with the government. We are all happy about this arrangement. This stall here is not clean but the new one will be much cleaner [...] It will be good for our children’s future (pers. comm., Burake landowner, January 2018).

The TT Regency government has led entrepreneurial initiatives and encouraged this trajectory together with local landowners who have started tourism businesses on the back of state investment.
Breakthrough in Burake Hill

The Burake Hills’ development exemplifies Garud and Karnøe’s (2003) ‘breakthrough’ process as a form of path creation. The TT government created a significant outcome by investing large sums in tourism attractions. In contrast to the bricolage approach in Lolai, the TT Regency government mindfully shaped a completely new pathway that differentiated it from the ethnic cultural attractions in the rival TU Regency. A key member of Toraja Branch of the Guide Association of Indonesia (HPI-Toraja) commented on the innovative and progressive attitudes of TT Regency government:

The TT Regency government gets involved with various stakeholder groups and concerns about tourism. The TU Regency says tourism development is important but does not do much. […] TU has more attractions and is important for tourism, but TT is more enthusiastic. We try to encourage the two governments to collaborate with each other, but they are not yet working together (pers. comm., January 2019).

The TT Regency government intentionally shifted its tourism strategy to Torajans living outside Toraja, and management of Burake Hill from the standard family-owned tourism business to a new type of government-initiated business.

TT Regency’s [new] attractions belong to the region and the [Regency] government. Pangopango [agritourism site] belongs to the region, Burake belongs to the region. Burake [landowners] claim they have established a foundation [run by landowners], but we [i.e., TT Regency government] do not want to hand operations over to them. This is the advantage here in TT Regency. Tourist attractions belong to the Regency government (pers. comm., TT Regency government officer, January 2018).

The government-initiated, state-centred management structure in Burake Hill shows weaker path dependence compared to Lolai which continues to rely on the family-run foundation model. Burake Hill’s initial development is a clear case of breakthrough, brought about through large investment, a change in the type of tourism attraction being created, changes in target markets, and a shift in the systems of management underpinning attractions.

However, the following stage—where facilities were added to accommodate tourist segments and visitation volumes that were previously not catered for—resembles a micro-learning approach characteristic of bricolage. According to Garud & Karnøe (2003), breakthrough in entrepreneurial innovation in sophisticated high-tech industries with large-scale investments lacks micro-learning stages to adjust operations. We argue that entrepreneurial innovations in the tourism industry, which often require less financial and knowledge-based investment (Hjalager, 2002), allow micro-learning responses even when a breakthrough approach is followed. The smaller-scale investment nature of entrepreneurial innovation in tourism means that realignment of operations and products can be relatively easily implemented. Therefore, the path-shaping process of breakthrough by entrepreneurs in low-scale investments such as tourism attractions is more flexible than in high-tech industries.

In the case of Burake Hill, the driving force of this mindful path-shaping process comes from the Regency government’s need to create its own tourism strategy following the division of Toraja into two regencies. The TT Regency government was left with no division or staff with tourism expertise when the two regencies came into operation. The TT region also lacked well-known cultural tourism attractions and supporting businesses such as accommodation, restaurants, and bus terminals (these are based in Rantepao, the capital of TU Regency). Because of these disadvantages, the Regent of TT at the time was keen to create novel, non-conventional (for Toraja) tourism products.
Another important catalyst for the TT Regency government’s move to initiate and invest substantially in the creation of new tourist attractions has been rivalry. In addition to the Burake Hills site, in 2018, the TT Regency government opened an agritourism site in Pangopango Village and a souvenir shop complex in Makale township. The Regency was also developing nature-based tourism sites, including waterfalls and a hot springs pool (pers. comm., TT Regency government officer, January 2019).

In this respect, Burake is an example of breakthrough accompanied by adjusting stages of bricolage, where a major investment led to new insights in tourists’ preferences and required a flexible approach to support continuing tourism development. In addition, tourism in TT Regency has exhibited a much weaker path dependence than the TU Regency. The major catalyst for this situation has been the change in local government structure. Despite being the newer regency, TU has a legacy-oriented approach to tourism and supports well-known cultural tourism attractions that have strong links to ethnic identity and well-established financial arrangements. Preservation of these locations is integral to the TU government approach to tourism. Despite being the pre-existing regency, TT has fewer entrenched structures and practices as the existing bureaucratic structure stayed with TU along with most major (cultural) attractions. As a result, TT was more willing to pursue a breakthrough strategy and to support local entrepreneurship that evolved with novel tourism attractions and social media.

Discussion and conclusions: bricolage, breakthrough and cultural tourism evolution

The paper adopted two core concepts of evolutionary economic geography (EEG)—path-dependence and path-creation—to examine the development of two tourist locations in two different regencies of the Toraja region in Indonesia—Lolai Village in Toraja Utara and Burake Hill in Tana Toraja. The paper focused on the various path-shaping strategies (i.e., various forms of mindful deviation) which the two locations embarked on in order to overcome stagnant situations, and investigated the various path-dependent factors influencing their evolution as cultural tourism locations. In addition, following Garud & Karnøe (2003), the paper adopted the concepts of bricolage and breakthrough, both utilized as contrasting forms of mindful deviation, and combined them with the adopted evolutionary perspective.

The evolution of Lolai Village exemplifies spatial bricolage (Korsgaard et al., 2021), in which local tourism stakeholders combined various resources, including Lolai’s geography and the practice of selfie tourism connected to social media, available both locally and outside the region to further develop the village as a tourism destination. In contrast, Burake Hill is a strong example of breakthrough, where tourism development has been centrally planned and coordinated, and based on a series of conscious decisions to initiate a new tourism path (i.e., religious tourism revolving around the Statue of Jesus Christ—a new development in the region). However, the research has also demonstrated that bricolage and breakthrough are not mutually exclusive in tourism and, as the case of Burake Hill showed, breakthrough strategies can be effectively accompanied by sequential, micro-adjusting waves of bricolage. This supports Garud & Karnøe’s (2003: 294) observation that ‘It is possible for different paths to emerge depending upon specific starting positions and subsequent dynamics that unfold’. Adding to Yachin and Ioannides’ (2020) finding that rural tourist firms mobilize various resources, our findings indicate that tourism breakthrough investment needs to be followed with bricolage. This is due to the spatial dimension of tourism where a
constantly evolving stream of consumers travels to a destination that therefore itself needs to be constantly responding after investment in path creation. This distributed dimension of spatial bricolage (Korsgaard et al., 2021) in tourism presents an opportunity for further research.

Apart from the need to overcome a decline of tourism which both locations experienced in the 2000s, the conscious decisions made by both regencies to pursue new tourism development could be attributed to two important path-shaping events: 1) the division of the region into two entities (i.e. the former region of Toraja split into TU in the north, which kept the existing tourism agency with its staff, and TT in the south, which had little choice but to re-invent itself as a tourist destination and undertake rivalry with TU), and 2) changing societal leisure practices through the advent of smart phones and social media that led to selfie tourism. The first of the two events was also the decisive catalyst for the two regencies initiating and following different path-shaping trajectories.

However, because of the pre-existing political, socio-cultural, and economic conditions in both regencies, both locations also found themselves subject to various processes of path-dependence (albeit to a different degree) that, in turn, influenced their development. The TU’s legacy as a cultural tourism centre, in combination with strong cultural relationships and social and family structures on one hand, and existing policies, rules and regulations on the other, significantly constrained the development of Lolai Village, thus making its evolution more strongly path-dependent than expected. The TU government continues to maintain its existing rules (particularly with regard to taxation), even though they prevent dramatic changes and hamper the development of the new tourism path (products, facilities, etc.) that is pursued by entrepreneurs and their social and family networks in and outside the region. Strong path-dependence at the regency level can, therefore, be deemed to be the main reason why the evolution of Lolai Village resembles bricolage, with tourist firms following an incremental form of mindful deviation. Intangible resources like social networks, cultural values, symbols, heritage and traditions (Kang, 2017; Yachin & Ioannides, 2020) are an essential element of path dependence and path creation in cultural tourism destinations and require consideration of their specific histories, dimensions and relationships. While considered ‘softer’ resources, they are determining factors in our case studies of cultural tourism path-creation.

By contrast, the TT government has played a much more active role in shaping a new path for the regency. Its conscious efforts to develop a new system of tourism governance and to differentiate itself from Toraja Utara further to the division of Toraja into two units, encouraged the authorities to embark on more dramatic and relatively large-scale changes, and to mindfully encourage and embrace new forms of tourism emerging in the region. Thus, low levels of path-dependence enabled a breakthrough strategy, with the TT government not only facilitating this development, but actively executing the emergence of new tourism products, facilities and attractions. In summary, if path dependence is strong at a regional level, the path shaping process at a firm level is gradual. In contrast, when path dependence is weak at a regional level, more dramatic shifts in paths can occur.

A key finding of our case studies in Toraja is that the application of EEG to cultural tourism evolution both requires and enables a close consideration of the local cultural, ethno-political and social context. This is a key factor shaping cultural tourism development. As cultural tourism in Indonesia refers narrowly to ethnic tourism and multiple regencies directly support cultural practices of the largest ethnic community (politically and/or financially), path creation in cultural tourism is inevitably limited by forces of
path-dependence rooted in the strong ties of ethnic governance structures and identity to the state. As the case of Toraja has demonstrated, political, cultural and social relationships between local government and ethnic cultural tourism operators (including family relations in the region) have been the most important factors determining tourism development, its pace and direction, and the range of resources on which it relies. This is also where concepts of bricolage and breakthrough prove useful. These contrasting forms of mindful deviation enable analysis of how various resources are employed, how institutions enable or limit access to local and external resources, how the political, economic, and cultural backgrounds of entrepreneurs affect their access to these resources, how conflicts between different (groups of) actors unfold, and how tourist destinations respond to external pressures, investments, and influences. As such, a combination of EEG with the notions of bricolage and breakthrough is an effective framework for examining the role that culture, identity and tradition play in the development of tourism destinations.

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Endnotes

1 Unfortunately similar statistics are unavailable for Lolai Village as they were not collected by the family running the attraction.
2 This number is over-estimated as it is based on visitation to Burake Hill. Local residents may visit there several times a year with their family and friends returning to Toraja for Christmas and funerals.
3 Newspapers noted that Lempe needed to upgrade the location and closed the site, but also implied there was a dispute between TU and Lempe regarding taxes. One interview revealed that the site was closed in protest against the TU tax. The dispute ended in March 2020 when a memorandum of agreement between the two parties was signed (Desianti, 2020).

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