

Co-production between governments, interest groups, private companies and citizens  
A case comparison of Vathorst, Spaanse Polder and Gelderse Vallei

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Abstract:

Integrated area development projects and promising alternatives have in common that they surpass the values and possibilities of the individual parties. In the end solitary action will lead to resistance of other parties involved (and those interested). The ambition to make use of the promising alternatives requires collective action and co-production. In this paper 'co-production arrangements' in three cases will be explored and compared. The cases that are included in this paper are Vathorst, the development of a new housing area, Spaanse Polder, the restructuring of an industrial area and Gelderse Vallei, the reconstruction of a rural area.

Keywords: co-production, Spaanse Polder, Gelderse Vallei, Vathorst

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous spatial developments on a limited surface, complex relations, different responsibilities and an abundance of parties and interests; spatial planning in the Netherlands is a challenge. The possibilities of the Dutch government to decide solitary on the desired spatial developments are limited. The Dutch ‘Nota Ruimte’ (Area Development Bill), which is recently made public, presents a different philosophy. This policy document takes active involvement of stakeholders as a starting-point, facilitates new initiatives of stakeholders and pays attention to the actual implementation. The overall idea is: ‘We can’t do it by our selves’.

This philosophy is also named –ontwikkelingsplanologie- (Dammers 2004)<sup>1</sup>. It implicates an important change in the perspective on the roles of governments, namely the transition from vertical to horizontal relations. Where governments used to see themselves as the central actor in the policy making process, at this moment emphasis has shifted to an attitude in which governments develop the policy together with private parties, interest groups and citizens. Teamwork and co-production between these parties will result in enrichment of initiatives, more implementation power, involvement and legitimacy of decisions.

In the following section we will describe some theoretical backgrounds of co-production. In section 3 different arrangements of co-production and their results will be analysed for our three cases Spaanse Polder (the restructuring of an industrial area), Gelderse Vallei (the reconstruction of a rural area) and Vathorst (the development of a new housing area)<sup>2</sup>. In section 4 conclusions will be drawn.

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<sup>1</sup> This Dutch concept is more or less similar to the concept of collaborative planning.

<sup>2</sup> The case material for this paper is adapted from a report that is prepared for the Dutch Ministry of Spatial Planning by Berenschot.

## 2. CO-PRODUCTION

Integrated area development projects have in common that they surpass the values, interests and possibilities of the individual parties (Klijn, 1996). Projects like the development of a new housing area (Vathorst), the restructuring of an industrial area (Spaanse Polder) and the reconstruction of a rural area (Gelderse Vallei) cannot be executed by the (decentral) governments single handedly. There is a consensus about the fact that top-down models (that state one organisation as superior and vertically on top) are often inadequate when it comes to dealing with area development projects (Teisman, 2001).

The Netherlands lack a centre for policy making and societal steering that's powerful enough to force a solution exclusively. Although many parties usually are capable of preventing themselves from being forced to do something they do not agree with, these parties usually do not have 'realisation power' themselves. Considering the almost inevitable dependency on other parties, it is necessary to look for partnerships, coalitions and alliances. It is also necessary because none of the parties is capable to oversee all relevant aspects of a problem. The degree of complexity and dynamics are too high. Furthermore it is relevant to understand that innovation (attributing to solutions for complex problems) originates from unexpected places, often on the edges of present institutions and organisations. Local policy is increasingly being developed and implemented in co-production between a great number of parties.

*Co-production* is a term that can be used to describe that citizens, private companies, interest groups and other organisations in the public and private spheres can make important contributions in the design and realisation of policies in spatial development (Tops, 1996 and 2000). Co-production implies a specific approach to the administrative practice in city and region. In this approach actors are constantly looking for coalitions and alliances between actors in the public and private sphere. Their active co-operation is needed for successful policymaking (Teisman, e.a., 2004). Co-production is a method that expresses shared involvement and responsibilities. In this way co-production implies a transition from vertical to horizontal relationships between parties.

The advantages of co-production seem evident: enrichment of initiatives, more implementation and realisation power, involvement of stakeholders and legitimacy of decisions. Giving

residents, interest groups and private parties more control and responsibilities on the problems in their own streets and neighbourhoods, increases the feeling of being responsible for their own environment. It can be assumed that professionals and other policy experts could also have developed the ideas, initiatives, propositions and suggestions that are developed in the process of co-production themselves. Nevertheless, these ideas, initiatives, propositions and suggestions are given meaning and status by the fact that they are being developed in interaction between stakeholders who have their own views and opinions. The assumption is that actors that participated in the process of co-production will not easily use their powers to hamper the process in the implementation phase.

Co-production processes take place between actors with different backgrounds, views, opinions and interests. Each process may require the involvement of a different set of actors depending on the local situation. In general co-production processes can be categorised in the following way (see: Twist and Kort 2005):

1. Co-production between governments; local, regional, central, et cetera.
2. Co-production between governments and the civil society. The civil society can be defined as the composition of individuals, organisations and institutions that cannot be considered already involved public or private parties. In this respect one can think of cooperation with civilians, but also mosks, privately-owned foundations and so on.
3. Co-production between governments and companies and other profit-institutions (or more general: private parties). This can be formalised in agreements, contracts, or in organisational arrangements in which both types of parties participate.

Study of co-production in practice shows that in each project different combinations of the above categories are chosen. In other words each project designs its own specific co-production arrangement. The case studies prove this (see next sections).

Although the expectations of co-production are high, the realisation of integrated area development projects in practice is difficult. Co-production and partnership are words that are associated with sympathy and warmth at first, but in daily practice they seem to be difficult to realise and maintain (Van Twist, 2001). Interests do not correspond, responsibilities conflict, information is dispersed, rationalities diverge, conceptions about the urgency of problems differ and ideas of the desired direction change constantly.

Behind the euphoria about the need to co-operate written down in policy documents, plans, agreements and visions on development, critical comments on the difficult practice of co-production, co-operation, alliancing and partnering can be heard. Parties start to complain about conversations without commitments ('poldering') and 'talkshows' in which no progress is made. Everyone intervenes in everything. And all of a sudden everyone has to talk to everybody. Processes continue for a long time without resulting in a concrete progress. Sluggishness is one of the mayor complaints in our country (Hendriks en Toonen, 1998).

### 3. CO-PRODUCTION IN PRACTICE; A CASE COMPARISON

In this section we will explore the ‘co-production arrangements’ in three cases:

- Vathorst, the development of a new housing area.
- Spaanse Polder, the restructuring of an industrial area.
- Gelderse Vallei, the reconstruction of a rural area.

Although each case is different in task, in each case the need for co-production is evident. For each case the choices, assessments and results are described. In table 3.1 a short overview of the cases is presented.

Table 3.1: overview of the cases

	<b>Spaanse Polder</b>	<b>Gelderse Vallei</b>	<b>Vathorst</b>
<b>Project</b>	Restructuring of an industrial area.	Reconstruction of a rural area.	The development of a new housing area (VINEX).
<b>Objective</b>	Improving spatial and economic structures of the area, included safety and environment for living.	Improving spatial and economic structures of the area.	Expenditure: realisation of a comfortable living and working environment for 30.000 people.
<b>Actors</b>	The cities of Rotterdam and Schiedam together take on the restructuring. The regional and the national governments are facilitating especially financial. Interest group Spaanse Polder (BVSP). Local entrepreneurs (700) and citizens (few) are asked to participate in the process.	The provinces of Gelderland and Utrecht. Ten surrounding communities and a water board. National government are subsidizing. All sorts of social groups. The SVGV Foundation in which the participants are represented plays a central role.	The city of Amersfoort as initiator. The regional and the national governments are involved (Vinex). Private organisations, social groups and citizens.
<b>Situation</b>	Ending the phase of plan-	Planning is finished, imple-	Realisation of houses, of-

	ning, parts of the project are already being implemented or are already finished.	mentation leads to discussion.	fices and infrastructures is being completed.
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In the following paragraphs the cases will be explored in more detail.

### 3.1 SPAANSE POLDER THE RESTRUCTURING OF AN INDUSTRIAL AREA

#### 3.1.1 Background

This project is about the restructuring of two neighbouring industrial areas: Spaanse Polder and 's-Graveland-Zuid. It is about restructuring in the meaning of spatial restructuring, but also in the meaning of functional restructuring. Spatial restructuring includes improvement of the infrastructure, development of grounds, the removing of social and cultural facilities and boats people live on, and moving businesses to other locations. Functional restructuring is about safety, environment, crime and co-operation. The total surface of both the areas of Spaanse Polder and 's-Graveland-Zuid is about 200 ha. Approximately 700 entrepreneurs are settled in this area. They vary from small to moderate and large and from light to heavy environmental categories. Spaanse Polder and 's-Graveland-Zuid are settled in both the Rotterdam (90%) and Schiedam (10%) area. This is the reason why these cities are co-operating in this project. Both cities are the principals of their own area.

The industrial area finds itself in a downward spiral. Promising businesses move out and vacancy is the effect. This vacancy is being filled by a couple of businesses that could also, or even better, be settled outside of the industrial area or by unreliable entrepreneurs. This negative movement of the departure of successful and promising businesses, the vacancy and the settling of businesses who are not part of the target group of the industrial area, has to be changed. The objective of the restructuring project is to reform the areas of Spaanse Polder and 's-Graveland-Zuid in about 15 years into a modern and mixed industrial area.

### 3.1.2 Co-production arrangement

The initiators of the restructuring are the cities of Rotterdam and Schiedam. From the start of the project, the two cities are working along side at diverse levels: preservation actions, communication policy, making of the development plan, spatial planning, et cetera. The agreements are fixed in a contract. For the implementation, both cities have their own organisation. For parts of the project within the area of both cities, joint project teams are formed.

In the area 700 entrepreneurs are working. They are represented by five different interest groups. Also a lot of entrepreneurs are not represented by an interest group at all. To organise some form of co-ordination one interest group is created in which all previous mentioned groups are united. This interest group is named Belangen Vereniging Spaanse Polder. This group is involved in the planning process. Before formal decision making process begins, entrepreneurs get the chance to react at the plans. The way participation of entrepreneurs gets shape is in other words consultation.

Regional, national and supranational governments are mainly involved in the role of subsidising parties. They are following the developments and try to facilitate if possible. The Ministry of Economics is the co-ordinating Ministry.

### 3.1.3 Observations

The two local governments find that the present co-operation has positive results: each council does his share of the project and the mutual adjustment runs smoothly. A more integrated form of co-operation, like a mutual project organisation and ground exploitation could be more effective, but this possibility is not examined thoroughly. The co-production arrangement that was chosen was politically feasible, a more integrated arrangement was not expected to be politically feasible.

The strategy of both city councils in the restructuring is a strategy of mutual actions in the spheres of maintenance, parts of the projects where opportunities come to light, and tactical acquiring and developing. They have begun at the spots where the problems were most obvious. They have not chosen for an integral redevelopment with wholesale acquiring because this would be financially impossible to realise.



The preferable participation of both the municipalities of Schiedam and Rotterdam and the BVSP is more 'joint fact-finding and decision making'. Until now this is not realised in practice. The two local governments are disappointed in the lack of initiatives from the entrepreneurs. They expected entrepreneurs to develop all kinds of initiatives and more involvement. On the other hand the entrepreneurs are unsure about their actual role and influence in the process. "Can we actually have any influence? The plans are already definitive, aren't they?"

This problem is more widely spread in the restructuring of industrial areas. Entrepreneurs distrust governments and vice versa. Entrepreneurs see government as opponents that they need for acquiring permits and licenses and collect taxes. A government that invites entrepreneurs to actively participate in the policymaking process is a new way of behaving from the point of view of the entrepreneurs. It takes time to get used to the idea of a government as a partner. Furthermore entrepreneurs are mostly occupied by the continuity of their own businesses. Especially in bad economical circumstances, interactive policymaking is not the main focus of the entrepreneurs, unless the restructuring reaches their front door. Other entrepreneurs that are established in the Spaanse Polder area have no direct interest in the restructuring of the industrial area at all: they perform some illegal activities, or have to adapt their activities according to environmental regulation that is more strictly enforced in the restructuring process.

The above mentioned factors explain why the 'seduction' of entrepreneurs to actively participate in the process is not easy for governments. It also explains why the total amount of members of the BVSP is somewhat disappointing and consequently the availability of sufficient means for them to play an active role.

## 3.2 GELDERSE VALLEI; THE RECONSTRUCTION OF A RURAL AREA

### 3.2.1 Background

The reconstruction area Gelderse Vallei/Utrecht-Oost is a unique region in the Netherlands. It includes a low, wet valley, located between two dikes dating back from the ice age. The flanks and gradients together create a special landscape with cultural, historical and natural values. The surface of the area is about 104.000 ha, includes 24 municipalities and has approximately 850.000 inhabitants. 4.500 agricultural firms are located in the area, which altogether encloses 50.000 ha. Approximately half of this region is designated as National Park.

The rest is mainly urban area, water and infrastructure. Looking more closely at the Gelderse Vallei we see that that agriculture, nature, living and working, are in each other's way. The restructuring assignment is to develop a new spatial structure in which agriculture, nature, bushes, landscape, recreation, water, environment and infrastructure are well combined. Besides that, the living and working environment also have to be improved.

### 3.2.2 Co-production arrangement

The Renewal Foundation Gelderse Vallei (SVGv) plays a central role in the reconstruction process. The involved local governments, regional waterboards, and interest groups are working together in this foundation, on the domains of agriculture, nature, environment, water, recreation, economics and livability. The foundation staffs a bureau (Programmabureau Vallei) and functions as reconstruction commission. The board of SVGv is advisor of the provinces Gelderland and Utrecht. The SVGv also is the main composer of the reconstruction plan.

The power of the SVGv seems to be the independent position in the area. Because many private actors in the region are sceptical about the role of the government, the independent position of the foundation is criticised as positive. The SVGv built a better track record as source of information for stakeholders than the local or regional authorities. The SVGv is seen as authoritative and easily accessible partner in development. SVGv plays different roles and has an intermediary position between regional actors as agriculture and environment organisations, counsels and the provinces Gelderland and Utrecht.

### 3.2.3 Observations

The strength of the SVGv is in its easy accessibility and its independent position in the region. Regional parties, farmers, nature organisations and local companies come to SVGv if they want to develop a project in the area. Parties recognise the SVGv as a partner in development, rather than the regional authorities. Besides that SVGv is a platform for debate between regional parties. The SVGv has an intermediary position between regional actors as agriculture and environmental groups, councils and the provinces Gelderland and Utrecht. The SVGv is capable of identifying and coupling interests because of its broad involvement in society that is driven bottom-up. An example is the way SVGv dealt with a pigfarm in the area. In this case SVGv coupled and recombined interests, actors and functions. SVGv de-

veloped a solution in which the owner of the farm received a financial profitable arrangement for closure which resulted in less emission and new possibilities for nature development and rural living more value the closure of and in return.

Recently a discussion has risen about the role of the SVGV in the implementation phase. New regulation, the Investment Budget Rural Area (ILG) that is expected to be in effect in 2007, gives more control to the provinces. As a consequence the question is raised what this means for the position of SVGV. From SVGV's point of view, the provinces are responsible for the implementation, but the real implementation should be done at the level of the local involved parties. This means more or less the continuation of the existing role of SVGV with its discretionary powers. The two involved provinces hold differing opinions. The province of Gelderland requires increased supervision on the activities of SVGV and the expenditure of reconstruction funds. However, Utrecht is willing to give the regional parties some space and freedom and sees SVGV as a vital actor in the prosperity of the reconstruction.

SVGV says that increased supervision may limit the social initiatives in the area. Perhaps giving SVGV power of a governmental body offers a way out. At this moment the foundation implements public tasks while it is a non-governmental organisation and is not formally juridical prepared and identified.

### 3.3 VATHORST; THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW URBAN AREA

#### 3.3.1 Background

Vathorst is a new Amersfoort district, to be realised between 2001 and 2014. In this district 11.000 houses, a 45 ha business area and 100.000 m<sup>2</sup> office location with necessary provisions (care, education, sports, culture, shopping malls and a railway station) will be realised. An important part of the programme is integrating an existing village. Other particular elements of the project are the railway station, the connection to the main infrastructures (the A1 and A28 highways) and the office location. The latter is a project that aims at multifunctional and intensive land use applications: the offices are to be built into a noise barrier.

Vathorst is a Vinex-location. Targets for reducing housing shortage are described in an agreement between the State and the Province of Utrecht, closed on July the first, 2004. The planning area of Vathorst, in the city of Amersfoort, is one of the building locations marked in order to realise these targets. This resulted in an agreement between the province and the city of Amersfoort. Amersfoort found partners for further development of the area. With these partners, a development plan was conceived, dividing the Vathorst area into smaller areas.

Further development and realisation is carried out in separate plans for each smaller area. Today, one third of the programme is realised. The ultimate goal of the whole project is creating a comfortable living and working area with approximately 30.000 inhabitants and 5000 jobs.

### 3.3.2 Co-production arrangement

To develop the area, a PPP-construction was created. This PPP includes the city of Amersfoort, four developers (Bouwfonds, Heijmans, Dura Vermeer en AM Vastgoed) and a housing association (de Alliantie). Amersfoort itself is developer of 1/7<sup>th</sup> part of the housing programme in the commercial sector, the whole of the social sector and all non-commercial provisions. It was explicitly decided to organise some distance between the PPP for the development of Vathorst and local government. Amersfoort is no longer responsible for everything, but uses qualities available on the market instead.

The province of Utrecht was dominant in starting the Vathorst development. While finishing other expansion districts in the area, the province foresaw more urbanisation was needed. Province policy was – and still is – that this urbanisation should take place within the urban district of Utrecht and Amersfoort. This policy aims to protect the province's vulnerable green zones.

The role of national government in the Vathorst development is not easy to point out, because national government has to attend to various interests. For example: the Ministry of Spatial Planning wants to realise comfortable housing in a high-quality environment by pointing out a VINEX-location, but has to solve dredging problems as well.

Interest groups (named Samenwerkende Groeperingen Leefbaar Amersfoort and Hooglanderveen) are involved in the process, but they don't take part in the PPP. They had a

role in creating the development plan. They were consulted. In the process they did not realise all of the targets important to them. They did succeed however in upgrading existing provisions - and creating new provisions - in Hooglanderveen, as well as in realising some extra infrastructural connections, limiting short-cut traffic.

### 3.3.3 Observations

The parties involved in the PPP all indicate that the co-operation is satisfactory. There is respect amongst the partners and no pushing one another into conflicts. When the PPP was founded and the development plan established the activities that followed were labelled 'implementation', thus creating some distance to politics. Particularly the private parties involved find this a major factor to succeed.

Parties see the city's role as distantly or closely committed, depending on their position in the field. To the city, taking part in the PPP is active ground-policy. They are after all a risk bearing partner in the process, giving advice and taking part in several working parties and planning teams. For the private parties consider their role distant, because not every decision made by the PPP has to be put to the City Council.

Co-operation between administrative parties can be judged mediocre. The ministry of Spatial Planning and the Ministry of Transport and Public Works disagreed on the way the infrastructural opening up of Vathorst should be arranged. Province and city disagreed on whether to realise or not realise a new expansion of Amersfoort. The internal co-ordination of the public organisations was not all it could be. Within Spatial Planning, as well as within the Province, colliding decisions were made considering one and the same Vathorst. This is particularly illustrated in the problems considering the dredging depot.

At one hand, the PPP can be considered successful, on the other hand there are some complications. First of all, the European Commission criticised the founding process of the PPP. It is considered contrary to European tender regulations. Second of all, the old planning procedures and the WRO still in force made it possible for private parties to gain ground positions in building areas. For private parties involved in the prior building projects, their close commitment made it easy to be in the picture for Vathorst. Finally, the distant role of the City Council led to discussions over the democratic nature of decisions made.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

From the case studies it can be seen that in each project different choices are made for the design of the co-production arrangement. In the table 4.2 the cases are assessed on the categories of co-production that we mentioned in the above:

- Co-production between governments;
- Co-production between governments and civil society;
- Co-production between governments and private parties;

Table 4.2: co-production in the cases

	<b>Spaanse Polder</b>	<b>Gelderse Vallei</b>	<b>Vathorst</b>
<b>Between governments</b>	Co-production between two local governments Provinces and central government facilitate and subsidise local government	All relevant local governments participate in SVGV SVGV is advisor of the two provinces	No co-production between governments Central government is involved in the planning process because of specific responsibilities.
<b>Between governments and civil society</b>	Interest group of companies (BVSP) is consulted. Active involvement is hard to realise.	Interest groups participate in SVGV	Interest groups and civilians have a role in the design of a development plan. They are consulted in realisation phase.
<b>Between governments and private parties</b>	The individual companies are consulted. No co-production with other private parties like developers et cetera.	Local companies work together with SVGV in the realisation of projects No co-production with other private parties like developers et cetera.	PPP between local government, developers and housing association.

From the table it can be derived that each case has its own co-production arrangement:

- In Spaanse Polder two local governments develop the plans and (the interest groups of) companies are consulted.

- In Gelderse Vallei local governments and interest groups developed a reconstruction plan. Local companies perceive SVGV as partner to realise projects.
- In Vathorst co-production is realised in the public-private partnership between local government, developers and the housing association.

Each of these arrangements has its own problems and successes. The problems and successes are described in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 problems and successes

	<b>Spaanse Polder</b>	<b>Gelderse Vallei</b>	<b>Vathorst</b>
<b>Problems</b>	How to activate the company owners in the co-production process? How to involve developers and other private companies	Relationship between SVGV and the provinces? Who decides on what?	Relationship between PPS and the municipal council Possible conflict between the designed PPS and European regulation
<b>Successes</b>	Co-production between two local governments	The position and realisation power SVGV earned in the process (matchmaker)	Organising capacity and realisation power

In the cases Spaanse Polder and Gelderse Vallei, one sees that aldermen at first are reluctant with new, innovative constructions. There is a constant tension between ‘controlling’ on the one hand and ‘granting moving ground’ on the other. For administrators, judging innovative constructions and horizontal co-operation by their true merits demands practice and some form of administrative intelligence. What is the right balance between ‘granting moving ground’ and control? And how to deal with accountability? In the Vathorst case, the City’s experience with such constructions made a decision easier on the PPP-construction..

Horizontal co-operation in the public and private sphere can cause accountability problems in the relation between the City council and the alderman. Co-operation in equality demands a strong mandate for portfolio-holders. This can collide with the changing insights and composition of the council.

What all three cases have in common is that local government is intensively involved; in Spaanse Polder and Vathorst as initiators, in Gelderse Vallei as one of the parties that participate in SVGV. This can lead to the conclusion that local government should always have intensive involvement to achieve efficient co-production. If this is true it would imply that local government is always the party that makes the difference (and the involvement of other parties can make none).

We explicitly don't draw this conclusion. Instead, one can argue that the intensive involvement of the two local governments in Spaanse Polder hinders involvement of company owners. Policies of local government are often not the reason why innovations are happening. The attention at the level of local politics mostly is attracted (because of bigger and smaller incidents) to the contrary: regulation and accountability, planning and control, conditions and procedures that should safeguard that nothing is overlooked, everything is been taken care of and (better than before) can be controlled.

Who knows what something like a SVGV in this case could have achieved; in the Gelderse Vallei it created a far more inviting environment for co-production. That is what Spaanse Polder needs. From local government this demands granting moving ground, which is not self-evident as also can be seen in the Gelderse Vallei case. Of course there is more to it than that alone in the Spaanse Polder. The particular kind of entrepreneurs and the enormous financial deficits cause the other private parties to hesitate in taking part in the co-production.

We conclude by saying that it is self-evident that governments are part of the process. But it should be no longer always and automatically the central starting point when it comes to co-production. There should be more attention for initiatives for co-production and partnerships between other organisations without a local government directly involved. For example private parties (companies) and organisations that are part of the civil society. An example can be social housing organisations that in public-private partnership with nursing-homes try to reduce the waiting lists in health care. Another example is an institution for homeless people that decides to provide study facilities in co-operation with a regional educational institution. A final example is an educational farm that no longer is exclusively providing agrarian activities but at the same time organises daycare for the handicapped as a result of decision making in the deliberative democracy.



The focus on these profit- and 'not for profit' organisations as a bottom-up approach compensates for the top down bureaucratic image of reality and the established interests of administrative institutions that can sometimes still dominate the policy debate and the practice of co-production. Governments should facilitate these initiatives as much as possible when they occur.

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