Neo-Exoticism as Indonesian Regional Government’s Formula for Developing Ethnic Arts: Concept, Practice, and Criticism

Ikwan Setiawan¹, Andang Subaharianto²

¹,² Faculty of Humanities University of Jember
E-mail: ¹ ikwansetiawan.satra@unej.ac.id, ² andangsbh@gmail.com

Abstract: This article aims to explore the concept and practice of neo-exoticism as an ideal-flexible formula for developing ethnic arts in the midst post-colonial society and neoliberal tourism industry. By analyzing our field data from various events of cultural tourism in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia, we will elaborate some concepts and practices of neo-exoticism. We adopt and develop the idea of neo-exoticism from the concept of “post-colonial exotic” by Huggan (2001), which describes the contestation between the desire of intellectuals and activists to preserve traditional cultures continuously as a significant marker for national identity and the state’s policy to incorporate the beauty of exotic cultures into commercial activities. The framework will help us to analyze primary data from participatory observation in cultural tourism activities in Banyuwangi and interview with some folk artists from 2012-2019 as well as secondary data from online news media. The result of this study shows that the neo-exoticism formula in the development of ethnic arts has several advantages. For the state regime, this formula makes local government easy for repackaging ethnic artistic richness in the form of tourism products such as carnival, festival, spectacular event, and collaborative performance. Indeed, the artists and residents will benefit through their cultural participation, but the investors in tourism with neoliberal flexible principles which incorporate exotic characteristics into their services will get greater profits. However, the neo-exoticism formula will not have a major impact on ethnic arts that still follow the traditional standard performances.

Keywords: neo-exoticism, ethnic arts, post-colonial, neoliberal tourism industry, Banyuwangi

Introduction

In term of culture, one of the characteristics of Indonesia in two last decades has been the rapid growth of cultural tourism which has made ethnic culture one of its components. Cultural tourism is a tourism activity that incorporates and accommodates ethnic culture, such as arts, traditional clothing, culinary, festivals, museums, rituals, crafts, including thematic parks and cultural heritage, which prioritizes the significance of authenticity in the midst of modernity (Salazar, 2012; Hsiao & Chuang, 2015; Croes & Semrad, 2015; Lacy & Douglass, 2002; Croes et al, 2013; Yang, 2011). In Indonesia, cultural tourism, which genealogically has been established since the colonial era with Balinese society its leading destination, has continued to be developed through various programs and destinations that can attract tourists, both domestic and foreign. In the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Tourism made by the National Development Planning Agency, cultural tourism is a priority to be developed together with nature (marine, ecology, and adventure), religion, heritage, culinary, shopping, city, and village tourism as well as MICE tourism (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions). That choice certainly intertwines with the global trend where cultural tourism through its uniqueness attracts tourists, so many countries prioritize its development (Grydehøj, 2012; Özel & Nazmi Kozak, 2012; du Cros, 2009; Kim, 2008; Kim, 2008; Zeppel, 2002; García et al, 2019; Kline et al, 2015; Lim & Bendle, 2012; Chianeh et al, 2018; Xie & Xu, 2004).

Many regional governments in Indonesia create a cultural tourism program by incorporating the diversity of ethnic cultures. In the context of post-colonial society, like Indonesia, finding an authentic culture is, of course, difficult. Socio-cultural, economic, educational, and political systems and practices from the colonial era to the post-colonial era have been colored by the mimicry and mockery process of the dominant culture, which have engendered in-betweenness, duality, and hybridity as the
survival strategies in the midst of the hegemony of modernity (Bhabha, 1992, 1994, 1997; Sylvester, 1999; Kumar, 2011; Enwezor, 2010; Harootunian, 2010; Young, 2012, 2003, 1995; Treacher, 2005; Ghandi, 1998; Venn, 2006, 2000; Schwarz & Ray, 2005; Loomba, 2000; López, 2001) and globalization in all fields of life (During, 2000; Krishnaswamy & Hawley, 2008; Krishna, 2009). Post-colonial societies appropriately and creatively re-read Western knowledge and transform it into local/national spaces and mechanisms (Ascroft, 2001a, 2001b, 2015). Although it is impossible to resist against the influence of modernity, postcoloniality provides opportunities for individuals and communities to continue practicing ethnic cultures that still exist, while defining dynamic subjectivity.

One of districts in Indonesia that has successfully carried out a variety of cultural tourism activities is Banyuwangi, East Java. Since 2011, under the leadership of Regent Abdullah Azwar Anas (commonly known as Regent Anas), the district has managed to establish itself as one of the best tourist destinations in Indonesia. It was proven by many awards, both national and international levels, received by the government of Banyuwangi. In 2016, for example, the government of Banyuwangi won an international UNWTO award in Barcelona. The flagship program is Banyuwangi Festival (hereinafter B-Fest) where Regent Anas’ regime incorporates a variety of local cultures—especially those from Osing community, one of the dominant ethnic communities in Banyuwangi besides Javanese and Madurese—and commodifies them in glamorous events to succeed tourism economic objectives, while providing political benefits to the regent (Setiawan et al, 2017a, 2017b). Setiawan and Subaharianto (2019) argue that B-Fest has produced of neo-exoticism, a discursive and praxis strategy to produce images, meanings, and knowledge of the beauty of local cultures which is not solely to construct ethnicity and solidarity. Neo-exoticism is the use of local cultural diversity — as well as natural beauty — to succeed economic interests driven by the government and investors. To legitimize the economic objectives behind cultural tourism activities, the government and local actors will usually use the pretext of preservation which also provides benefits for improving the welfare of local people, even though clear calculations have never been given.

This article will enrich the discussion regarding neo-exoticism as a discursive formula used by the government of Banyuwangi in accommodating and transforming ethnic arts as one of the main pillars of tourism industry. Particularly, we will discuss (1) the concepts offered by the government of Banyuwangi regarding the empowerment of local arts that adapt to the tourism industry trend at the global level, (2) the dynamics and problems that arise in the empowerment process by using the formula of neo-exoticism, and, (3) the strong interests of the neoliberal tourism industry. The superiority of the formula for the transformation of ethnic cultures into tourism practices that have been relied upon and campaigned by the government of Banyuwangi needs to be criticized to find some contradictory aspects.

Cultural Tourism and Neo-Exoticism

A lot of literature says that cultural tourism can bring positive impacts, including to alleviate poverty (Anderson, 2015), cultural conservation (Yun & Zhang, 2015), develop the economy and diversify livelihoods (Loukaitou-Sideris & Sourelli, 2012; Mbaïwa & Sakuze, 2009), and empowering vulnerable indigenous communities, both culturally and ecologically (Wallace & Russell, 20014; Carr et al, 2016). All of these positive impacts can be obtained through a number of strategies such as appropriate cultural and market-based approaches (Peters, et al, 2011; Kastenholz et al, 2013; Herrero-Prieto & Gómez-Vega, 2017; Mokoena, 2019), good and innovative management (Liu & Chen, 2014; Cetin & Bilginan, 2014; Martinez-Pérez, et al, 2018), and creative marketing (Kantanen & Tikkanen, 2006; Pennington & Thomsen, 2010; Font & McCabe, 2017). However, the government also has economic interest in designing and running various cultural tourism programs. The visit of
domestic and foreign tourists will certainly produce a significant amount of financial transaction that can support regional and national economic growth.

Commercial motivation encourages many post-colonial governments to run cultural tourism programs by incorporating ethnic cultural variety and transforming them flexibly into the formula of tourism industry. Community’s and intellectual’s interests to negotiate local cultures as a strategic force to maintain identity amidst global cultural uniformity trends, on the one hand, and the state's desire to make commercial profits through tourism and cultural industries, on the other hand, become the color of post-colonial exotic (Huggan, 2001). Exoticism as a discursive part of Orientalism to support the colonialism project used to stereotype and subdue non-European people, society and culture (Said, 2003, 2004, 1985; Marcuse, 2004; Elmarsafy, et al, 2003) is positioned as an economic potential that can be commodified as spectacles, destinations and commercial products by the governments. Various expressions of ethnic cultures with high economic value are re-packaged in tourism programs and cultural industry (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). In this format, the existences of traditional cultures are important because it can be raw materials for the creation of many spectacular programs and products. Ethnic arts, rituals, and local fashion may become a strength as well as a cultural resource to attract tourists. The development of local cultures will also be framed not in a conventional way, but through innovative programs that can be used to legitimize the concepts and practices of conservation while simultaneously accumulating profits from tourism.

**The Problem of Post-colonial Subjectivity and Cultural Policy**

For post-colonial countries, one of the dominant problems is how to position subjectivity in global traffic that brings in diverse cultures from developed countries and in the midst of adoption of neoliberal capitalism systems which may influence the orientation and praxis of national life. Indeed, there is still a great desire from ethnic communities to continue to believe, negotiate, and practice local cultures as a marker and binder of solidarity, even though they are also familiar with global lifestyles. The governments, of course, benefit because one of the important contributions of ethnicity is to strengthen the construction of nationalism as a product of modernism (Smith, 1998; Greenfeld, 2006), but it still requires cultural symbolism and mobilization (Eriksen, 2010; May et al, 2004; Kolig et al, 2009; Smith, 2009; Spencer & Wollman, 2002: 57-93; Malešević, 2006; Norbu, 1992). When neoliberal capitalism has been adopted into Indonesia's post-Reform economic and political system, cultural policies have been often overlapped between one ideal and the other ideals; contributing to the creation of conditions of multiple ambivalence. Constructively, cultural policy is the government’s efforts to make regulations on cultural development and empowerment that involve public participation to foster a form of cultural democracy (Mulcahy 2006, 2017; Hadley & Belfiore 2018; Mennell 1981; Belfiore 2016; Langsted 1989; Gibson & Edwards 2016), strengthen cultural values (Behr et al, 2017; Walmsley 2018; Oman 2019; Manchester & Prett 2015; Oancea et al, 2018; Belfiore 2018), and enrich national identity (Villarroya 2012; Al-Zo’by 2019). Nevertheless, cultural policies in the era of market civilization have always brought diverse business interests for maximum capital accumulation (Wise 2002; Banks 2018; Throsby 2010; Craik 2007; Frey 2000; Bille et al, 2016; Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005; Haans & van Witteloostuijn, 2018).

In Indonesia, historically, cultural policy has been inseparable from national interests controlled by the state. During Sukarno’s leadership, the desire to have a national culture encouraged intellectuals and artists to compete in offering cultural concepts from a variety of world cultures in accordance with the choice of parties’ ideology (Lindsay & Liem, 2012), although in the end they continued to incorporate ethnic cultures in cultural policy (Jones, 2013: 272). Meanwhile, in the New Order era, under Suharto's leadership, national cultural policy was directed at supporting liberal-oriented national development projects, but did not require absolute freedom, so culture remained under government
control, including ethnic culture (Jones, 2012: 157-161). In the Reform era, cultural policy is a transformation from the New Order era that prioritized the development of national culture, but the regional governments are given autonomy to manage ethnic culture (Jones, 2012: 175-176) and begin strengthening its linkages with market economic mechanisms (Setiawan, 2012). The ideal for empowering nationalism through national culture which requires serious policies for preservation and development, for example, must clash with the tourism industry and the market-oriented culture industry. Market law—as the main characteristic of the neoliberal economic system—is positioned as the highest rule that will determine the popularity of attractions and tourist destinations in a region. In other words, local governments should adopt and follow the trend of tourism industry in global level. Within this framework, local governments, with their power, use the principle of flexibility to incorporate and articulate cultural wealth into tourism industry programs that not only attract tourists, but also investors. Ethnic cultural exoticism is exploited and at the same time campaigned as a form of preservation.

Method

We will use the conceptual framework above to analyze primary data from participatory observation in cultural tourism activities in Banyuwangi and in-depth interview with some folk artists from 2012-2019 as well as secondary data from online news media. Firstly, we will analyze some cultural tourism events in the form of carnival, festival, spectacular show, and collaborative performances to find the concepts of neo-exoticism. Various glamorous events give different ethnic performances which produce particular meaning related to the traditional ideal constructions in a tourism perspective. The information from folk artists about some problems caused by B-Fest will complete the analysis, especially for showing the negative sides of cultural tourism. It is also important to know comprehensively, through critical analysis, some ideal discourses from online media news related to B-Fest in order to gain the description of an empowering formula for creating various cultural events which bring exotic taste with a new meaning. Secondly, we will analyze the practice of neo-exotic formula in big cultural events in Banyuwangi for showing the innovative patterns in B-Fest, including some dominant discourses campaigned by the government. From such analysis, criticism against the weakness of the formula which is believed to be able to boost the tourism economy can be done.

Results and Discussion

The result of this study shows that neo-exoticism as a formula in the development of ethnic arts has both economic advantages and socio-cultural problems. For the state regime, this formula makes local government easy for repackaging ethnic richness in the form of tourism products such as carnival, festival, spectacular event, and collaborative performance. Neo-exoticism is not intended to criticize colonial perspectives on traditional cultures or to counter the existence of Orientalism perspective in developed countries, particularly for representing various problems in developing countries, such as political issues (Ventura, 2016; Seeger, 2017; Bassil, 2018; Yamaguchi, 2012) and socio-cultural (Rath, 2004; Beck et al, 2018; Khalid, 2011; Dhreshwar, 1998). Instead, the government consciously mobilized the discourse on the importance of traditional arts and transformed them into a glamorous way to support cultural and tourism policies in order to increase commercial profits which are always campaigned to provide benefits for common people. Indeed, the artists and residents will benefit through their cultural participation, but the investors in tourism with neoliberal flexible principles for incorporating exotic celebrations will get greater profits. Furthermore, neo-exoticism will not have a major impact on ethnic arts that are still oriented towards the standard
performance and noble meanings of the past. In that position we will explore, conceptualize and criticize neo-exoticism.

“Carnivalization” and “Fashionization” of Ethnic Arts

At 2011, Regent Anas wanted to maximize ethnic cultural richness in his region, including art, as a material and creative source of cultural tourism programs that would make tourists, both domestic and foreign, visiting Banyuwangi. For him, the preservation of ethnic arts must have an economic impact, both on increasing the regional government’s income and improving people's welfare. Conventional ways such as holding folk arts performances as done by the residents were assumed no longer able to attract the desire of domestic and foreign tourists. A tourism program that could be covered by national and international media was needed. The first choice was to formulate the festival mode as a basis for ethnic arts and cultural activities. This choice was inspired by Jember Fashion Carnival (hereinafter JFC), a fashion carnival event from various ethnic groups in the world that was held in Jember, East Java. The popularity and wide coverage of JFC by national and international media made Regent Anas tempted to copy the event in Banyuwangi with different content. In 2011, Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival (hereinafter BEC) became the first fashion carnival event in Banyuwangi with the theme of ethnic diversity and natural beauty as a source to be used as a luxury fashion. This focus on Banyuwanginese ethnic cultures has been distinguished BEC from JFC.

Within the framework of carnival, exotic ethnic arts, such as gandrung terob, a traditional social dance held for family celebration, are no longer performed as a full break performance in which gandrung (female dancers) will dance with pemaju (male dancers) to the accompaniment of Banyuwanginese gamelan ensemble. The uniqueness of folk dance and music that is usually performed from the evening until the dawn will not be found in BEC because the principle of transformation and commodification of ethnicity only requires fashion glamor with art trinkets. Fashion appearance is positioned as a transformative product of ethnic art that engenders new exotic meanings. Fashionization of ethnic arts is the main formula in the carnival mode to transform and produce new exotic meanings through luxurious and grandiose fashion, but it is actually separated from the comprehensive meaning in the performance standard and loses the historical meaning attached to it. The intimacy, excitement, dynamism, male gaze, and gender struggle that can be interpreted from gandrung show will disappear because what appears in the carnival is the luxury fashion worn by the talents. All the meaning of struggle in the colonial era as constructed, idealized, and campaigned by some Osing cultural experts, could never be found, except in the oral narrative of the MC who delivered it in front of the spectators. To get closer to the meaning of gandrung, fashion show performances are accompanied by live gamelan ensemble. In addition, at the opening of the 2011 BEC, dozens of young female dancers from sanggar—the arts community that organized informal dance education—opened fashion shows by dancing on the highway.

Neo-exoticism, thus, becomes a formula containing a discursive framework as a reference in the development of traditional arts and other cultural expressions that are no longer oriented towards strategic and serious efforts to preserve, but offer them to the tourism market that is open enough for cultural tourism activities. Although folk art has symbolic meanings that help constructing the cultural strength of an ethnic group (Tyukhteneva, 205; Zemtsovsky, 1996), the principle of flexible-transformation facilitates creativity that adopts global cultural popularity, such as carnival, and, then, fill it with modified local content to provide visual entertainment. Ethno-glamorous visualization becomes the basis for the creation of fashion works that are displayed and presented to the spectators as well as giving meaning to new ethnicities that no longer originate from conventional cultural practices. The flexibility of meaning and discourse of ethnicity is indeed contrary to traditional principles in viewing arts which are positioned not only as entertainment but also as a reinforcement
of identity. At BEC 2011 and BEC 2012, several groups of artists and Osing cultural experts protested the “carnivalization of ethnic arts and cultures” because it would marginalize the authentic arts. However, after being approached and given a special explanation by Regent Anas and the officials of the Culture and Tourism Office regarding the purpose of the carnival to introduce Banyuwanginese cultures to the national and international level, they were no longer staging protests.

Culture and tourism bureaucrats certainly have no burden to carry out the commodification of art for carnival tourism. Although there are ethnic meanings and knowledge that are destroyed from an art, the crowded number of viewers and the wide coverage of media, both television, printed, and online media, provide evidence that glamorous events with new exotic meanings and visual beauty can be a spectacular tourist agenda. As a discursive argument to avoid criticism and resistance from folk artists, the government often says that the neo-exotic fashion carnival they performed did not change the meaning of an ethnic art that was being used as the theme of the work. However, the discourse they construct shows overlapping understanding that has not yet been completed, but needs to be disseminated immediately in order to legitimize the implementation of an event. This can be seen clearly, for example, from the 2012 BEC concept that carried the theme of Re-Barong. The theme was revealed into several concepts such as (1) reconstruction, reorganizing in terms of form without changing the original values contained therein; (2) redefining, formulating and rectifying self-understanding; (3) reproduction, maintaining identity through self-propagation; (4) re-actualizing themselves; and, (5) revolution, accelerated structuring, formulation, defense, and self-actualization.

Barong Kemiren, which became the theme of BEC 2012, is a sacred art that is usually held in Kemiren Village, Osing Tourism Village, near to the city. The ritual art with the main appearance of a giant dragon head mask (barong) made of wood according to the hereditary speech has existed since the 17th century. This art is commonly performed for ider bumi ritual (walking around the village), a series of bersih desa ritual (the purification of village). Of course, there is a long historical process which this art has gone through. Besides that, the residents of Kemiren Village also have certain beliefs related to the sacred function of Barong as a means to request protection from various kinds of bala (diseases, disasters, and disturbances). When the historical complexity and the sacred functions of Barong Kemiren are reconciled with the concepts of reconstruction, redefinition, reproduction, re-actualization, and revolution in Re_Barong, we are confronted with the grandeur of the carnival concept which seems to understand the traditional desires of society, but in fact deconstructs all of these ideals within the framework of the carnival from the beginning. Its birth in Europe has been trying to destroy the establishment of meaning and power, even if only for a day.

Reconstruction, which is understood as rearranging shapes without changing sacred values, for example, does sound ideal. Barong Kemiren show does have cosmological-sacred values that bind villagers in the midst of modernity they experience. However, the meaning of sacredness is present when the performance takes place in ritual with the original form of barong. When the barong figure is only used as a cultural source for the activity of making spectacular fashion, we can be sure that the sacred values evaporate along with the boisterous mass of the audience and the camera blitz of journalists and photographers. What appears is not the concept of redefinition, but new-construction, in which the sacred is only an entrance to produce meaning, “transformative sacredness in a global format” that has been adapted to the carnival tourism trend. The reason used to legitimize carnival choices is to introduce the local to the global. In his welcoming speech at the 2012 BEC, Regent Anas straightforwardly said:

‘BEC is a bridge between modernity and locality, because it will present a theme that changes from local customs each year ... This year takes the theme of Re Barong Osing Kemiren. This barong has important significance in the history of Banyuwangi. Which later the original form will be displayed, and reproduced in the form of designs reorganized by our children. This is an offering that we will continue to make.’ (quoted from Tallapessy, 2019).
Regent Anas’ statement is a representation of the great discourse on carnival events that always accommodate the cultural richness of Banyuwangi. ‘Bridge’ is a metaphorical concept that constructs the state regimes at the local level that try to bridge rural and urban communities, between traditional and modern cultures—modernity and locality. This mindset suggests that there is a binary opposition which the state regime is about to outdo and maximize in terms of society and culture. Village communities with a variety of arts and other traditions are a source of new creativities that can attract the coming of tourists. In addition, rural communities with their cultural richness need to be transformed, invited into the logic and laws of the tourist market that demand attractiveness that is not monotonous and always changes in many forms, although it still takes inspiration from cultural roots, no matter how small.

In this frame, the role of the state regime becomes central because they position themselves as leaders who understand what is best for the village communities, including empowering traditional arts into the laws of the tourism economy. Exotism of art and other traditions needs to be exploited flexibly to meet the aesthetic tastes of tourists. Neo-exoticism formula is consistently implemented annually in BEC. Many works have been produced by designers and are exhibited by talents. The creative reality is in accordance with the concepts of reproduction and re-actualization. The ideal of “multiplying” in reproduction is indeed in accordance with the reality where BEC and many other events in B-Fest succeed in giving neo-exotic meaning to the thousands of spectators present or millions of news readers on the media or connoisseurs of visual image in various online and social media platforms. The youths can actualize themselves in various roles in the cultural tourism arena, from designers, talents, to volunteers. However, is it true that all of that can be a way to maintain the identity of Osing community? Ethnic identity is connected with the substance of historical and cultural meaning which is bound and carried out through ritual activities, linguistic, and arts which are quite intense. Meanwhile, B-Fest is only a more modern annual event, so that it will never touch the substance of preservation and strengthening of ethnic identity, because as an event it offers many new meanings that are more flexible and fluid, but still within the framework of a tourism economy that emphasizes the celebration of neo-exotic visual cultures. The government of Banyuwangi realizes that the community has also become accustomed to modernity and tourism activities since the New Order, so that the majority of them will easily accept the carnival formula, let alone covered widely by the media which naturally makes the district's name better and more popular.

The incorporation and transformation of ethnic arts into a fashion show carnival is indeed inseparable from the national and international context that places the carnival as a spectacular event-based cultural tourism as a global trend. The fashionization of traditional arts, then, is not only a regional and national event that invites local people to understand what is happening in the global space. Moreover, events such as idealized BEC can introduce global cultural richness into global space. Regent Anas on many occasions disseminated the idea to the public. In the 2013 BEC press release with the theme The Legend of Kebo-keboan, he said:

‘Carnival is an effective way to promote regional tourism. For this reason, this BEC was held ... While other carnivals were busy pulling themes from the outside in, Banyuwangi was the opposite, and namely exploring what was inside to be introduced to the outside. We want to share local culture with global society ... BEC explores more the concepts and power of themes rather than getting stuck in carnivals that exploit the body. Like a carnival in Brazil that exploits women's bodies as a spectacle ... We often ask how much investment is needed to build buildings, but ignore cultural investments that are very important to strengthen the foundations of this nation.’ (Andriansyah, 2013)

As a smart young leader, Regent Anas has a visionary perspective in positioning tourism and local cultures. BEC neo-exotic event is only an entrance for tourists to enjoy various arts, rituals, culinary, handicraft, and natural beauty, such as Mount Ijen, Sukamade National Park, Alas Purwo National Park, Pulau Merah Beach, and other beautiful places. That means that moving and enlivening the
exotic tourism industry has become the main destination of BEC, from 2011 to the present. Presenting a different carnival look into the power of commercial concepts that can attract tourists. The pride that is proud of is in the form of a carnival that explores the diversity of local culture. For, Regent Anas, Banyuwanginese cultural richness must be used in transformative way by making it a carnival that can be exhibited to domestic and international tourists.

The mobilization of traditional meanings from ethnic arts is not merely presented as an exotic display that is different from Western music. Furthermore, the traditional meaning must be put into a global carnival format that visually looks spectacular. Neo-exoticism which is constructed in carnivals such as BEC is thus oriented to bring cultural tourism products to national and global space, “sharing local culture for global society.” The Regent no longer talks about how to maintain ethnic arts in the midst of the global cultural trends. What's the most important is to “share” the uniqueness and diversity of local arts that have been formatted in global flavors through the carnival format, no longer the original format. For us, the use of the word "share" shows how well the Banyuwangi district government - and also other district governments have similar perspectives - because the uniqueness of local culture is presented to international citizens to meet the tourism industry’s targets. Exoticism which in the colonial period was constructed and disseminated by writers, researchers and colonial government apparatus to strengthen the Orientalism project, in the era of free market economy has been offered openly after repackaged by the government in post-colonial countries such as Indonesia.

To legitimize the commercial interests of BEC—and this is also applied to similar activities in B-Fest—Regent Anas expressed some clever conceptual arguments, but needs to be criticized. First, he said that BEC is concerned with ‘conceptual exploration’ and ‘theme power’ rather than carnivals that exploit body, such as carnival in Brazil which exploits female bodies as spectacles. The comment is actually not necessary, because what is done by BEC—also JFC—is to imitate the growing trend at Rio Carnival. Moreover, according to Lewis (1996), the existence of female talent in Rio Carnival is constantly developing through the circumvention of power, knowledge, and social values about how women should understand their bodies. The female performers merely deceive the system of meaning and power, but are also able to display pretense, so that this carnival can also be a site of resistance. Meanwhile, Pravas (2008) argues that through hybridity concepts and practices, Rio Carnival emphasizes the “racial democratic” character of Samba culture that originates from Afro-Brazilian subjectivity can be used to negotiate alternative values and improve unequal power. So, Rio Carnival cannot be interpreted absolutely as an event to show the female bodies. Even if it has to show excellence, there is no need to give negative comments about the model carnival being emulated. Moreover, at BEC there are also many female talents involved and they also have to show off their bodies wrapped in modified clothing from various arts and other cultural expressions.

Second, Regent Anas positions BEC and other events in B-Fest as cultural investments. Of course this term is good because it positions cultural tourism program in Banyuwangi as an important contribution to local cultures and national cultures which will strengthen the foundation of nationality. Unfortunately, Anas Regent only positions cultural tourism events as a means to sell Banyuwanginese cultural neo-exoticism to the national and international community. Meanwhile, systematic activities to preserve and develop folk arts are still lacking. There is no, for example, grandrung training, so the female dancers who want to dance in terob (a venue for folk arts) are being rare. If the word “investment” is interpreted as allocating funds for profit, what Regent Anas said is true. By performing various neo-exotic cultural tourism events, the government of Banyuwangi benefits in the form of financial income from the tourism sector.
Spectacular Public Performance: “Festivalization” of Ethnic Arts

Another effort to develop and empower ethnic arts in Banyuwangi is to make a spectacular event by taking on a massive performance to present an exotic visual allure. One of the events held in 2012 was Parade Gandrung Sewu (hereinafter PGS, the Parade of a Thousand Gandrung) or, now, Festival Gadrung Sewu (hereinafter FGS, the Festival of a Thousand Gandrung). This event does not present a thousand gandrung terob (the female dancers who are used to dancing with fans). Instead, FGS presents more than a thousand teenage female and male dancers from the representatives of middle and high schools in Banyuwangi. Its main concept is a pseudo-preservation activity in which the dancers are trained to dance gandrung according to the theme each year. In this way, the students are idealized learning gandrung dance without an obligation for becoming gandrung terob. This mass folk dance is presented to thousands of spectators on Boom Beach. Unlike BEC, which packs traditional art in the form of a fashion carnival, FGS continues to model the infinite choreographic works with dance titles that are still in accordance with the standard (pakem). The new exotic meaning can be clearly seen from the choreography that is no longer intended for the people who give gandrung a performance job, but to satisfy the visual desires of the tourists.

From the document of PGS 2012, we see that the main purpose of this event was to promote cultural tourism by using the folk art as Banyuwanginese identity. The spectacular gandrug performance was specifically chosen to “tell” Banyuwangi, especially its’s “new face”, to Indonesia and the world. The new face is a metaphor for the transformation of cultural policies in Banyuwangi under Anas’ leadership that prioritizes the flexible transformation of traditional cultures to become a major component of the tourism industry. Telling is a special mission carried out by this mass event to promote the greatness of Banyuwangi as an area that has a rich culture and natural beauty. Gandrung is positioned as a “special agent” packaged in the form of a mass dance. Once again, that concept from the very beginning emphasized that this event had nothing to do with regeneration or preservation of gandrung terob.

As a spectacular public show, the choreographers of FGS still follow the tradition of gandrung performance in terms of dance, music and song, because the historical meaning of Gandrung is believed to be maintained, even though it is intended for tourist consumption. The themes are Jejer Gandrung (2012), Paju Gandrung (2013), Seblang Subuh (2014), Podho Nonton (2015), Seblang Lukinto (2016), Kembang Pepe (2017), Layar Kumendung (2018), and Panji Sunangkoro (2019). Jejer Gandrung was danced by 1088 dancers from elementary to high school students and professional dancers from art communities (sanggar) telling the history of the birth of gandrung from Seblang ritual—the purification ritual in Olehsari and Bakungan villages where a female dancer experienced trance—up to the colonial period which was used as a tool of struggle against the Dutch colonizers. The choice of the theme aims to remind teen dancers and viewers of the long history of gandrung that must be kept in mind because it relates to the important contribution of art to the early development of Banyuwangi. However, Wolbers (1992: 278-283) argues that the meaning of the struggle and resistance against the Dutch colonizers as interpreted by some local cultural experts (budayawan) based on the songs in the gandrung show seemed excessive because the contextualization with the real conditions was difficult to find. This interpretation could not be separated from the memory of suffering in the colonial period.

The choice to continue using the traditional standard FGS can be read the government’s discursive attempt to show the public that they have an interest in maintaining and preserving gandung historical significance and meaning. Thus, even though it is used as a cultural tourism event, the public will still assume that the government still has the seriousness in managing and developing folk art. The intelligence of this strategy on the one hand is able to eliminate the negative accusations that Anas is using gandrung solely for commercial purposes. On the other hand, the preservation of the historical
meaning and the *gandrung* in the form of mass dance will raise the interest of tourists to watch. The allure of *gandrung* has proven the capacity of this folk art to attract thousands of spectators, even though the majority of them are from Banyuwangi. Most of the spectators from outside Banyuwangi came because they wanted to enjoy a mass dance on Boom Beach. Novi Budihastuti, a tourist from Jakarta who came with her family at FGS 2019, October 12, 2019, said that they had come to watch 3 times because of the cool dance attractions. The graceful movements of a thousand or more dancers make them shudder because of their strong allure (Fanani, 2019). For the metropolitan residents, the visual beauty of the infatuated dances of the young dancers is quite amazing because there is an exotic meaning that still has a traditional nuance without much transformation.

Indeed, neo-exoticism model through the festival of ethnic arts does look promising. The involvement of children, adolescents, and young people in the festival event provides a hope of ensuring regeneration and reducing the fear of loss of local cultures. The absence of transformation that results in significant changes in terms of the art form or total changes in form, such as the carnival model, are cultural benefits of the *festivalization* formula. Why? Because the participants can learn ethnic arts that are positioned as supporters of Banyuwanginese local identity in the midst of their love of global arts. They are expected to have *gandrung* knowledge and choreographic skills and other ethnic arts so that they can share to their communities. Negotiation and offerings of ethnic art forms and meanings to domestic and foreign tourists become soft diplomacy to give a positive impression of the beauty and uniqueness of the exotic Banyuwangi, so that they are expected to be willing to suggest family and friends to visit this district.

Unfortunately, the discourse that places the festival of ethnic arts as an act of ‘cultural advancement,’ as conveyed by Regent Anas when giving a speech at FGS 2019, needs to be criticized. The discourse refers to Bill No. 5 2017 concerning the *Advancement of Culture* in which the government leads efforts to make local and national cultures increasingly developed and advanced through strategic and operational steps, including preservation and empowerment. When it comes to preservation, the first thing to consider is how the sustainability of an art from one generation to the next is. Regeneration is an important issue in conservation efforts. Indeed, the district government ordered each sub-district to send middle and high school students to take part in the exercises several times. However, the training is only carried out for the purpose of the festival, not to educate the prospective *gandurung*. Some information that we gathered from senior gandrung dancers such as Temu and Poniti explain that the regeneration of *gandrung* is increasingly difficult due to the negative stigma of alcoholic drinks and prostitution. In addition, many young women who practice in art communities are not to become *gandrung*, but rather to become dancers who perform according the jobs by government institutions or hotel management in Banyuwangi. In other words, the excitement of FGS with a variety of media coverage and flashes of camera blitz of photographers and tourists did not positively correlate with *gandrung* regeneration. The dancers from art communities which have good relations with the Culture and Tourism Office and hotel management will indeed get many job performances.

**Ethnic Arts in Collaborative Events**

Not only being used as a cultural resource for carnivals and festivals, Osing arts, such as *gandrung* and traditional music, is also used by event creators to collaborate with other arts from foreign cultures. One of the most well-known is the collaboration of Osing music in *Banyuwangi Jazz Festival* (hereinafter abbreviated as BJF) which was held in 2012. Since 2013 until now, it has changed to *Banyuwangi Beach Jazz Festival* (hereinafter BBJF). BJF was held in Gesibu Taman Blambangan, Banyuwangi, while the BBFFFF has been held at Boom Beach. The main concept offered by this event is Banyuwangi's “new face” as *The Sunrise of Java* and ‘telling Banyuwangi to
Indonesia and the world. Jazz represents freedom of expression as well as appreciation for musical achievement. Jazz has a unique way to communicate with its audience. Banyuwangi with his new passion displays its uniqueness and allure. For this reason, jazz will be brought together with local music which is quite lively and dynamic. The main performers in BJF are several outstanding jazz artists along with their respective music groups, such as Syaharani & the Queenfireworks, Rieka Roslan & Reza the Groove, Monita Tahalea & Friends.

The ideal concept to bring together Banyuwangi music with jazz, in fact, is not fully fulfilled. There are only 2 collaborative compositions between some jazz musicians and Osing gamelan musicians. Meanwhile, Syaharini, Rieke Roslan, and Monita Tahalea did not bring Osing-based compositions. Nevertheless, Regent Anas hopes that Banyuwanginese community and artists can “converse” with other music can indeed be fulfilled. At least, BJF could show that in Banyuwangi there is also a creative effort to dialogue ethnic and jazz music. In our opinion, the awareness of Anas’ regime to exploit the potential of Banyuwangi music with new tastes like jazz is the entrance to bring out new creativity based on aesthetic hybridity. Banyuwangi music exotics, both in terms of instruments and songs, can be collaborated flexibly with music genres from abroad so that it can become a new claim that is expected to enrich local culture. In the framework of festival, what is needed is indeed not a complicated work with a composition that requires several months of exercises. The ideal festival is indeed a celebration event to show the outside world, monumental displays that are worked on with attractive models, eye-catching, and interesting for camera shots so that they are easily broadcast as news, of course by adding bombastic discourses. BJF is not intended as a venue for showing of traditional musical works or hybrid music created by local musicians. This event, in our opinion, follows the trend of jazz performances in other regions, such as Ngajogjazz in Yogyakarta, and gives a different touch to the Banyuwangi music world, so the promotion is easier. The target, as already stated, is to attract tourists to come to Banyuwangi, including national and international musicians who are expected to collaborate with local musicians.

Massive media coverage about BJF prompted Regent Anas to order the Culture and Tourism Office to hold BBJF in 2013. The exotic atmosphere of the Boom Beach at night was expected to be able to sharpen the interest of prospective spectators. In response to criticism of the lack of musical collaboration between musicians and jazz singers with Banyuwangi ethnic musicians and songwriters, the event committee asked senior gadrung and singers, Temu, with local musicians to collaborate with Syaharini, an outstanding Indonesian jazz singer. Of course, they could not refuse the request. Aside from having the orders from the Office, they also hoped to get a fortune from the musical collaboration project.

In an ideal level, the concept of BBJF can indeed make cultural researchers amazed at the ability and intelligence of Regent Anas in utilizing ethnic art. First, BBJF could promote local potential, such as Boom Beach and other exotic places. Second, the collaboration of Jakarta jazz musicians with local musicians will be an important marker of creating harmony in civilization, a bridge to explore local wisdom through a musical dialogue approach. BBMF could always provide space for local music to melt with the rhythm of jazz to produce an interesting musical experience. As a continuation of the BJF, BBJF is designed to be more perfect, both in terms of discursive objectives and appearance during the performance. The very typical discourse developed by Regent Anas is the desire to combine the richness of local music with international music as a creative effort to build harmony in civilization. Harmonious rhythm formed from the musical dialogue is expected to be able to present musical sensations that can raise the degree of ethnic music.

Regent Anas believes these two concepts as a formula to promote cultural uniqueness and tourism at the national and global level, including enjoying exotic natural attractions, through musical collaboration. As a program, BBJF ideally could have a positive impact on the lives of local artists. Is it true that this performance has implications for the spirit of empowerment? As a musical
performance, BBJF 2013 was indeed successful. The presence of Syaharani, Tompi, Sandy Sundoro, Glenn Fredly and several other jazz musicians added to the selling power of the event. Ticket prices certainly could not be bought by local residents who come from ordinary people, IDR 300,000 for the festival class, IDR 500,000 for VIPs, and IDR 1,000,000 for VVIP. Stage appearance and multimedia technology that completed it made the waves of Boom Beach more crowded by the musical display. In addition, mass media coverage reinforced the important position of BBJ 2013 in jazz performances in Indonesia.

One of the unique aspects exposed by the media is the collaboration of Jakarta jazz musicians and local musicians who were considered offering musical sensations. This coverage was very much in accordance with the discursive ideal of Anas’ regime.

One of the unique features of the Banyuwangi Jazz Beach Festival is the inclusion of local traditions with jazz music. The veteran singer Syaharani for example, after singing his song, he collaborated with traditional artists to sing a Banyuwangi song called Pethetan. Syaharani's deep voice, combined with the voice of Mbok Temu's sinden, was accompanied by music and colorful dancers. The beautiful and mystical atmosphere flowed and was very entertaining. This is what is called Jazz Indonesia. (Johanesrendy, 2013)

The news constructs a discourse on the uniqueness of musical collaboration that still produces an exotic atmosphere. What is interesting to note is that the musical collaboration carried out is merely a complement to mark the presence of ethnic music in BBJF. Why do we say that? It is because Temu and local musicians only collaborated with Syaharini and her group, but not with other singers such as Trio Lestari (Glenn Fredly, Sandy Sondoro, and Tompi). Even then Syaharini only sang one Osing song, Pethetan (a flower). This means that the presence of Temu and the other musicians is only a formal marker that they have done musical collaboration, and even then for the interests of BBJF, not for further musical development. Indeed that fact can be considered as something normal because the most important thing for Anas’ regime is the emergence of images and discourse that they have tried to dialogue and enrich Osing ethnic music, not the spirit of true empowerment in the cultural realm. In other words, musical transformation and hybridity to build the harmony of civilization is simply a collection of labels to attract journalists to enhance coverage in order to promote tourism excellence. It was that interest that made the committee bringing top jazz musicians from Jakarta. Their presence at BBJF 2013 was actually the main selling point because it would be crowded covered by the media.

Despite all the success and coverage of BBJF 2013 in the media, we can say that the performance never aimed to empower the lives of artists/tradition. The outstanding name of Temu, which has promoted Banyuwangi since the New Order era through various gandrung performances, did not have any implications for the amount of honorarium from the committee. Since the training process for 2 weeks until the performance of BBJF 2013, Temu only received IDR 500,000 for her fee. Meanwhile, local musicians only got IDR 300,000. Indeed, they would not resist against the decision regarding the amount of honorarium, because they are only local artists who do not have political power. However, this fact confirms that when jazz musicians get tens of millions rupiahs from BBJF, local musicians become “sweeteners” who are worshiped but without proper financial appreciation. Of course the fact proves the unequal and unjust treatment for local artists who participate in developing ethnic arts. Furthermore, this fact clearly shows that Anas’ regime does not yet have a policy related to the empowerment of the arts and local artists, even though the reach of the regency is the tourism industry.

**Under the Control of Tourism Industry**

As we mentioned in the discussion above, driving the tourism industry is the main motivation in the creation of many cultural tourism events based on ethnic arts. Indeed there are many artists who enjoy economic fortune through their participation in festivals, parades, carnivals, or performances at hotels and resorts. However, the majority of folk artists still conduct self-efforts to preserve ethnic
arts. Neo-exoticism, thus, is not an ideal formula for the preservation and development of ethnic arts because it has less positive impact. Instead, the formula has a positive impact on the growth of the tourism industry in Banyuwangi. This growth can be seen, for example, from the increase in the number of tourists visiting this area from year to year. Based on data that we proceed from various sources, in 2013 domestic tourists who visited Banyuwangi were 1,057,952 people. In 2018 there was a surge in the number of domestic tourists visiting, 5,039,934 people. The average domestic tourists when visiting Banyuwangi spent money of IDR 1,638,000. The number of tourist arrivals also increased significantly. In 2013, foreign tourists was 10,462 people, a significant increase to 127,420 people in 2018. They spent an average of IDR 3,700,000.

That fact drives tourism service investors to start developing their businesses in Banyuwangi. Several star hotels operate, such as Santika Hotel, Aston Hotel, El Royale Hotel, Dialoog Hotel, Sahid Osing Kemiren, and Illira Hotel. Some resorts complement the exotic desires of tourists towards the beauty of nature. Some resorts that offer exotic of Mount Ijen are Jiwa Jawa Resort and Ijen Villas. The business of restaurants and cafes that offer traditional foods are also growing. Some are even located in village areas not too far from the city, such as Kemarang Restaurant in Tamansuru Village, Glagah Subdistrict. The presence of the hotel service industry, resorts, restaurants and cafes is evidence that there is stretching the tourism industry with local culture and natural beauty as its main menu. The presence of a large investment in Banyuwangi certainly must be supported by a variety tourism events based on local culture and natural beauty, so that the tourists are interested in coming and staying longer. It is not surprising that the presence of star-rated hotels in Banyuwangi is directly correlated with the increasing number of tourist events in B-Fest. In 2012 there were 10 events. That number increased to 15 events in 2013, 23 events in 2014, 36 events in 2015, 53 events in 2016, 56 events in 2017, 77 events in 2018, and 122 events in 2019. Of course, this condition will provide commercial benefits to hotels, resorts, restaurants and other businesses. Positioning B-Fest as a tourism event with a variety of cultural and sport activities combined with natural beauty became an intelligent strategy chosen by Regent Anas in his two leadership periods. Following the trend in the global level, he believes that tourism events can increase regional income and local communities as tourists arrive who will allocate costs during the visit, be able to improve the image of the region in the eyes of tourists and local communities, and can support the marketing of tourist destinations.

Regent Anas’ breakthrough through B-Fest with extensive media coverage and positive changes in terms of development and economic growth has proved to be able to influence the majority of residents. An effective approach to the bureaucrats, village government, community leaders, religious leaders, cultural practitioners, and artists has proved to be able to direct the common perspective and orientation in developing ethnic pleasure and other cultural expressions in the tourism frame. In our notes, in 2011, when BEC was held for the first time, many folk artists refused under the pretext of disturbing the preservation of local art and not reflecting positive values. However, such critical voices also disappear gradually and all cultural tourism programs with neo-exoticism formula in the frame of event tourism run successfully without rejection from Banyuwangi residents. As a proof of consensual acceptance, village government and community members are competing to create village-based cultural tourism events or their unique arts and culture. There is a certain pride when the event that they created can be included in B-Fest agenda because besides getting funding from the district government, their village will also be famous for being covered by the mass media so that in the next event many tourists will come.

The transformation and commodification of local exoticism, including the ethnic arts in it, into the mode of festivals, carnivals, and spectacular performances to support the tourism industry has become a standard formula. Many regional governments in Indonesia have learned from Banyuwangi’s successful story in managing tourism industry. It indicates that neo-exoticism is believed as the appropriate formula for regional governments for developing ethnic arts as well as other cultural
expressions and natural beauty. One that is put forward to highlight the success of B-Fest is its contribution to community empowerment and cultural actors. The discourse has been repeatedly conveyed by Regent Anas on many occasions. The emphasis is that B-Fest event relies on the use of local human resources and institute resources in designing various events. Besides statistical data in the form of increased per capita income as a result of the growth of the tourism industry is always proud of. Since the start of B-Fest in 2012 to 2016, for example, there had been a significant increase in per capita income per year. In 2012 the income per capita was IDR 26, 84 million. The number increased to IDR 30, 08 million in 2013, IDR 33, 63 million in 2014, IDR 37, 78 million in 2015, and IDR 41, 46 million in 2016. The mobilization of economic growth discourse and the welfare of the community and cultural actors as B-Fest's positive impact is the strengthening of public support for the leadership of Regent Anas. Politically, all achievements during his leadership will also be a political investment that will benefit him in the future.

What should be noted is that the mobilization and commodification of ethnicity in each region into cultural tourism has indeed succeeded in bringing domestic tourists from other regions or foreign tourists, but generalist claims regarding economic contributions need to be tested. Several studies have shown that the contribution of event tourism to local economic development is relatively small because many events do not involve poor citizens (Mukwada & Dhlamini, 2012). If various events in B-Fest can improve the lives of folk artists in Banyuwangi, of course, we will not hear many sad stories of those who have to fight hard to survive. Moreover, the claim of positive impact related to preservation of ethnic art through various displays in B-Fest needs to be criticized because the government of Banyuwangi district does not have a systematic and measurable program to preserve gandrung and other ethnic arts. Many art communities run on their own initiative. Gandrung groups break even less from time to time. This confirms that all the celebrations and crowds of the local culture-based tourism industry are not designed to maintain and preserve communal-oriented ethnic arts, because the most important thing is to transform it into tourism glamorous packages.

**Conclusion**

The neo-exoticism formula in the development of ethnic arts and other cultural expressions is indeed considered reasonable and applicable. Other local governments are enthusiastic because there is a lot of artistic potential that can be developed in their area and so far they have not found the right formula. Neo-exoticism makes the uniqueness and diversity of forms and meanings possessed by ethnic arts in each region into cultural capital and resources to be commodified with the principle of flexible transformation in a variety of cultural tourism products with carnivals, festivals, and spectacular performances. The process is possible not only because of the readiness of the government in preparing regulations and campaigning for a discourse on the benefits of community members from cultural tourism events. Moreover, artists, cultural practitioners, and residents in daily life have experienced cultural ambivalence and hybridity in which aspirations to be modern for getting profit in life are also strong, in addition to the desire to preserve ancestral culture. In such conditions, the policy to create spectacular and luxurious cultural products based on ethnic arts was accepted. What's most important for them is the recognition of ethnic signifiers in cultural tourism events so they can still be a bit proud. This is the reality of culture in the midst of the tourism industry trend that mobilizes and commodifies ethnicity or locality.

The neo-exoticism formula in the development of ethnic arts has several advantages. For the state regime, this formula makes local governments easy for repackaging artistic richness in the form of tourism products because they do not have to be burdened with all the historical values and cultural meanings that in the past bound a community. Moreover, community members who support an art have also changed a lot in understanding the meaning of ethnic art. What is exploited then are exotic
meanings that can still be found in various glamorous displays of an event. The tourists' longing for traditional meanings is fulfilled through new meanings. Thus, the mobilization of the great function of communal solidarity and the noble meaning of an art is quite pronounced in oral utterances that are continually voiced by officials and artists. Meanwhile, in the show, the beauty of visual aspects with more flexible meaning is the main choice. Even tourists who want to enjoy ethnic visual beauty do not really have many opportunities to read or learn the history of an art. What they need is the greatness, diversity, and uniqueness that can be felt from a cultural tourism event. For the private sector that invests in the hotel, resort, restaurant, and other sectors, the increasing number of neo-exotic events created by the local government together with artists and community members will benefit greatly because tourists need the services and facilities they provide. That is why, local governments are expected to continue to make creative and innovative breakthroughs in utilizing ethnic arts as a cultural event tourism material. Thus, the government and the private sector are the two factions that will get greater financial advantages. However, the government always argues that the profits are returned for the social welfare.

Neo-exoticism is indeed able to make the artists and residents who accept the *carnivalization* and *festivalization* concepts to continue to develop their potential. The mobilization of the discourse of strengthening local identity while increasing income is a discursive combination that is always campaigned for. Indeed, the artists and residents involved will benefit. However, when compared with the profits of investors who invest in tourism services, their benefits are certainly not comparable. The artists and residents are the subjects who are directed to always be in subordinate relations with the local government so they choose to wait and expect jobs from government events, instead of making their own work. This condition can trap them in an art template in the context of standardized neo-exotic products in accordance with the ideal of the government. In Banyuwangi, many artists have such principles. As for the folk artists who try to survive with the concept of traditional performances, they will be marginalized because their work is not in accordance with the neo-exotic format. Therefore, although it is very good to be used for the development of cultural-oriented tourism, the neo-exoticism formula will not have a big impact on ethnic arts that are still oriented towards the traditional standard and noble meanings of the past. The consequence is that the government and the private sector will improve the role of artists and citizens who agree with neo-exotic formula, while for those who do not agree, being marginalized is a certain consequence.

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