

The Discourse of Cultural Identity Construction of Balikpapan City (A Study on *Kelubut* Batik Motif)

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Abstract. Batik is a form of cultural expression which can express the cultural identity in Indonesia, such as in Balikpapan city. The initiative of Balikpapan City's government to showcase the cultural identity pursued through the local batik motifs produced by the local artisans, one of them is the *Kelubut* batik motif. Beyond its application on batik fabrics, where it is commonly featured in traditional attire, the *Kelubut* motif has been embraced in various public spaces and infrastructures. Therefore, this study analyzed how *Kelubut* batik motifs are constructed as cultural identities of Balikpapan City through the local artisans perspectives. This study employs Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) theory to examine the process of discourse construction in shaping the cultural identity. This study used a qualitative method. The data collection technique was interview and observations. This study found that the discourse in constructing the cultural identity through this motif is carried out through various means, such as through the philosophical values present in the embedded motifs, use of motifs in traditional cloth, use in governmental events, use in training for batik artisans, use in school uniforms, and infrastructure decoration. The identity that is created as a product of that culture is continuously developed along with the policies carried out by the government. Therefore, the findings provide new insights into how policies can construct a cultural identity in a city.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, digital disruption, generative technology, Indonesian literature, literacy crisis

INTRODUCTION

Balikpapan City is a cosmopolitan city in East Kalimantan functioning as a gateway to other cities in the region. The strategic location of Balikpapan City has led to its rapid development and further increase the number of migrants. Since the past, this city was formed by migrating residents (Pratama, 2019). It has a diverse population of many ethnicities and races, such as Javanese, Banjarnese, Bugisnese, Maduranese, Bataknese, Butonese, Sundanese, Ambonese and others (Mutmainnah et al., 2014). The city's diversity is both a challenge and an opportunity for Balikpapan City to showcase its local cultural identity.

The significance of identity for a particular city in Indonesia is demonstrated through its impact on city branding, cultural preservation, economic growth, and global representation. The cultural identity itself plays an important role in city image or character, cultural preservation, local and global (Lestari et al., 2020; R. B. Lestari, 2016). Cultural identity in a city can differentiate a city from other cities in Indonesia. Constructing a city's identity involves tangible and intangible components, whereas intangible aspects such as cultural industries play a significant role in defining the city's identity (Syahrir & Pramono, 2021). The showcase of the cultural identity also caused by the role of Balikpapan city as the buffer zone of the new capital city Indonesia, known as Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), which makes the cultural identity crucial.

In order to showcase its local cultural identity, Balikpapan City government has taken various initiatives related to cultural industries, one of which is the development of its unique local batik (Romiana & Afdholy, 2024). Batik is one of the cultural products which exerts a substantial influence on the cultural identity of a particular region. Balikpapan batik was introduced in 2012 by the Balikpapan government through the Balikpapan Industry Trade and Cooperative Office (Disperindagkop) and the Regional National Craft Council (Dekranasda) by holding a typical Balikpapan motif competition. The competition resulted in the creation of distinctive motifs that highlight Balikpapan's biodiversity and landmarks as well as the Dayak Kenyah carvings art which became the characteristics of Balikpapan's batik (Zakaria, 2021).

In line with the development of Balikpapan batik, local artisans have introduced various motifs that reflect the city's natural wealth and cultural heritage. For examples are the honey bear motif inspired by the mascot of Balikpapan City which also depicts the richness of fauna in Balikpapan, then the Balikpapan ginger motif inspired by the endemic flora of Balikpapan City, and so on. In addition to these motifs, there is one new motif that has become very popular and has become part of the new traditional clothes of Balikpapan which was introduced in the Balikpapan City's anniversary in 2022, namely the *Kelubut* motif.

The batik *Kelubut* motif, a new local batik motif pioneered by the wife of the current mayor of Balikpapan City, who also served as the chairperson of the Regional National Craft Council (Dekranasda) of Balikpapan City. The *Kelubut* motif is inspired by the *Kelubut* or Rambusa plant (*Passiflora Foetida*) which grows abundantly in the city of Balikpapan. It has intricate patterns of leaves and branches. This batik motif is inspired by the *Kelubut* fruit. The fruit is characterized by its fine hair covering and has health benefits for the body. Considering the numerous benefits and the uniqueness of the *Kelubut* plant, this has led to the creation and desire for a distinctive batik from Balikpapan (Susilo, 2022).

In addition, the *Kelubut* batik motif not only serves as a variation of the local batik design but has also evolved into a significant representation of the cultural identity of Balikpapan City. Beyond its application on batik fabrics, where it is commonly featured in traditional attire, the *Kelubut* motif has been embraced in various public spaces and infrastructures. For example, it is prominently displayed on the body of public transportation vehicles, such as the Balikpapan City Trans Bus to show the local identity of Balikpapan city (Agung, 2024; Angelina, 2024).

The use of batik motifs as a local identity has also been shown by several previous studies. Widiyono and Mawarti (2020) examined the societal construction and public recognition of batik in Jepara. The study emphasizes the significance of preserving and respecting batik production as a fashion expression, highlighting the influence of

societal norms and cultural appreciation on its identity. Devina & Atrinawati (2022) stated the Jlamprang motif, originating from the Jlamprang tree, is crucial to Pekalongan's cultural identity and heritage, as it has a significant historical foundation.

Furthermore, the study on the Tamarind fruit motif in Semarang batik highlights its cultural significance, as it was incorporated into the city's traditional motifs and cultural identity (Syakir et al., 2022). Moreover, the Latohan motif, a benthic seaweed found in batik Lasem, Indonesia, which represents the people and culture of the Lasem group and is used in written batik (Darmayanti et al., 2023). Then, Anakotta and Andries (2021) explored how Moluccan scholars in Ambon construct their cultural identity through Cele and batik, revealing the intricate discourse from the local government. A study conducted by Romiana & Afdholy (2024) on Balikpapan batik, which highlights its role in reflecting cultural identity, asserts that preserving Balikpapan batik is an effort to maintain the city's cultural heritage. Batik serves not only as a traditional textile but also as a medium for expressing the cultural identity of Balikpapan. Furthermore, batik symbolizes the diversity of Balikpapan, a multicultural city rich in natural resources.

Previous research has shown that batik inspired by the natural wealth of a region can serve as a cultural identity for that area. However, this research goes beyond examining batik motifs as symbols of local culture and also looks at how the policies of the ruling authorities also have an impact on the construction process of existing cultural identities. It was conducted to enrich research on batik in Balikpapan and enrich the research that had been conducted previously. It delves deeper into how *Kelubut* batik motifs are constructed as cultural identities of Balikpapan City through the local artisans' perspectives. Further, this study also observes how the discourse of this new iconic motif is distributed and practiced in society. This discourse analysis approach provides insight into how a cultural identity is narrated and distributed to the general public. This exploration is important due to the widespread use of this motif and its rapid rise in popularity, especially compared to other motifs, during the tenure of the new leadership. This study employs Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) theory to examine the process of discourse construction in shaping the cultural identity of Balikpapan City through the *Kelubut* batik motifs.

METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative method. It was conducted at Balikpapan City, East Kalimantan, Indonesia for one year. This research relies on data from in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the construction of Balikpapan cultural identity. The selection of informants is done purposively based on the following criteria, namely four local artisans who play a significant role in making various *Kelubut* motifs who have in-depth knowledge of the development of the batik industry in Balikpapan, both from a cultural and economic perspective. Then, the document analysis also taken from the news in local media, events conducted by the Balikpapan City government such as the batik motif competition, upgrading skill training, exhibitions of the local products, digital documents from the official of Youth, Sport and Tourism Office, the official website of Balikpapan City governments, the official website of Cooperatives, MSMEs, and Industry Office of Balikpapan City and books related to batik of Balikpapan. A limitation of this study is the limited number of informants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Further studies could involve other stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive perspective.

The interviews were conducted five times and taken randomly. This interview is expected to provide accurate information about the history and the development of the *Kelubut* motif in Balikpapan City through the local artisans' point of view. Furthermore, the observation was conducted at some events from the local governments. It was conducted to provide other supporting information with the data obtained in the field, which focuses on how the *Kelubut* motif is used in some government events, and the role of the local artisans in developing this motif. This study also observes how the discourse of this new iconic motif distributed and practiced in the society.

The collected data were analyzed using Foucault's theory of discourse, which emphasizes the process of the discourse and how it practiced in the society. This study will examine how the discursive are formed which transform the *Kelubut* Batik motif into a new icon of Balikpapan city. This is because based on Foucault's perspective, a discourse encompasses both language and practice. Foucault aims to figure out the historical context and guiding principles that influence the evolution of organized approaches to addressing certain subjects, specifically practices and discourse formations (Barker & Jane, 2016).

Michel Foucault's discourse analysis theory also explores the intricate relationship between power and identity construction. The work of Foucault has played a crucial role in comprehending the influence of discourses on the formation and control of identities and in uncovering the mechanisms by which power functions within social and cultural contexts. Foucault defines power as an all-encompassing influence that functions through discourses, shaping and controlling identities (Humaidi et al., 2022). This perspective emphasizes that identity is not a fixed or unchanging characteristic but is constantly formed and influenced by discursive practice infused with power dynamics (Wandel, 2001).

This research uses a genealogical approach, which investigates the relationship between power and knowledge, focusing on how different mechanisms of power influence knowledge production and vice versa. Where Foucauldian discursive analysis can be done by identifying how knowledge and power operate in social practices, as well as how individuals are positioned within these power structures. This suggests that genealogy focuses not only on the text, but also on the practical context in which the discourse operates (Hook, 2001).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. *Kelubut* Batik Motif

The *Kelubut* batik motif, known as the Rambusa plant (*Passiflora Foetida*), is associated with Balikpapan City, serving as a cultural symbol. The plant was chosen due to its abundant growth in the Balikpapan Forest, which is closely related to the lives of children in the past who liked to find and eat these plants when adventuring in the forests of Kalimantan. The *Kelubut* plant is a rich symbol of Kalimantan's diverse and beneficial flora. The batik motif inspired by this plant symbolizes the cultural diversity of Balikpapan, which is closely tied to the heterogeneous people of Balikpapan, see Figure 1.



Figure 1 *Kelubut*/Rambusa Plant (*Passiflora Foetida*)

The vines depicted in the batik represent the harmonious relationship of people from different tribes and ethnic groups who live in Balikpapan. They embrace one to another with open arms despite their differences. The fruit's shapes are unique. They are round, and have many seeds inside. They look like mini passion fruits. The color of the fruit will change from green to yellow when it is ripe. It also has fiber protection, symbolizing the city's diverse society, prosperous in many different cultures. Furthermore, the fruit's fiber protection illustrates the community's everlasting guardianship by the power of God.

This motif was produced in 2018 by one of the local batik artisans in Balikpapan and continuously produced by other local artisans in 2020 with different stylization of motifs. However, this motif has become widely known in 2021. This motif just became very popular when the current chairperson of the Regional National Craft Council (Dekranasda), the wife of the mayor of Balikpapan City, frequently wore batik featuring this motif and actively promoted it to the public. She is also the holder of the intellectual property rights of *Kelubut* Batik Balikpapan's name which was registered in 2020. Moreover, the *Kelubut* motif was finally made as one of the batik motifs in Balikpapan and it is officially supported by the local government as a typical batik of Balikpapan City.

This motif has emerged as a new icon that currently represents the cultural identity of Balikpapan City and frequently used as official attire for local government events at the local and national levels. It is usually used for the government officers' uniform in many events and in many government offices. This motif is also used in many types of local souvenirs such as brooch, bags, and scarves. Therefore, the emergence of *Kelubut* motif as the variations of Balikpapan's batik motif, enhancing the artworks in Balikpapan City.

Since this motif has become increasingly popular in government circles, the *Kelubut* motif has various varieties developed by local artisans. The local batik artisans had made many stylizations of this motif with their own characteristics. This is to provide a diverse selection of motifs that can showcase the creativity of local artisans. The creation of diverse batik motifs, inspired by the magnificent beauties of the region, demonstrates the interconnectedness of cultural diversity and indigenous nature in strengthening the cultural identity of a region (Sobandi & Santosa, 2019).

The local artisans commonly enhance this motif by integrating it with various batik motifs, such as ferns, cassava, and oil rigs. This combination of icons not only showcases the *Kelubut* motif's origin but also highlights the diverse natural and industrial elements that define the region's identity. Through the motifs portrayed in many *Kelubut* stylizations, they show the specificity of cultural identity. The artisans

continue to strive to create various motif variations to introduce the city of Balikpapan through the batik art they produce. It is also in line with the study conducted by Syakir et al., (2022) that process of establishing one's identity through batik from indigenous flora as the motifs that are environmentally oriented, hence strengthening the significance of cultural identity.

In order to enrich the variations of this motifs, The Office of Cooperatives, MSMEs, and Industry of Balikpapan City, in collaboration with Regional National Craft Council (Dekranasda) of Balikpapan City, organized a batik motif competition in 2022— the competition focused on creating batik motifs of Balikpapan City, using *Kelubut* motifs. According to the competition guidelines, all artisans in Balikpapan City are permitted to create different stylizations of the *Kelubut* motif, as the objective is to establish *Kelubut* batik as the new symbol of Balikpapan City.

The *Kelubut* plant was the primary source of inspiration for the motif competition. The artisans could combine the *Kelubut* motif with other natural resources or Balikpapan City's icons. The motifs used by the artisans to create stylizations of the *Kelubut* motif generate new ideas. This competition also allowed the artisans to express their imagination freely. Hopefully, the artisans could continue to express their ideas in making batik without restrictions on who is considered as the pioneer.

B. Government Role in Promoting *Kelubut* Motif

The role of government is very influential in shaping the identity of its region. For example, government policies through decentralization and regional autonomy policies established by the Indonesian central government have attempted to build local identity and create opportunities to express and explore different aspects of local community culture and identity in public spaces (Tamrin et al., 2020). Apart from that, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika acts as a unifier that encompasses the various ideologies of the founders of the Indonesian nation, considering its influence in determining the identity and character of the nation (Farouq et al., 2022).

In Balikpapan, the local government also plays a significant role in constructing the city's identity through the *Kelubut* batik motif. It is due to the functions of signs and symbols in batik are essential for comprehending a specific society's cultural and political identity (Widodo et al., 2019). In order to showcase the uniqueness and local identity, the government's policies and support directly influence how this traditional art form is perceived and developed. They also contribute to preserving and promoting the *Kelubut* batik motif as a cultural identity, which impacts the visibility and recognition of this art form nationally.

The endeavor to incorporate batik motifs is being undertaken with great diligence and consistency. One of the measures being implemented is to persist in regulations related to the development and utilization of local batik. The effort to develop and promote local batik is stated in the Mayors of Balikpapan Decree No. 15/2016 on the Utilization of Local batik Motifs which stated that “The Regulation of the Utilization of Typical batik Motif of Balikpapan aims to organize the use of typical batik by small and medium industries to showcase the uniqueness and demonstrate the presence and pride of the region” (The Office of Cooperatives, 2016).

The application of the regulations regarding the *Kelubut* batik motif has been implemented extensively, with this motif often used at government events as uniforms for committees and as souvenirs for government guests held in Balikpapan. Moreover, since Balikpapan became a supporting city for the IKN, the number of international

guests visiting has greatly increased. Local artisans involved in the production process say that this has significantly helped them promote the local batik of Balikpapan, especially the *Kelubut* motif they produce.

In addition, based on the data from digital documents from the official Youth, Sport, and Tourism Office, the introduction of the *Kelubut* batik motif was also done by incorporating this motif into the traditional clothing of Balikpapan, which was introduced in 2022, namely Mahligai traditional cloth. This traditional cloth was also initiated by the wife of the mayor of Balikpapan City, who used the *Kelubut* batik motif as part of this traditional cloth. The *Kelubut* motifs appear in the skirts for the women and men, as well as the accessories.



Figure 2 Mahligai Traditional Cloth of Balikpapan City

Mahligai, in Figure 2, means a palace or castle, symbolizing a beautiful home where people are consistently grateful to God and piety. The traditional clothes of Mahligai Balikpapan are inspired by the culture of the Paser Balik tribe. In the past, the Paser Balik tribe lived in the coastal area of Balikpapan Bay which is the origin tribe of Balikpapan city. The clothing details feature a plain black color symbolizing that Balikpapan is an Oil City. Then, the accessories and embroidery of *Kelubut* motif on this outfit are in golden colors, representing wisdom and prosperity. The men's outfit, which is a plain black Surjan, symbolizes life and piety. The men's cap signifies unity and features a small brooch of a honey bear, which is Balikpapan's mascot. On the chest, there's a honey bear pendant with a golden yellow chain, symbolizing that despite our different tribes and religions, people remain united, and people's ties of friendship are maintained.

For women, the outfit is also in plain black, designed like "kebaya," reflecting the heritage of the Paser Balik tribe from the past. Then, the pointy shape at the bottom of the kebaya which faces each other, symbolizing unity. Then, the *Kelubut* plant appears as the head accessories called "sunting" and brooch in the chest represent jewelry for women. For the bottom, women wear a patterned kain or known as tapih or jarik, which features seven layers of folds at the front. This signifies that we stand on the earth with seven heavens in the universe (Hariyani, 2022).

In addition to the traditional clothing featuring *Kelubut* batik motif, the government also frequently uses this batik motif in many activities like in batik training. During these batik workshops, participants are equipped with knowledge on developing local batik, including how to create gold shimmer lines in batik. In this training, the facilitator also uses the *Kelubut* batik motif as the object to be drawn. This motif also frequently appears on training banners and posters organized by the government. Using this motif

in training also has the advantage of consistently introducing and familiarizing the artisans with the motif.

Moreover, the local government organizes a variety of local, provincial, and national events and exhibitions. In government-organized exhibitions, all batik artisans participate in showcasing their high-quality products. To promote the *Kelubut* motif nationally, the participating artisans also display a large selection of *Kelubut* motif batik and accessories featuring the *Kelubut* motif. This usually occurs when the exhibition is held in and outside the city and organized by the government.

Furthermore, the *Kelubut* motif is showcased during exhibitions and at fashion shows. Its introduction actively engages the youth of Balikpapan City in promoting *Kelubut* batik to the public. Talented young individuals involved in modeling are enlisted to wear *Kelubut* motif attire at local and national government events. This extensive effort aims to sustain the motif's prominence, pioneered by the current mayor's wife, as a new cultural icon of Balikpapan City.

In addition, the government also renovated the infrastructure of Balikpapan's House of batik, Woven, embroidered (BATEBOR), and the *Kelubut* motif, also painted at the entrance of BATEBOR. This place can be used for the local artisan to develop or promote their batik. The BATEBOR House is often visited by visitors from outside the region and school children who receive batik training organized by the government and local batik artisans. The educational communication involved in teaching batik highlights its role in maintaining local wisdom products for future generations. They emphasized the significance of batik as an artistic heritage, cultural expression, and a symbol of Indonesian national identity. It highlights the educational element of passing cultural identity through batik to future generations (Prasetiyo et al., 2022). This revitalization is a form of the city government's commitment to developing batik in Balikpapan City. Furthermore, the appearance of this motif during revitalization also shows how the current leader's role significantly influences the city's symbols and identity.

In 2022, the Balikpapan City government also provided free school uniforms, including a batik uniform with the *Kelubut* motif batik. This is to introduce the local batik to children and young people. The hope is that school children wearing these uniforms will become more acquainted with their cultural identity, recognizing Balikpapan's local batik, the *Kelubut* motif. The aim is to elevate this motif as a cultural symbol of Balikpapan City across various vital sectors.

C. Power and Identity

Hall's conceptualization of cultural identity is marked by its simultaneous dynamism and static nature. Cultural identity is a continuous and dynamic process influenced by a particular society's cultural and historical context. Cultural identity construction is shaped by multiple factors, including individuals establishing themselves as active participants in history, culture, and power (Barker & Jane, 2016). The emergence of the *Kelubut* motif in many governmental events, artisans' trainings, school uniforms, and various infrastructures managed by the Balikpapan City Government shows that the *Kelubut* batik motif adds a new dimension to the city's culture as a new cultural identity in Balikpapan City. Although the *Kelubut* batik motif is not historically tied to Balikpapan City, it has a significant impact as a symbol of the city depicted through the batik motif. Furthermore, in line with the study conducted by Prastio et al. (2021) the batik motif is crucial in developing cultural identity by integrating symbols and aspects

that symbolize the local culture and environment.

The emergence of this motif is not only a symbol of batik cloth as a national heritage but also widely used as a decorative element in government buildings. Therefore, the discourse about the *Kelubut* motif in Balikpapan is fascinating because the idea of *Kelubut* as a Balikpapan cultural identity has penetrated in the political space. It is in line with the study conducted by Anakotta and Andries (2021) that the discourse from the government using the decree can control the people it governs.

In addition, the government policies profoundly impact the identity construction process of batik *Kelubut* Balikpapan. The requirement for people to wear Mahligai traditional cloth with the batik motif *Kelubut* is an example of how a leader regulates traditional cloth and the identity of the individuals they lead. Such regulations also demonstrate that the city's identity is heavily influenced by its leader. This is also acknowledged by batik artisans, who must adapt to changes in leadership as they are often also business owners in the batik industry and need to adjust to market and government demands. These policies establish the legal framework for the production, distribution, and promotion of *Kelubut* batik. This aligns with the research conducted by Candra et al., (2023) on Malangan batik, demonstrating the significant influence of the government in its development.

The distinction between the dominant and subordinate groups lies in the varying power levels and contrasting perspectives on essential matters. In addition, using *Kelubut* motifs that are often carried out in several government programs will also indirectly make the public and artisans recognize *Kelubut* batik motifs; this method is also a discourse it becomes one of the ongoing promotional efforts where it will also enter into the subconscious of the artisans and the community about the presence of the *Kelubut* motif in the society.

Therefore, in the process of constructing Balikpapan's cultural identity, the *Kelubut* motif not only functions as an aesthetic symbol, but also as a dynamic arena where power and meaning are negotiated at the micro level. The interactions between batik artisans, local communities, and government authorities reflect how this motif is accepted, defended, or even challenged by various actors. For example, the batik artisans often have to adjust the design of the *Kelubut* motif to meet market demands and remain culturally relevant, while complying with the standards set by the local government in an effort to brand Balikpapan as a creative city.

In this context, the internalization of the *Kelubut* motif by the local community does not always go smoothly; some groups may feel that the motif does not represent the complexity of their identity or is more inclined to the official narrative composed by the authority. Conversely, there are also individuals or groups who actively use the motif as a tool to assert their local identity in the face of external cultural influences. This process shows that cultural identity is not static, but continues to experience shifts and contestation in accordance with changes in social and political dynamics, in line with Michel Foucault's theory of power relations that shape and are shaped by human subjectivity.

CONCLUSION

Cultural identity occurs when a group creates meaning in a symbolic life system. Discourse controls what can be expressed within specific social and cultural contexts and determines who has the authority to speak, when, and where it takes place. This statement is similar to the cultural identity in Balikpapan City in that the government's discourse in constructing the cultural identity is determined by who leads, when, and

where. This is because the leader's authority can influence the utilization of batik as a cultural identity. Its processes are continuous and dynamic. For instance, the batik motif is also used as traditional cloth, governmental events, artisans' training, school uniforms, and various infrastructures of Balikpapan.

Moreover, the emergence of batik in Balikpapan City is the result of the government's initiation, which continues to develop and follow the direction of the ruling leader at that time. In addition, power is distributed across all levels of a social structure and can create social connections and identities. This can be seen in how the government promotes this *Kelubut* batik motif in many fields to be able to touch all existing social structures. Regardless of the specific form or type of product, batik will consistently be recognized as the cultural heritage of Indonesia. The presence and appreciation of batik, a local tradition representing cultural heritage, is essential in modernization and globalization.

In the context of Michel Foucault's theory of power and identity, this finding makes a new contribution to the understanding of how power operates at the micro level through cultural policies that not only regulate, but also create and direct identity discourse. The *Kelubut* motif, for example, becomes a visual and symbolic tool produced and reproduced within the power structure, which ultimately strengthens the official narrative of Balikpapan as a city with a distinctive cultural identity. Thus, this study reveals that cultural identity is not something fixed, but rather continues to evolve along with the policies implemented by the government. The findings provide new insights into how public policy can be a means of cultural identity construction in a city, expanding the application of Foucault's theory in the context of cultural heritage preservation.

However, this study has some limitation such as the informants who are coming from the local artisans. Therefore, this study suggests to elaborate more perspectives from other parties who are related to the development of batik in Balikpapan.

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