



An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Urban Streetscape of Budapest's Andrassy út

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ABSTRACT

As Budapest's most prominent boulevard, Andrassy út (Andrassy Way) exhibits a variety of urban land uses designed to showcase Hungarian history and culture and provide modern housing and leisure amenities for the city's elite. Designed and constructed in the 1870s, it is anchored in by Erzsébet tér (Erzsébet Square) in the city center and extends 2.42 km (1.5 mi) northeast to Városliget (City Park). This study, conducted in summer 2014 by students in UW-Eau Claire's interdisciplinary Central European Travel Seminar (CETS), examined the cultural streetscape of the boulevard through the lens of geography, history, and music. Teams of researchers were dispatched to designated stretches of Andrassy út to document the ways in which historically and musically significant buildings and institutions coincide with high-end residential and commercial land uses. Landscape analysis was then utilized to document concentrations of specific types of land uses. As the city embarks on a massive redevelopment project that will convert Andrassy út from mixed use corridor into the tourism-focused Andrassy Quarter, this study marks an important transition period in the boulevard's history.

HISTORY OF ANDRÁSSY ÚT

Construction on Andrassy út began in 1872 at the command of Emperor Franz Joseph (Figure 1). Construction was completed in 1885, and the road was given the name Andrassy after a former Prime Minister of Hungary who was a leader in the development of the project. However, the road has been renamed multiple times over the last 130 years, always reflective of the goals of the country's leadership at the time. For example, Körönd ("Circus"), a roundabout on Andrassy út, was renamed Hitler tér during German occupation from 1938 to 1945, when it reverted back to Körönd. After World War II the avenue was renamed "Stalin Street" for the Soviet Premier. During the revolution in 1956 it was renamed "Avenue of Hungarian Youth," reflecting the independent spirit that was strong during the revolution. After the Soviet Union put down the revolution they renamed it "People's Republic Street," which remained the name until 1990 and the fall of communism. It was immediately renamed Andrassy út, and continues to be the heart of Budapest today.

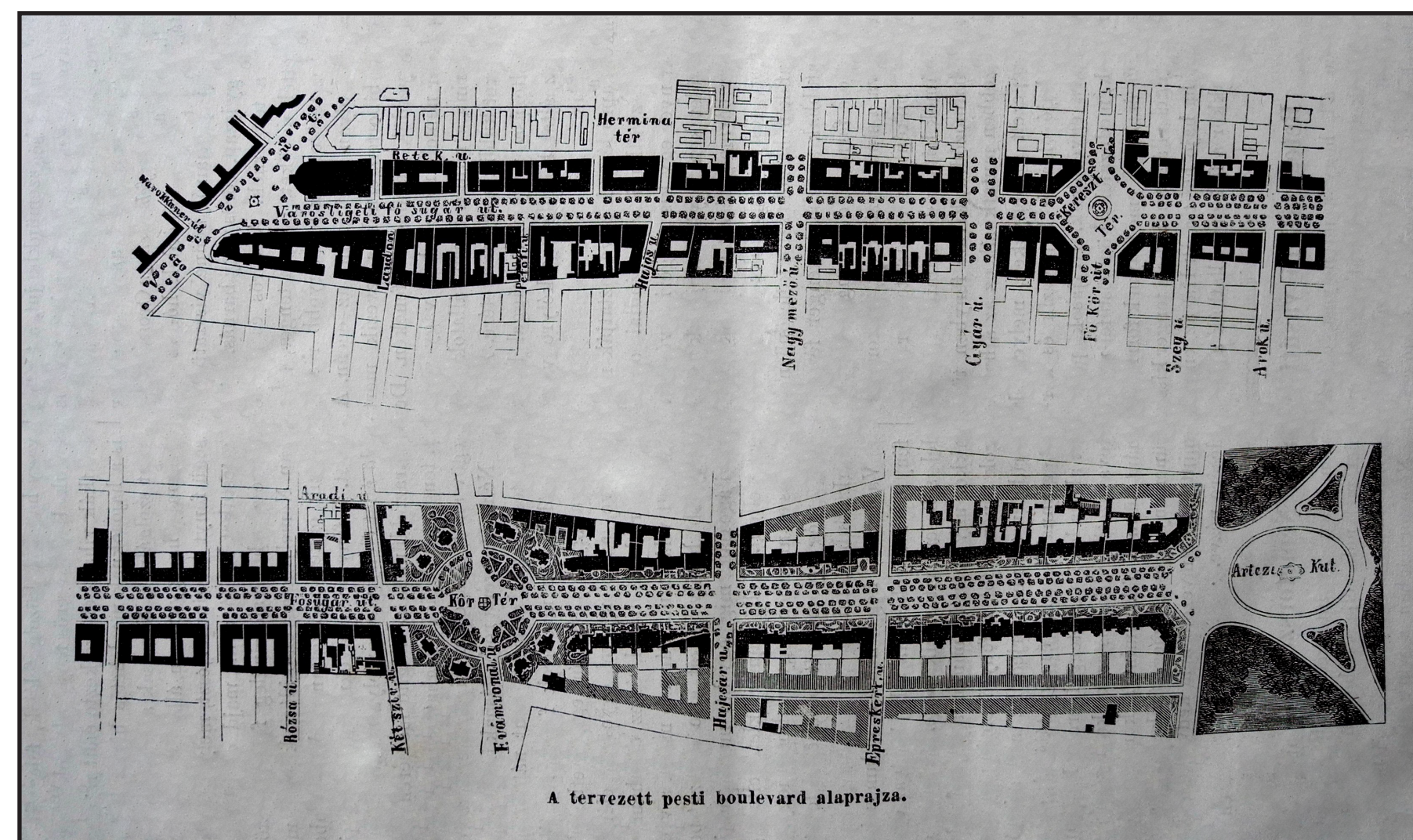


Figure 1. Original plans for Andrassy út in 1870. The south end (top left) was to be anchored by an opera house at Hermina tér (it opened in 1884). The north end (bottom right) was to be anchored by a large park (City Park, which hosted the millennium celebrations of Hungary in 1896). Source: http://m.cdn.blog.hu/t/1timeford/image/ikon%20542_1870.jpg

HISTORY OF THE M1

The M1 Metro Line (also known as the Millennium Line) that runs below Andrassy út is the oldest underground metro line in continental Europe and is the second oldest underground line in the world, younger only than the London's underground's Metropolitan Railway. Construction on the M1 began in 1894 and was completed in 1896, in time for Hungary's millennial anniversary. Emperor Franz Joseph made the trip from Vienna to celebrate the opening of the M1 and was the first person to ride on it. The original stops along the M1 were at important sites in Budapest, and even though some of the stops have changed, the significance of the remaining stops cannot be questioned. When a rider emerges from the M1 stations, located one story below the street surface, they are greeted by some of the most noteworthy landmarks that Budapest has to offer, including the Hungarian State Opera House, Heroes' Square, and the Széchenyi baths (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Photo of M1 Line with Heroes Square in the background. Taken c.1900. Source: EN Academic

OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

The citizens of Central European counties like Hungary experienced remarkable political, social, and economic changes during the twentieth century (Johnson 2011). With independence from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1989, the nation transitioned from an economy that was solely state-run to one that involved private investment. The fall of the "Iron Curtain" opened Hungary's borders to visitors from Western Europe and beyond. As tourism visits increased into the 2010s, the City of Budapest encouraged the private development of tourist amenities along the Andrassy út/M1 corridor that would complement existing landmarks, including the State Opera House, Heroes' Square, and City Park (UNESCO 2013). The key objective of this project was to document contemporary land use along the Andrassy út/M1 corridor, the ways in which Hungarian culture is presented to the public through the built environment, and the impact that globalization is having on the city's cultural landscape.

Seven teams of students enrolled in the 2014 Central European Travel Seminar (CETS) were assigned individual M1 stations to use as "research nodes." Seven stations were selected by the research mentors for the landmarks and land uses near them (Figure 3). Research teams traveled to their station via the M1 and conducted an analysis of land use within two city blocks of the station along Andrassy út and one city block away from Andrassy út. Teams focused on general types of land use (commercial, residential, recreational) and searched for examples of "Kultur" ("high" culture = classical art, classical music and the performing arts) and "kultur" ("low" culture = street art, popular music, global commercial brands). Teams documented their observations in notebooks and through photography. Upon returning to the United States, research teams analyzed their results and produced 10-12 page papers that recorded their observations.

STUDY AREA

The M1 Metro Line is located in the heart of central Budapest and connects the city's commercial core at Vörösmarty tér (Vörösmarty Square) to upper class housing between Kodály Körönd (Kodály Circus) and Hősök tere (Heroes' Square) and near its northern terminus at Mexikói út (Mexico Way). This metro line, and the street that runs above it for most of its two mile route, is an emerging tourist destination and therefore is a good geographic place to observe the ways in which important aspects of high Hungarian culture and nationalism are on display.



Figure 3. A digital aerial view of central Budapest. Source: Google Earth

Stop 1: Vörösmarty tér (Vörösmarty Square)

Vörösmarty tér is named after Mihály Vörösmarty, an author and poet who lived in Budapest from 1800-1855. Vörösmarty is credited with helping a distinct style of Hungarian nationalist literature. Before Vörösmarty, Hungarian literature had an overwhelming classical and German influence. Vörösmarty helped transform it, and he made it national in language and in spirit. One great example of high Kultur that can be found at this stop is the Café Gerbeaud. It is a grand building from the outside and the inside was equally grandiose. It is considered the main attraction at Vörösmarty tér and is seen as one of the most famous and traditional cafés in the city. However, it is easy to see how popular kultur has made its way here, even at the Café Gerbeaud (Figure 4). There is a coffee stand set up just outside the building, selling the same coffee in to-go cups to meet the demands of today's fast paced world. The surrounding shops also show a diversity between Kultur and kultur: There is an H&M store on one side of the square and expensive luxury stores on the other.

In the center of the square is a monument of Vörösmarty, which is surrounded by a grassy park area (Figure 5). Nearby you can see a fountain which is decorated with four golden lions that have streams of water coming out of their mouths and going into basins. The water has rubbed the statues down and now runs onto the ground, showing the need for upkeep. Much of the music that can be heard around the square comes from the nicer shops and cafés, and the upscale music is consistent with the elaborate, decadent decorations on the buildings. Near there is also a place for a temporary stage, which was being set up for a concert while the researchers were collecting data.



Figure 4. The Gerbeaud House, a commercial building on Vörösmarty tér, is home to the Gerbeaud Café, one of Budapest's most famous coffeehouses. Photo by Clare Stratton.



Figure 5. A statue of Mihály Vörösmarty, an important Hungarian poet, graces the center of Vörösmarty tér. Photo by Jessica Koser.

Stop 3: Opera

The Opera stop on the M1 is aptly named. When riders emerge from the underground, they are surrounded by two massive buildings. On one side is the Hungarian State Opera House, with its ornamental exterior and dazzling interior (Figure 8). On the other side is the former National School of Ballet, which is currently being renovated and transformed to a five star hotel (Figure 9). Being around the Opera House is naturally a place of high Kultur, and the surroundings do not disappoint. The stores and restaurants that surround the Opera House are all of high standard and higher cost. This is logical though, because the Opera House has been a beacon for the upper class since it opened in 1884. There are examples of pop kultur that manage to survive in this high end environment. There are coffee shops and transnational fast food restaurants scattered around the surrounding area that does not necessarily fit the mold of the rest of the area.

The neighborhood surrounding the Opera House exhibits a great disparity in wealth among its residents. Just one block away from Andrassy út there are many buildings that look like they were very beautiful and ornate in their prime, but now look disinvested and damaged. Many of these buildings are weathered and have pieces of the stonework missing completely. It is very sad to see how the buildings can be so appear so dire just one block away from refurbished buildings with high end commercial stores.



Figure 8. The Hungarian State Opera House, located on Andrassy út, is a centerpiece of Hungarian culture and identity. Photo by Kate Beu.



Figure 9. The National School of Ballet once called this building home. This prime piece of real estate, located across Andrassy út from the State Opera House, is currently under renovation. Photo by Trace Osborn.

Stop 2: Deák Ferenc Tér (Deák Ferenc Square)

Deák Ferenc Tér is named after Deák Ferenc, a former Minister of Justice. Deák's most significant contribution to Hungary was arguably his effort in drawing out the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. This compromise allowed his country to reclaim both independence and (partial) sovereignty for the historic Kingdom of Hungary from the despised Hapsburgs. The best examples of high Kultur at this stop comes from the high end stores and shops that surround the square: Tommy Hilfner, Hugo Boss, Lacoste, Intimissimi, Lloyd, Furla, Scotch & Soda and Ray Ban. The Deák Ferenc tér M1 station is the only station in the city's metro network which connects the M1, M2, and M3 lines, which makes it a hub of the city's transportation network. This has undoubtedly been of major importance in making Deák Ferenc Tér into the high end area that it is today.

There is much more to the square than just shops though. Musicians play in the square (Figure 6), and there is a park with a giant Ferris wheel that is visible throughout the city (Figure 7). The park would broadcast World Cup soccer matches on projector screens every night, making it a popular place for younger crowds. Also near the square is a building called the Merlin Theater. Before it closed in 2012 it was an international theatre which staged many plays in English, and often had performances by local troupes. There is also a plaque dedicated to Marastoni Jakab, a painter of Italian descent, honoring him for founding the First Hungarian Painting Academy.



Figure 6. Musicians pick some strings in the cool shadows of Deák Ferenc Tér, a popular hangout place for young Hungarians. Photo by Yan Lin Lee.



Figure 7. A day scene at Deák Ferenc Tér. At night the square is lit by a Ferris Wheel and video screens showing sporting events. Photo by Matt Struve.

Stop 4: Oktagon (Octagon)

The Oktagon M1 stop has a unique name, as it does not relate to a person or event that occurs at or near that location. Instead, Oktagon refers to the shape of the road at this exit. There are roads intersecting at 6 points around the center of the square. It is an interesting and complicated space for most drivers. Most visible throughout the area surrounding the Oktagon stop were the influences of the modern pop kultur of the people. This could be seen in many of the businesses lining the side streets connecting with Andrassy út such as bookstores, globalized chains such as a Lego store, a North Face store, a candy store, a tattoo parlor, a modern art gallery, and cafés. There was also a tourist information booth and several restaurants with international themes. Despite the prevalence of pop kultur, there was also evidence of high Kultur present, exemplified through advertisements such as the large Rolex sign on top of a building. Intermixed with all the smaller business were also higher-end shops.

Near the Oktagon is the Terror Museum, an emotional but necessary memorial to those who suffered under National Socialism and Communism (Figure 10). stop were three statues located here honor significant figures Hungarians have chosen to honor. Instead of recalling political figures or military victories from the past, the statues near the Oktagon stop feature Hungarian culture figures such as famous poets and composers like Kálmán Imre (Figure 11).



Figure 10. The cantilever of the Terror Museum cast ominous shadows onto Andrassy út. This museum memorializes those who perished under National Socialism and Communism. Photo by Emily Herkert.



Figure 11. A welcoming statue of famous Hungarian composer Kálmán Imre is located in a plaza just off of Andrassy út near the Oktagon M1 metro station. Photo by Alexis Paladini.

Stop 5: Kodály Körönd (Kodály Circus)

Zoltan Kodály is known as a musician, pioneer in music education, geographer, and a cultural academic in Hungarian history. Initially, in the 1890s, the area was simply called "Körönd" or "circus" because of the jovially painted buildings and circular nature of the center of the square. Kodály has proved himself worthy of being dedicated a metro stop by not only producing strongly patriotic Hungarian music, but also by changing the way that music is taught and practiced in Hungary. Many of the small shops that surround the M1 stop are in fact casual, local vendors, rather than chains or fancy restaurants. Along with the elegant and elite Victory Park, where people can be seen walking around pushing strollers through Victory Park and buying flowers from local, non-corporate vendors, there are also local coffee shops and knick knock stores. This marriage of Kultur and kultur coincides with the essence of Zoltan Kodály himself, displaying how fit the decision was to name this particular stop after him.

When exiting out of the underground stop, riders step out onto Victory Square, a circular alignment of statues depicting some of Hungary's greatest heroes (Figure 12). These heroes are not heroes of the people, but rather highly celebrated generals and poets who have defended Hungary from invasion. This blend of high Kultur and pop kultur shows the diversity of opportunities offered at this M1 stop. One of the buildings happens to be the apartment where Zoltan Kodály lived and developed most of his musical techniques and works that are practiced and taught today. Today, his apartment is a museum that explains his life story and contains an archive that holds all of his original works and documents. The museum still showcases his original apartment layout with all of his original décor and furniture.



Figure 12. A small yellow sign like this, seen in every M1 Metro Line station, reflects the late 19th century time period which the line opened. Multi-family residences are located along Andrassy út south of Kodály Körönd. North of Kodály Körönd residences are exclusive, detached single-family homes. Photo by Amanda Blue.

Stop 6: Hősök tere (Heroes' Square)

Hősök tere is named for the giant beautiful square full of monuments that you see upon exiting the M1 (Figure 13). In 895, seven tribal chieftains and their armies conquered the land that is now known as Hungary, which is what Hungarians trace their lineage back to. There are equestrian statues of the seven chieftains of the Hungarian tribes around the base of the Millennium statue in the center of the square. The square itself was built for the millennial celebrations of 1896 to memorialize the first 1000 years of the Hungarian state. This entire square is high Kultur, as it praises the military, the government, and the individuals who helped write the incredible history of Hungary. All of the statues in the square were of significant importance in the first 1,000 years of Hungary's history. The restaurants and shops near the square show signs of pop kultur, as they sell tourist souvenirs and fast food. Perhaps the most interesting blend of Kultur and kultur at this stop however, is in the music that is played by musicians around the square. There are some playing traditional Hungarian folk instruments, and others playing instruments like the violin, clearly of a high Kultur background.

Upon exiting the M1 it is nearly impossible not to notice the two large buildings along each side of Hősök tere. One of the buildings is the Museum of Fine Arts, which is a beautiful neo-classical structure that is filled with European art. Across the street is the Palace of Art that looks similar to the Museum of Fine Arts, which is similarly filled with huge amounts of European art from across the centuries. Nearby, the huge Budapest City Park with its greenery and ponds offer relief from the concrete and statues that fill Hősök tere. In the other direction there is a residential area, that is removed from the noise and tourism that the main square brings.



Figure 13. Heroes' Square memorializes the leaders of the seven tribes of Hungary who consolidated around the year 900. Photo by Mandy Babb.

Stop 7: Széchenyi fürdő (Széchenyi Baths)

Széchenyi baths, located in City Park, are among the biggest spa and thermal baths in Europe, containing 13 indoor pools and 5 outdoor pools (Figure 14). The baths themselves were named after the wealthy Count Istvan Széchenyi. Széchenyi elevated the status of Budapest by constructing roads, improving the navigability of the Danube River, and building the first suspension bridge connecting the two sides of the river. The last accomplishment has left him an important figure in the city's history. The baths are a great place to observe high Kultur, as they are an integral part of the history of Budapest. Outside of the baths is Budapest City Park. On a sunny summer afternoon there are countless examples of pop kultur: kids swimming in the pond, a small petting zoo, a man playing music, a discotheque across the street from the baths blaring European techno music.

The Budapest City Park was the site of the statue of Joseph Stalin that was toppled during the 1956 Revolution. All that remained after 1956 was the base of the statue and Stalin's feet. Today, there is a plaque commemorating the 1956 Revolution, and all trace of Communist era statues have been taken away (Figure 15). Also found within the confines of Budapest City Park is a statue of Ahn Eak Tai. Ahn was a Korean-born classical musician, composer and conductor. He conducted many major orchestras throughout Europe. In Vienna, he met the legendary composer Richard Strauss. It is said that Strauss was so impressed with Ahn's talent that he asked Ahn to conduct a concert in Budapest in place of him and Ahn was so stressed out because of it that he practiced so hard that, when the concert came he was exhausted that by the last song he collapsed. Nonetheless, the Hungarians loved him and placed a statue of him in the Budapest City Park.



Figure 14. Széchenyi Baths, located in City Park, are a popular place to relax for residents and visitors of all ages. Photo by Courtney Yeager.

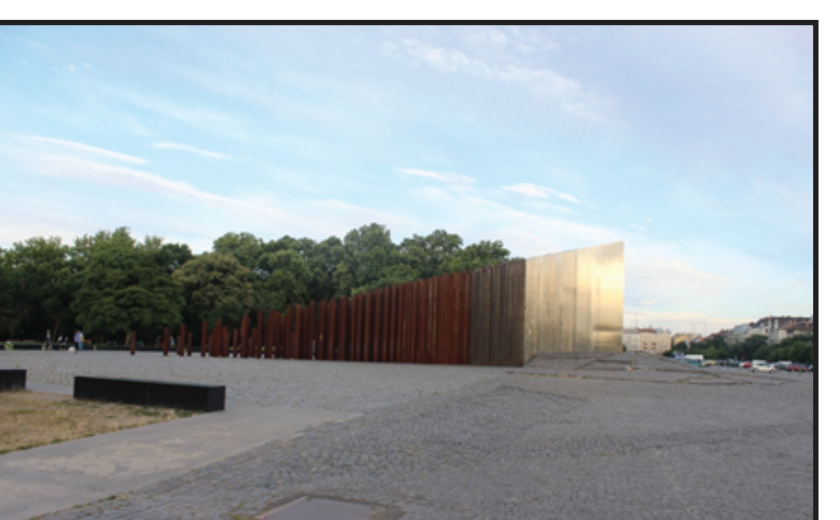


Figure 15. A large memorial to the failed Hungarian Revolution of 1956 is located in City Park. Photo by Courtney Yeager.

SUMMARY

Author Jamie Lafferty (2012) describes the route along Andrassy út as "an atmospheric tour through the city's past". Budapest as a whole, and specifically Andrassy út, is rapidly evolving away from its historic past into the present while maintaining and refining its view of its own history and culture. This project allowed the researchers the opportunity to observe the way that each stop along the M1 is individually attempting to integrate Hungarian history and culture that has been present for centuries with the needs of 21st century capitalism and tourism. The collective understanding taken from this research is that high Kultur is being mixed with pop kultur in Budapest, and that the M1 line is headed for an exciting new future.

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