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A dramaturgy of critical moments in transition: Understanding the dynamics of conflict in socio-political change

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ABSTRACT

Transitions are processes of major change and often come with conflict. There has been limited attention for the complex and multi-dimensional nature of conflict and its relation to transformative change. To capture this complexity, we use the case of ridesharing in Indonesia and the dynamics of conflict that accompany the emergence of digital innovations in mobility services. We use the notion of 'critical moments' to be able to deepen the analysis on particular short timespans during which conflicts are particularly visible. For an in-depth understanding of these critical moments we look at the discursive enactment and mobilize dramaturgical analysis. We argue that: (1) multi-dimensional conflict analysis could be beneficial for transition studies; (2) critical moments are promising units of analysis in transition studies when analysing conflictual dynamics. (3) examining the dramaturgy of politics provides a useful framework and shed new light on where and how conflict in transition takes place and how it plays out.

1. Introduction

Radical innovation and wider processes of socio-technical transition are inevitably accompanied by controversy and conflict. Within the fields of innovation studies and sustainability transitions there has been a long tradition of studying conflict (Rip, 1986; Smith, 2006; Raven, 2007; Meadowcroft, 2009; Smith and Kern, 2009; De Haan and Rotmans, 2011; Lawhon and Murphy, 2012; Pesch, 2015; Belmin et al., 2018; Cuppen et al., 2019). Most of these studies have tended to take a binary and non-dynamic approach to conflicts as existing between incumbent and newcomer actors. This is understandable when starting from a Multi-level Perspective where socio-technical change is described in terms of the interactions between a dominant regime-level structure and a set of niche-level alternatives (Geels, 2002; Geels and Schot, 2007). Conflict is then generally conceived as a struggle between incumbent regimes versus emerging niches (Raven, 2007; Lawhon and Murphy, 2012).

However, in real-life transitions conflicts are seldom binary (Cuppen et al., 2019). Rather, conflicts typically involve a more nuanced and dynamic battleground in which multiple actors with various interests and positions oppose each other (Torrens et al., 2019). In this paper we aim to approach the analysis of conflict in transition processes in a dynamic way. To do so, we develop an

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approach that is inspired by recent conceptual contributions to the fields of sustainability transitions and discourse analysis. We aim to add contextual elaboration focussing on the influence of settings on how conflicts are played out. We present this empirically with a case study on the introduction of digital ride-sharing platforms in Indonesia. Ride-sharing is considered as part of a broader transition to a more sustainable urban mobility system (Shaheen and Cohen, 2019).

Our case study illustrates the emergence of a mobility alternative and the ensuing struggle of multiple storylines to restructure incumbent regimes. We regard the Indonesian political and legal landscapes as well as the streetscape of Indonesian cities as arenas of conflict during the introduction of digital ridesharing innovations. Controversy, protest and decision-making dilemmas are core elements in shaping the trajectory of these innovations and wider transition processes. The Indonesian government has attempted to introduce multiple ad-hoc policies to regulate ridesharing, but this has not resulted in a permanent settlement satisfactory to all parties involved.

A discursive analysis reveals digital ridesharing as a permanent battleground where actors compete, using storylines that foreground issues like unfair competition, disruptive innovation and labour exploitation. Looking at the conflict in terms of a dynamic discursive contestation is our way to generate a deeper understanding of the role of conflict in transitions. Conceptually, our discursive approach relies on the notion of 'critical moments' as particular events that allow negotiation of meanings, formulation or reformulation of dominant discourses. We will use this approach to explore which (interactions of) critical moments produce (new) social realities through changing orders of discourse and the relationship between multiple actors in transition pathways.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a discussion of existing literature on conflict in transition studies and the discursive approach to analyse the dynamics of conflict. Section 3 describes the data collection and data analysis. Section 4 presents the results of the critical moment analysis. Section 5 and 6 discuss and present conclusions of the contribution of critical moment analysis of conflict in transitions.

2. A discursive approach to conflict in transition

Science, Technology and Innovation Studies have a long tradition discussing the importance of controversies and conflict tied up with process of socio-technical change. Conflict has been understood as an active agent in the governance of innovation (Callon, 1981), as ways of informal assessment of new technologies (Rip, 1986), or as forms of participation (Leach and Scoones, 2007). Conflict and controversies reveal the changes taking place in social groups (Belmin et al., 2018). Conflict has also been perceived as an intertwinement of objective facts and subjective perspectives (Latour, 2004; Martin, 2014; Marres, 2015) and as a source of decision-making dilemmas (Giere, 1987). Many studies have focused on struggles for 'legitimation' and 'social acceptance' that innovative niche technologies have to overcome (Devine-Wright, 2005; Wustenhagen et al., 2007; Bergek et al., 2008).

In the field of Sustainability Transitions Studies the role of conflict can be seen as part of an emerging research agenda on power and politics in transitions. Transitions are first and foremost political processes in which actors with varying degrees of access to sources of power vie with one another over the direction that processes of socio-technical change should take, how to steer this and – by implication – who will eventually end up as winners and losers (Hendriks and Grin, 2010; Meadowcroft, 2009; Avelino and Rotmans, 2009; Scrase and Smith, 2009; for a more recent renewed call on research on this topic see Kohler et al., 2019). Transitions result in structural change, which is regarded as a function of the struggle between incumbent and emerging socio-technical systems. When starting from a Multi-level Perspective, socio-technical change is described in terms of the interactions between a dominant regime-level structure and a set of niche-level alternatives (Geels, 2002; Geels and Schot, 2007). Conflict is then generally conceived of in terms of a battle between an incumbent regime and emerging niches (Raven, 2007; Lawhon and Murphy, 2012).

We argue that the focus on the polarization of and power struggle between incumbents and newcomers, or regime followers and niche deviants, risks missing out on the complex nature of conflicts of transition. Such a binary understanding of conflict may lead to a perception that new niche actors always are the carriers of the solution of a problem, while lack of progress is then inevitably caused by the endurance and inertia of incumbent actors. We concur with Cuppen (2019) who suggested to rethink social conflict as unit of analysis in conceptualizing transitions.

Our perception of conflict is more in line with earlier research that positions conflict as a form of informal technology assessment (Rip, 1986), with the idea that conflict or contestation are core elements *within* transformative experimentation for change (Bulkeley et al., 2015; Murphy, 2015). This is taken further in a recent publication by Torrens et al. (2019) that proposes to explore contextual dynamics of experimentation and transition through three different 'lenses'. These lenses have been labelled seedbeds, harbours, and battlegrounds. The first two lenses mostly concern an experimental approach, whereas the 'battlegrounds lens' focuses on the interplay between conflict and socio-technical change and highlights the generative potential of conflicts. In this approach conflict becomes an arena where political contestation is staged and in which processes of building coalitions, alliances and mediation are of key importance (Torrens et al., 2019, pp. 219).

As part of our contribution we want to further unpack the 'battlegrounds' lens by focusing on the "particular event(s)" through which conflicts create opportunities for change (Torrens et al., 2019 pp. 219). Relatedly, we also build on the notion of 'field configuring events' from institutional theory in organization studies to analyse major industry or policy events in order to understand how and where sustainable transitions are performed (Jolly and Raven, 2016).

In this paper we mobilize the concept of *critical moments* to better understand the conflicts in transition processes. A critical moment refers to a particular time and place where dominant discourses are questioned and consequentially dislocated or 'unhinged', which, potentially, allows for the shift to a new order of discourse (Hajer, 2009). We emphasise 'potentially' because critical moments may also lead to restoration of the established order. Key is to analyse the interplay to try to determine what explains the discursive dynamics. The literature on critical moments drives us to identify and unpack tangible opportunities for change and sensitises us to three

potential discursive shifts: (1) reinterpreting the meaning of past and future events (Green and Wheeler, 2004; Leary, 2004); (2) new meaning of events shape the 'standard' behaviour of action (Cobb, 2006 p. 148); (3) reframing the form of relationship between actors (Verloo, 2018). We take these three sensitising insights into account when demarcating critical moments empirically in the analysis of the interplay between conflicts and social change.

An analysis of critical moments puts the analytical focus on the time- and space-specific interplay of actors. The attempt is made to analyse how a discursive order is challenged and what determines whether this challenge is effective in causing a change. Hajer has embedded the analysis of critical moments in a "governance as performance" framework. It focusses on ways in which the discursive order gets 'enacted' using two dimensions: discourse and dramaturgy (Hajer, 2009). The first dimension – discourse analysis[1] – focusses on the 'language-in-use' and enables a deeper understanding of how new concepts and storylines can shape or reshape the way we allocate meaning (ibid). In this sense, the main objective of discourse analysis is to reveal the dynamics of discourse over time. The two important elements in discourse analysis are storylines and metaphors. Storylines refer to condensed statements summarizing complex narratives and metaphors refer to explanations of one thing in terms of another. Using discourse analysis facilitates the acknowledgement of both dominant and marginal storylines and stresses the importance of critical moments (i.e. moments of conflict) rather than long-term stability (Verloo, 2015). Discourse analysis has been frequently used in transition studies (Bosman et al., 2014; Geels, 2014; Hajer, 1995, 2003; Lee and Hess, 2019; Lovell, 2008; Jensen, 2012; Schor, 2014; Smith and Raven, 2012; Stirling, 2011; Pesch, 2015; Rosenbloom et al., 2016; Hess, 2019). Several authors have used it to analyse how conflict and controversies play out discursively in the media (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Sengers et al., 2010; Geels and Verhees, 2011; Yuana et al., 2019).

In this paper, we attempt to enrich discourse analysis by emphasising and adding the second dimension of Hajer's governance as performance framework: dramaturgical analysis. Dramaturgical analysis looks at politics in terms of a 'sequences of staged performances' and distinguishes actors and publics. The word 'Publics' refers back to the work of John Dewey, who pointed out that publics do not a priori exist, but should always be conceived of as the result of a particular struggle; as intertwined with a particular new issue of concern (Dewey / Public and its Problems also in Marres, 2005). In that way, it allows investigation of actors' strategy and its implication for the (re)creation of particular publics. A dramaturgical analysis would aim to understand not only "what people say" but connect its influence to "how they say it, where they say it, and (especially) to whom" (Hajer, 2009, p.65). Three elements are central to a dramaturgy analysis: the scripting, staging and setting of the 'performances'. Scripting refers to the effort to determine the participating actors and the appropriate behaviour in the performance. As in social conflict, scripts are often challenged or disrupted by opposing actors by an alternative or contrasting script. We also look out for these so-called 'counter-scripts'. Staging refers to the 'mis-en-scène', the organisation of the interaction between active players and passive audiences. Setting refers to the physical and organisational situation in which the interaction takes place (ibid). Together, these three elements of dramaturgy allow us to analyse the interaction of the critical moments that produce (new) social realities through changing orders of discourse and the relationship between multiple actors.

By adding the perspective of dramaturgy, we are able to illuminate the way in which scenes and acts interrelate to produce particular staging of public involvement in the context of conflicts. Furthermore, by investigating conflicts as 'sequences of staged performance' it is possible to distinguish under what conditions various actors and stories emerge in the political discussion, and under what conditions such political statements can be made that influence actual decision making. Our paper adopts critical moments and the dramaturgy dimension to show that conflict in transition is not merely about persuasion of the better arguments or better storylines, but it is also a performative act creating a public of its own.

3. Data collection and data analysis

Our methodological approach to our case study draws on the ten steps of Argumentative Discourse Analysis (Hajer, 2005, p.306). The data collected and analysed is specifically geared to identify critical moments and to zoom in on the two governance-as-performance dimensions of discourse dynamics and dramaturgy around the emergence of digital platforms for ride-sharing in Indonesia. This governance-as-performance analysis relies on various sources of textual data and on the study of interactions in particular moments of discursive conflict. During the fieldwork in Indonesia the fortunate opportunity presented itself to be allowed internal access to the textual data at the Indonesian Ministry of Transportation (i.e. minutes of meetings, internal reports) and to be permitted to attend and observe several internal meetings in the Ministry where multiple stakeholders 'performed' their storylines. To present this journey, we structure the ten steps of the Argumentative Discourse Analysis (ADA) approach over three phases of data collection and data analysis.

3.1. First phase

In accordance with the first two steps of the ADA, we started with desk research and 'helicopter interviews' (Hajer, 2005). The aim was to build an initial timeline of the conflict by investigating important moments and to identify initial storylines in the conflict of ride sharing. We first collected and analysed stories from publicly available digital media (i.e. news articles, company websites, blog posts) and have continued to do this throughout the process (2015–2019). Particular attention was paid to keywords related to ridesharing,

[1] Discourse is defined as "an ensemble of notions, ideas, concepts, and categorizations through which meaning is ascribed to social and physical phenomena, and that is produced in and reproduces in turn an identifiable set of practices" (Hajer, 2009, p.60). The discourse approach enables analysis of conflict through an analysis of the language-in-use (Wetherell et al., 2001).

such as "ridesharing", "ride-hailing", *"transportasi online"*, "online taxi" and *"ojek online"* (the motorbike taxi). Desk research was followed by conducting a round of helicopter interviews with several actors who have a more general overview of the topic. This was done in April 2018 with stakeholders across five key organisations in Indonesia: (1) the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology; (2) the Ministry of Transportation; (3) The House of Representatives; (4) the Institute of Demography at the University of Indonesia; and (5) the Centre for Digital Society at Universitas Gadjah Mada. All data from the media and helicopter interviews were imported to NVivo to construct an overview and timeline to connect the actors and their storylines and moments of perceived conflict.

3.2. Second phase

In accordance to steps 3–6 of ADA, intensive fieldwork was conducted in the form of document collection, semi-structured interviews with key actors, and ethnographic observations at the sites of argumentation (from January to April 2019). After the initial round of helicopter interviews, the first author maintained and followed up with her contacts with the Ministry of Transportation and the opportunity arose to become embedded there as a visiting researcher. During this time the first author was given permission to access internal textual data and internal meetings related to ridesharing issues. The access to data and close observations from the inside provided a unique opportunity to shed light on certain critical moments and to analyse the dramaturgical performance through a focus on the particular 'enactment' of the situation.

In terms of document analysis, we were able to gather and analyse meeting notes from the Ministry of Transportation from 2015 to 2018. Some of these notes contain general points of discussion and some notes contain detailed statements of each actor. In addition, slides of presentations about ridesharing regulations from the Ministry of Transportation were collected. To put the documents into perspective and gain an additional understanding of the changing context, an interview was also conducted with the person who delivered the presentations. To complement these textual sources, additional documents, such as research papers and essays, were collected.

During this second phase of fieldwork, 23 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Fifteen of these were in a formal setting and recorded with permission to cite as a reference. Eight other interviews were more informal and not recorded; these anonymised sources cannot be cited as a reference. Interviewees included policy makers, online taxi companies, online taxi drivers, conventional taxi organisations and transport specialists. This covered most of the key actors involved. These interviews provided a valuable context that helped to reveal the discursive dynamics and to identify the set of critical moments. The first part of each semi-structured interview served as an enquiry about what the stakeholder highlights as crucial events, episodes and points in time that were formative in shaping discourses around online taxis. This provided us with a starting point for distilling critical moments based on multi-stakeholder perceptions. The second part of the interview was geared to inquire about the dramaturgy dimension (i.e. where was the events, how was the dynamic in the event) in each of those critical moments and to further unpack the discursive battle as perceived by the interviewee.

To have an even wider and more balanced understanding, ethnographic work and informal interviews were conducted with drivers by taking 84 trips using conventional car taxis, online car taxis, conventional motorbike taxis and online motorbike taxis. During the interviews, the actors were asked about their perception of conflict and critical moments for ridesharing in Indonesia. This was followed up with questions that explore the perceptions on the chain of events and the meanings of those events to the interviewees.

An important source of data for the dramaturgy analysis was the observations of closed meetings of key actors. These meetings focused on how to provide regulation for motorbike ridesharing. With permission from the Ministry of Transportation, the main author was able to observe, take photos, and audio-record these meetings for research purposes. In the context of observing the internal meetings, she took the opportunity to talk informally with the meeting participants during the break times or after the meetings. These talks aimed to gather the reflections of each actor and to plan for follow-up interviews with meeting participants. Support documents that reflect each actor's position and activities were also collected, e.g. public opinions, general statements, policy briefs.

3.3. Third phase

The last phase of our research was one of synthesis, verification and reflection. The aim was to reconstruct the discursive battles – both discursive positions and the dramaturgical components through time – as a way to synthesise the various insights developed during the first and second data-collecting phases. This is in line with step 7 (identification of key incidents), step 8 (analysis of practice), step 9 (interpretation) and step 10 (second visit to key actors) of ADA. Some key actors were revisited in order to 'verify' our findings[2] .

After several iterative analysis steps we identified a set of critical moments, key storylines, and other elements related to discourse dynamics and dramaturgical performance. A good indicator for a critical moment would be when during our semi-structured interviews multiple stakeholders stressed the importance of a similar episode and identified a set of proponents. For example, multiple rounds of street protest by online taxi drivers that critiqued the company exploit their job were identified as crucial by multiple interviewees. In this case we interpret our version of critical moments as moments with a distinct discursive dynamic, i.e. when multiple storylines battle for dominance, or when the dominant storyline is reinforced, redirected or reproduced.

Two months after the fieldwork the opportunity arose to present our initial work at 6th International Workshop on Sharing

[2] According to Hajer "Discourse are inferred from reality by analyst. Yet, when respondents are confronted with the findings, they should at least recognize some of the hidden structure in language" (Hajer, 2005, p.307).

Economy in Utrecht, the Netherlands. In an attempt to verify our initial findings, we invited several of our interviewees to attend this workshop. Delegates from the Ministry of Transportation and Gojek Indonesia were able to attend the synthesis presentation by the first author and gave their remarks about our findings. These remarks demonstrated validation from the key actors of our findings. An early draft version of this paper was also sent to other key players who did not attend the workshop to see if our narrative made sense to them, and as a way to confirm our findings. In sum, all key actors recognised the storylines in our findings.

In the results section, we present our results based on the identified critical moments. For each critical moment we elaborate on the general discursive dynamics (i.e. the language, categories and storylines being used) and on the specifics of dramaturgy (i.e. the where and how of language-in-use; the arena in which the discursive dynamics were performed). The discourse dynamics are characterised by the storylines and the utilisation of metaphors while the dramaturgy is elaborated through an analysis of scripting, setting, and staging. We structure our results into five sub-sections on the bases of five identified critical moments. For each critical moment we elaborate how storylines were contested, reformulated, and/or redirected, along with a dramaturgy analysis describing the situational performances related to that moment. Our paper has a limitation in providing equal details of dramaturgy in each critical moments, which is due to different access of documents as well as opportunity to observe some events. However, we argue that some critical moments with limited information on dramaturgy are still important to articulate to keep the 'sequences of staged performance' consistent.

In this paper we use the term, *'online taxi'*, to describe these digital ridesharing or on-demand taxi services as this was the 'language-in-use', i.e. the term used to cover the story of conflict on-demand taxi in Indonesian media and public debate. We also distinguish between online taxi drivers and online taxi companies, since they were acting as different entities is this conflict.[3]

4. Results: the battleground of digital ridesharing in Indonesia

Motorbike taxi, popularly known as "Ojek", is an informal transport service available at street corners as the only mobility service locally available in the neighbourhood. Commuters in Jakarta perceive Ojek as a solution to get through severe gridlock in the city during rush hours. However, the limited availability and non-standard pricing demotivated commuters to use it on a regular basis. Responding to this problem, Nadiem Makariem founded the phone-based motorbike taxi services company Gojek[4] in Indonesia in 2010. Gojek is a phone-based booking system of motorbike taxi services that promises fixed prices without negotiation hurdles. The service became increasingly popular. In 2015, inspired by the success of Uber, Nadiem extended the Gojek platform to smart phones by launching an online taxi service.

In the same year, Grab[5] and Uber online taxi services arrived in Indonesia and following the success of Gojek motorbike taxi, they launched their motorbike taxi services (GrabBike and UberMotor). Since Uber left Southeast Asia in 2018, Gojek and Grab has started to become strong competitors. Based on Katadata.id in 2019, number of app downloads for Gojek is 155 millions, and the same number to Grab. Based on area of operations, Gojek cover 207 cities five countries (Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines) while Grab cover 338 cities in eight countries (Singapore, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines). As a homegrown company, Gojek claimed contribution of USD 3billion to Indonesian economy as of end 2018. The major investors of Gojek are Astra International, Blibli.com, Facebook, Google, Tencent, Temasek.Paypal, Mitsubish, Visa, and more that lead Gojek to the first decacorn or startup with valuation over USD 10billion in Indonesia. On the other hand, Grab investors include Softbank, Vertex Ventures, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, Booking Holdings which lead them to the first decacorn in Southeast Asia in 2018.

Despite the popularity of digital platform taxi services and their (stated) alleviation of commuter problems, the introduction of these services created controversies and conflicts as the platform enables drivers to provide taxi services with their own car and without an official taxi license. As a result, these digital services can offer a lower market price and threaten the incumbent taxi players. In Indonesia, protests and incidents on the streets against on-demand taxi attracted attention from the popular media. We can discern two rival storylines in public discourse: online taxi as a technological solution to urban mobility on the one hand, and online taxi leading to unfair competition on the other. As a result, the government was pushed to enact a regulation that could tame the disruptive effect of online taxis. The government of Indonesia was confronted with the problematic side of online taxis. Like many other countries (e.g. the Netherlands, France, UK, China, Australia) one of the biggest challenges is the legal definition of online taxis. Is it public transport? The companies present themselves as technology providers, but their direct impact on the private transport market is inevitable and continues to raise criticism about representing unfair business practices. The tension became critical when Uber left

[3] The 'language in use' to describe the online taxi company is 'applicator company'. This term represents the company's position to characterise themselves as an entity who 'only' provides a digital application that connects drivers and customers. The company is reluctant to be regarded as an online taxi company, because that would mean it should comply to transportation law. However, to keep a consistent terminology in this paper we will refer to the term 'online taxi company'.

[4] Gojek, or legally known as PT. Aplikasi Karya Anak Bangsa, is a homegrown on-demand transport services. The existence of Gojek has increased the visibility of motorbike taxi, because Gojek drivers must use green helmets and green jackets. Beside a motorbike taxi service, the Gojek mobile-app offers over 20 on-demand services, from transport to payments, food, logistics, entertainment and lifestyle. Gojek was celebrated as the first unicorn and decacorn originating from Indonesia.

[5] Grab, formerly known as MyTeksi and GrabTaxi, is a Singaporean based on-demand car taxi services founded by Anthony Tan in 2012. Grab car taxi operates in 8 countries in South-East Asia, and entered the Indonesian market in 2014. Looking at the potential of motorbike taxi, Grab introduced GrabBike's motorbike taxi in 2015 in Vietnam and Indonesia. Similar to Gojek, GrabBike drivers must use green helmets and green jackets.

Southeast Asia in March 2018 which intensified competition between Gojek and Grab. The two companies were locked in a price war in order to obtain market domination, which had detrimental effects on drivers' prosperity. Therefore, the government was expected to act in order to prevent chaos. At the same time, the government was ill-equipped to navigate a smooth transition: existing transportation law did not foresee online taxis so the government needed to 'invent' a new strategy and develop regulation. Moreover, the government was undecided if online taxi was to be understood according to the first story line (technological innovation) or the second (unfair competition).

Upon closer examination we can distinguish several critical moments in this evolving battle of online taxis, which helps understand the discursive dynamics. The critical moments were identified from particular events that we interpreted as moments that create the opportunity to formulate, challenge, or reformulate the dominant storylines. During our semi-structured interview, we started our discussion by asking the respondents what they perceived as critical moments in the online taxi conflict. From these interviews (and complement with media analysis), we were able to identify the shifts in regulation (upper line in Fig. 1) and episodes at the street level (lower line in Fig. 1). The orange boxes indicate the four different regulations as introduced by the Ministry of Transportation for online car taxi (PM32/2016, PM26/2017, PM 108/2017, PM 118/2018) and for motorbike taxi (PM 12/2019). The issue of regulations was interspersed by two judicial reviews decided by the Supreme Court (red boxes) that annulled the preceding regulation.

The formulation, introduction and reformulation of these regulations ran in parallel with multiple street protests of proponents and opponents of online taxi (lower line). On the lower line in Fig. 1, the blue boxes represent protests against online taxis. The protests were mainly initiated by conventional taxi drivers, but other public transport providers (i.e. mini-bus) also joined. Fig. 1 also presents the protests of online taxi drivers against Ministry regulation (green boxes) and protests of online taxi drivers against online taxi companies (purple boxes). Not all street protest or regulation change bring up new discursive dynamic, therefore we identified five critical moments that signify the different dynamic of discursive battle i.e. emergence of marginal storylines, redirection of dominant storylines, reinforcement of dominant storylines.[6]

The remainder of this section is divided into five sub-sections that each discuss a critical moment. Each sub-section elaborates the discourse dynamics and the dramaturgy of a critical moment.

4.1. Critical moment 1: the protest against arrest

The first critical moment was the moment when Uber drivers were detained by Jakarta police officers on 19 June 2015, followed by a series of protests and incidents by conventional motorbike taxi services against online taxi services. This moment opens the public debate that employs the storyline of *online taxi is illegal and unfair*. The storyline explains that online taxis are illegal because they lack the operating permits required for conventional transportation. The popularity of online taxis has put pressure on the operations of other conventional taxis. Our interview with the head of Organda (Organization for land transportation; association of public transport companies), characterising the conflict as an unfair battle using the metaphors of "the bound boxers" versus "the bastard"[7] .

> "*They are bastards because they were not originally from our organisation and suddenly they came to our industries and try to change all the rules that we have complied with for years….. Imagine your brother comes to your house and change all of the interior….. Are you offended? Now, imagine a total stranger coming to your house… To me this is a battle in which I am a boxer, I want to fight inside the ring, but my hands and my feet are bound, because I follow the rules; my opponent is the online taxi, they are free to do anything they want and they even tried to create the rules of the game too. I end up severely battered.*" – Shafruhan-Organda, 3 March 2019

The scripting of the detention was orchestrated by Organda, the Polda Metro Jaya police station, and the Jakarta Bureau of Transportation. Running an Uber service was framed as illegal conduct. The Kompas media covered this story using the headline "Uber drivers being framed by Organda". It started by some actors from Organda who 'pretended' to be customers, ordered an Uber service and located the police office of Polda Metro Jaya as their destinations. After arriving at the police station, they were being reported for conducting an illegal act and being processed to the unit of cyber-crime in the police station.[8] These 'sweeping' operations targeted at online taxi drivers, mostly at airports and train stations, continued to become the normal staging of conflict between conventional and online taxi drivers until the end of that year. To prevent customers trapped in this potential violent conflict, the online taxi company directed their customer to hidden or further-afield meeting spots, usually at the airport parking area or outside the train station. As reported in the media, the customers refer to this staging as playing 'cat and mouse'.

As a follow-up to this moment, a public debate emerged about the legality of online taxis. The Minister of Transportation (Ignasius Jonan) banned the operation of online taxis on 17 December 2015, which led to major public controversies that could be observed in conventional and social media. In response, customers of online taxis employed a counter-script. They raised their voices to the Minister's decision through social media, which provided the setting of this moment. The hashtag #SaveGojek became trending on Twitter. The hashtag mobilised mostly people articulating the benefits of online taxis. As a response to this stage, in less than 12 h the President (Joko Widodo) responded to the controversy by posting a tweet and called the Minister to cancel his decision. *"I will call*

[6] Until the end of our field research (May 2019) we still observe some public rejections towards the latest regulation. Therefore, we assume that the resolution of the conflict is still a long way off.

[7] We also found another metaphor which is "banci taxi". Banci is an Indonesian word for sissy, mostly referring to the behavior of a man acting like a woman. In this context, online taxi services present themselves as legitimate, whereas others see them as illegal.

[8] Sources: Kompas.com https://megapolitan.kompas.com/read/2015/06/19/13080201/Lima.Taksi.Uber.Dijebak.Organda.dan.Dishub.DKI.ke.Mapolda.Metro accessed in 20 March 2019.

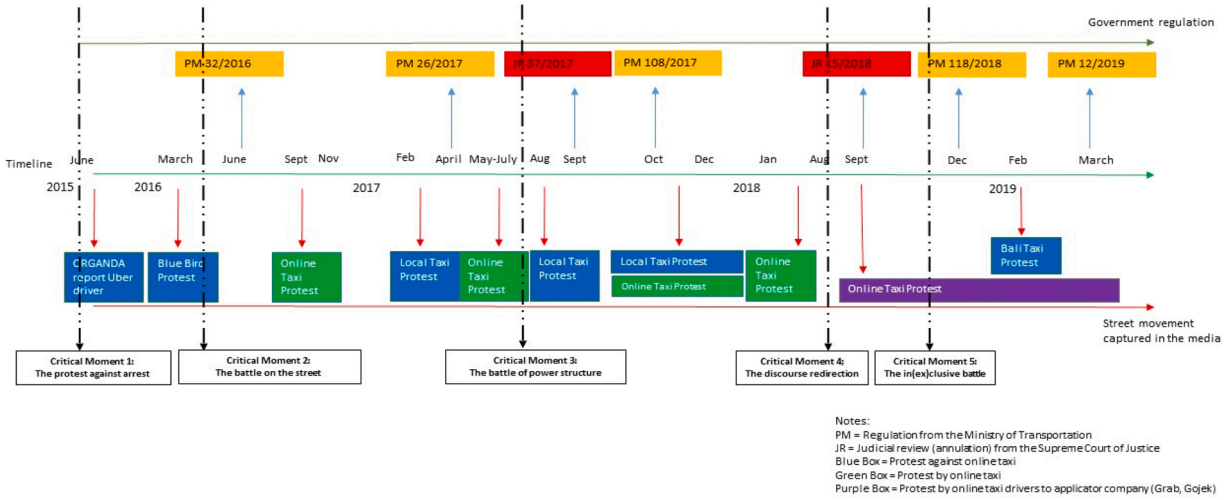

Fig. 1. Discourse dynamics and critical moments during the ridesharing conflict (2015-2019).

Minister of Transportation. Motorbike taxi is needed by the people. Don't let regulation make people suffer. It should be organized-JKW" (Jokowi's tweet, 17 December 2015). This act symbolised the triumph of the counter-script over the dominant storylines.

4.2. Critical moment 2: the battle on the street

The second moment concerns the street protest initiated by thousands of conventional taxi drivers on 22 March 2016. The minister's wavering decision of the previous critical moment formed the cause of the protest, which not only increased the visibility of the 'illegal taxi' storyline, but also engaged additional actors in supporting the storyline. These actors included the taxi drivers association Paguyuban Pengemudi Angkutan Darat (PPAD), the Blue Bird Taxi drivers (representing one of the biggest taxi companies), the Express Taxi drivers, and the Ministry of Transportation. Fig. 2 illustrates the scripting, the setting and the staging of the critical moment, widely reported as the Blue Bird taxi protest. The scripting emphasised that joining the protest should be done based on a sense of solidarity. Taxi drivers parked their cars and blocked the road (picture on the right) and many Blue Bird taxi drivers performed 'sweeping operations', meaning blocking other Blue Bird drivers who did not join the protest.

Furthermore, in this setting we can observe the utilisation of metaphors to convey the main message of the protest. Important in this was the use of posters as timeless and borderless messengers. For example, the left picture in Fig. 1 shows a poster on a Blue Bird taxi. The poster says "Rejection to Uber Taxi. Where is the office of Uber Taxi, Gojek? *Siluman coy*". *Siluman* is an Indonesian word for ghost. The term *"siluman coy"* could be interpreted as a metaphor for arguing that the online taxi is a ghost belonging to another, non-human world, and should not belong to the world of legal taxis.

Interestingly, this protest met with a counter-script reaction in the setting and staging of social media mobilisation. On the same day, hashtag Blue Bird became a national trending topic on Twitter and most of the public reacted negatively towards the violent character of the protest. The negative opinion was shown by the use of the metaphors 'angry birds' in Twitter posts to illustrate the violent acts conducted by Blue Bird taxi drivers. We interpret that this counter-script moment provided room for online taxi companies to employ the second storyline: *online taxi is 'karya anak bangsa'. Karya anak bangsa* is Indonesian for 'work of nation's child'[9] . The following quote from the Gojek company blog illustrates the metaphor of online taxis being a "national pride":

> "*As we launched in 50 cities, we have opened opportunities and created impact for individuals, small business, society and government. We have helped in lifting the welfare of more than 300.000 drivers. One year after becoming a unicorn, our driver's average monthly income has increased by* 15 %. *Our customers get a life-changing experience through the service provided by our drivers*." – Gojek company blog, 31 August 2017

We found that the street protests combined with the social media counteractions form a critical moment, because they had chaotic and violent results and unhinged the dominant storylines. The dominant storyline associated with the street protest backfired in the public media, which allowed the online taxi companies and their customers to employ the second storyline.

Part of the setting in which the unhinging of the dominant storyline happened was the existence of a political void. The President reshuffled his cabinet and Minister of Transportation Ignatius Jonan was replaced by Budi Karya Sumadi. This change in leadership

[9] Karya Anak Bangsa is the legal company name of Gojek. However the media repeatedly associate this term to represent online taxi companies in general. This term signifies multiple meanings: (1) The Indonesian online taxi company, Gojek, is a celebrated homegrown hero as they became the first unicorn and decacorn in the country; (2) as a homegrown company, online taxi services provide a heroic solution to urban commuter problems; (3) online taxi opens up massive employment opportunities and improves driver's standard of living; (4) online taxi also improves the income of small restaurants through their food delivery services.

Fig. 2. The 22 March 2016 street protests (left picture source: Tempo.co; right picture source: Liputan6.com/Johan Tallo).

provided the opportunity for the Ministry to reformulate the storylines and their position towards the conflict.

However, the Ministry decided to reinforce the 'illegal taxi' storyline by introducing regulation PM 32/2016 that mostly required online taxi drivers to be part of a company or to form a cooperative of taxi drivers[10] . The problem with the new regulation was that it only regulated the online taxi drivers, while online taxi companies were part of the remit of the Ministry of Information and Communication because they were categorised as Electronic System Providers. As a consequence, the new regulation led to critical reactions and street protests from online taxi drivers.

The protest was organised by online taxi drivers organizations (ALIANDO and ADO) who conveyed a third storyline '*online taxi is our job'*. Posters used in this protest read "SAVE OUR JOB", which signifies the new logic of employment opportunities that are brought by the online taxis. In this storyline the metaphor of *'salam satu aspal'* or 'one asphalt greetings' was used as salutation among protesters. Most of Indonesian roads are made from asphalt pavement; one asphalt then means solidarity among online taxi drivers who earn their income from the same asphalt road, no matter what company they belong to (Gojek or Grab). In contrast to the Blue Bird taxi protest, the coordinator of ALIANDO said to the media that their organisation did not allow any 'sweeping operations' to block online taxi drivers who did not join the protest. Such an operation could backfire, shifting public opinion in favour of online taxi.

Once again, through hashtag #savegojek on Twitter, the customers of online taxis pressed the government to disentangle the conflict immediately. The Minister decided to revise the PM 32/2016 regulation into regulation PM 26/2017. The Minister introduced a new category for online taxis called Angkutan Sewa Khusus/Special Rent Transport, to differentiate online from conventional taxi services. However, even though the name of the regulation was changed, the content of the new regulation did not dramatically change the requirements for online taxi drivers and only revised the pricing mechanism to determine the standard price.

In this critical moment we observed the battle of storylines on the street. The dominant storylines, 'illegal taxi' was unhinged and challenged by two storylines: 'karya anak bangsa' employed by online taxi companies and 'online taxi is our job' employed by online taxi drivers. We argue that this moment was an opportunity for the Ministry to make new sense of the conflict and reformulate and take into account the three competing storylines. If the Ministry would have been able to embrace the storylines, the multiple revisions of regulation would have not be necessary. However, in this story, the Ministry chose to reinforce the 'illegal taxi' storylines, prolonging and enlarging the scope of the conflict. Moreover, we observed the paradox of mobilisation of chaos and violence. Violence brings instant news media attention, but also invites negative public reaction.

4.3. Critical moment 3: the battle of power structure

In contrast to the street battles, the setting of this moment is in a formal meeting. Feeling unsatisfied with the new PM26/2017 regulation, a few online taxi drivers issued a legal complaint to the Constitutional Court in February 2017 and the Supreme Court in July 2017.[11] As a response, the Constitutional Court declined the request of online taxi drivers through decision number 78/PUU-XIV/2017 while in contrast, the Supreme Court issued decision JR 37/2017 that annulled several articles of the Ministry regulation PM 26/2017, mostly articles that regulate tariffs and driver requirements.

The Constitutional Court reasoned that online taxi driving must be conducted by legal cooperatives or companies and shall not be operated individually in order to guarantee a formal mechanism. On the other hand, the Supreme Court decision regards online taxis as logical consequences of technological innovation, which should be allowed to change the conventional way of transport services. The Supreme Court also argued that online taxis enable a more competitive transport industry by allowing micro players (online taxi drivers) to enter the business. We interpret this moment to be associated with a fourth storylines in the debate: *online taxi is an inevitable*

[10] These regulations are mostly for online taxi drivers. To be considered as legal taxi driver, in general they have to (1) obtain a formal public transport license, (2) obtain a vehicle checking license, and (3) form a legal cooperative because traditionally the provision of individual public transport (personal taxi driver) was illegal.

[11] The street protest from proponents and opponents of online taxi is still going on during this period. The protests take place in Jakarta, the capital city, as well as in smaller cities. Local bus and public transport drivers also participated in street protest against online taxis.

innovation.

Once again, this moment created an opportunity for the Ministry of Transportation to take a new perspective. The Ministry attempted to take into account the Supreme Court decision and, again, revised the regulation PM 26/2017 into regulation PM 108/2017. The Ministry realised that online taxi is now becoming an 'inevitable innovation', as articulated by the Director of Road Transportation in an interview. As a result, the Ministry eliminated the obligation to form a legal cooperative and allowed individuals as transport services providers. However, the new regulation still requires drivers to have a safety vehicle check, put special stickers on their car, and the online taxi company still needed to provide dedicated pick-up spots.

In this moment, we observed the 'inevitable innovation' storyline to become more dominant than the 'illegal taxi' storyline. The Supreme Court official document number 15 P/HUM/2018 explicitly mentioned online taxi as a logical consequence of technological innovation in transportation services which is in line with the storyline of 'inevitable innovation'.

Furthermore, online taxi drivers mobilised legal venues and argumentation to stage the battle. They used the power structure of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court which has higher institutional power than the Ministry of Transportation. The Constitutional Court only considered transportation law to support their decision, whereas the Supreme Court took multiple laws into consideration, i.e. laws on small- and medium-sized enterprises, on business competition, and on transportation. In this sense, the strength of the 'inevitable innovation' storyline is based on the ability to bring in more dynamic and multiple dimensions to make sense of 'disruptive' online taxis.

4.4. Critical moment 4: the discourse redirection

The fourth moment began with online taxi drivers protesting in front of the Presidential palace on 29 January 2018, followed by a second legal complaint to the Supreme Court in August. The online taxi drivers' movement had become larger and more organised. Even though the Ministry took into account the 'inevitable innovation' storyline, the online taxi drivers were still unsatisfied with the details of the new regulations, i.e. safety vehicle checks and stickers.

In addition, this moment also became the starting point for online taxi drivers to speak up, not only against the government regulation but also against the online taxi company (Grab and Gojek)[12] . The *online taxi is our job* storyline was redirected to *online taxi exploits our job*, which highlighted the labour exploitation conducted by the online taxi company. Here, the arguments concerned the asymmetrical relations between the company and the driver. The company used bonus system as a bait to boost driver's productivity, at the same time enforcing rating and suspension systems as a stick to drivers. The price war between Gojek and Grab negatively affected not only accumulative bonuses for drivers but also their basic tariff. Based on Kompas.com, in 2016 the basic tariff for motorbike taxi could reach IDR 3000, during the price war the basic tariff drop until IDR 1600. We found the use of the metaphor 'drug addiction' as an illustration for this situation.

> "*If I illustrate this online taxi, to me it looks like drugs. If I try to define it, over time it is like drugs addiction. We are the drivers, we got injected with higher basic prices and bonuses, we got higher incomes than our usual job, and then we decided to become full-time online taxi drivers. First, we got comfortable but over time the doses are reduced and we become addicted and dependent. This is our main income now and we don't have many exit options*" – Einstein from Kopdar (organisation of online motorbike taxi drivers), interview on 26 February, 2019

In contrast to the 'save our job' posters used in the street protests of the second moment, now we found a different metaphor was used: '*Mitra atau Eksploitasi??'* (Fig. 3). The metaphor could be translated as '*Partner or Exploitation??'*, indicating the asymmetrical relations between the company and the drivers.

Although many street protests were conducted and a second legal complaint was issued and the Supreme Court decided in favour of the drivers, the fourth critical moment focussed more on an advocacy effort. Interestingly, the setting of the battle was not located on the street nor the formal meeting room but rather in the digital space. In July 2018, following a severe price war between the two giants, the online taxi drivers demanded the government to force the companies to set a minimum price. They threatened to mobilise millions of drivers to protest during the opening ceremony of Asian Games 2018.[13] The taxi drivers expressed this 'plan' to protest through social media forums which ran viral and became national news.

The protest threats invited the government to come with a public statement accommodating the demands in exchange to prevent the protest. The scripting in this moment was to prevent any chaotic or violent movement that would jeopardise the image of the country as a host of an international event. Therefore, the protest threat from online taxi drivers became a counter-script that successfully unhinged the dominant script. In the end, Garda Indonesia – one of the organiser of online taxi protest – announced the cancelation of the protest and instead they decided to turn off the online taxi application for one day.

This moment brought two important dynamics to the conflict of ridesharing. First, it reformulated and empowered the third storyline '*online taxi exploits our job'* which was mostly employed by the online taxi drivers. The concern of worker exploitation

[12] The decision of Uber to leave Southeast Asia in 2018 has led to a tighter competition between Grab and Gojek, resulting into price war. The companies compete in giving lower prices to customers and higher work pressure to the drivers.

[13] The 18th Asian Games was a pan-Asian multi-sport event held from 18 August to 2 September 2018 in the Indonesian cities of Jakarta and Palembang. The protest threat from online taxi drivers became crucial because the government feared that a strike would leave a bad impression of Indonesia to global audiences. The Indonesian vice-president, Jusuf Kalla, stated to the media: *"This Asian Games is the dignity of our nation, we need to protect the nation's honour. Don't protest during this crucial situation"* – (Detik, 7 August 2018).

Fig. 3. Photo taken during the demonstration from motorbike online taxi drivers in front of the Presidential palace in Jakarta, 27 March 2018. The poster "Mitra atau Eksploitasi??" could be translated as "Partner or Exploitation??" (Source: TEMPO/Subekti).

emerged after the start of the price war between Grab and Gojek. The reformulation of the storyline is a demonstration of the non-binary and dynamic nature of conflict. Non-binary in the sense that the conflict of ridesharing was not only between incumbent taxi actors and online taxi companies, but between the online taxi companies and online taxi drivers. It is a dynamic conflict in the sense that storylines are not static arguments and they could be discursively constructed or redirected. Second, a powerful movement could also grow in a digital space as illustrated by the online threat to protest in Asian Games.

4.5. Critical moment 5: the in(ex)clusive battle

The fifth moment happened after the government decided to listen to the online taxi drivers, by inviting driver representatives in a formal meeting to revise the regulations. As an instrument of accommodating the driver's demand the Ministry revised regulation PM 108/2017 as regulation PM 118/2018. The new regulation eliminated the requirement of vehicle tests and special licenses for the drivers as well as allowing individual driver to conduct public transport services. Previous regulation (PM 32/2016 to regulation PM 118/2018) did not regulate online motorbike taxis. Following up on the 'successes' of PM 118/2018, from January to April 2019 the Ministry reused the strategy to invite drivers' representatives to draft regulations for motorbike taxi. In April 2019, the Ministry of Transport introduced the regulation PM 12/2019 regulating motorbike taxis and categorising them as legal 'social transport'[14] . This regulation is claimed as the first national regulation that oversees motorbike taxi.

The Ministry decided to change the scripting and the staging by inviting representatives of online taxi drivers in the drafting process of the regulation. Previously, the online taxi drivers were only involved during the public hearing session which was held after the finalisation of the draft regulation. By having drivers' representatives at the table, the Ministry expected a more satisfied audience and prevention of other protests. There were multiple meetings conducted to draft PM 118/2018 and PM 12/2019.

The principal actor was The Urban Transportation unit, which as part of the Ministry of Transportation, organised the meeting. The unit's members decided who could be invited and what the agenda of the meeting was. Interestingly, this is a new unit that was formed less than one year ago with a minimum degree of background and documentation about the conflict. So they relied on the current debate for their intellectual resources.

The second important group of actors was the drivers' representatives. In these meetings, there were seven representatives from online car taxi drivers and ten representatives from online motorbike taxi drivers' organisations. These representatives were selected during a one-day meeting covering were different get-togethers for online car taxi and online motorbike taxi representatives.

Other actors present during the meetings were transport experts and delegates of online taxi companies. As independent actors, transport experts were most of the time appointed as moderators of the meeting. The online taxi companies (Gojek and Grab) also attended the meeting. Company delegates who attended the meeting worked at the legal affairs departments, which meant that they

[14] The term 'social transport' was chosen as a category between public and private transport. To acknowledge motorbike as public transport is problematic because it means the government should have changed the laws on transportation. Since the House of Representatives was reluctant to acknowledge motorbike as public transport, the government decided to make it a Ministerial regulation. The Ministry defined social transport as a transport mode that meets a societal need. The Ministry argued that they are only regulating the safety aspect, without explicitly discussing the legal aspect of online taxi as public transport.

could not take immediate decision in sensitive matters during the meeting, such as on suspension and basic tariffs. Mostly, they were outnumbered by the drivers' representatives. The informal motorbike taxis or "ojek" were not present during the meetings.

The draft regulation was prepared by the Ministry of Transportation. During the meeting, this draft was the central point of discussion on which participants could give comments or propose revision of the wording. It was allowed to have different interpretations toward particular words but it was discouraged to speak about other issues that were not related to the topic in the pre-written draft. In terms of setting, the physical and organisational situation of the meeting indicated hidden meanings of power structures, as shown in Fig. 4 below. In the meeting room, the Ministry enforced the fixed agenda in a subtle way by distributing the pre-written draft on each tables and displaying it on the big screen that was central in the room.

Furthermore, we observed a division of power between participants on the first row versus second row. The Ministry of Transportation, drivers (who always wanted to sit close to each other and never wanted to be placed at the same side as the companies), companies and experts were mostly seated in the front row and become quite vocal actors. The delegates from other ministries sat in the second row and formed a rather passive audience.

In terms of staging, having the opportunity to attend the meetings gave us a look at details regarding how the actors 'performed' their storylines. During the meeting we observed the online taxi drivers use their daily experiences on the street to articulate the storyline of 'exploits our job'. As an example, there was a debate about non-user passengers who order a taxi service for someone else. Drivers ran into trouble when passengers were not satisfied and complained to the company. The company would then proceed suspending the driver and would provide the opportunity for the driver to clarify, leaving the driver without income during the suspension and clarification process. The storyline is explicated in this conversation:

> *Online Motorbike Taxi Driver: "We always become the victim. The mother orders a taxi service for her child to pick up from school. The child was difficult to talk with. Every risk on the road is under our responsibility. When the customer is not satisfied, the customer will directly punish us with one star.*[15] *We are doomed. It is unfair because the customer can order for someone else, but we can't use different vehicles or other people cannot use our account as driver"*
>
> *Company: "I want to clarify, since the last few months our driver partner could rate the customer. Customers could be suspended. Second, the new suspension system has a warning signal. This is only a warning and does not impact drivers. This suspension policy has been socialised within the 4000-drivers community. I am not defending, only informing. In this regulation, there is a minimum age of 18 years to have application, so we need to see their impact to the business".*

From this conversation we argue that there are two storylines that convey different actor perspectives. The online taxi company employs the storyline 'online taxi is karya anak bangsa' to highlight the social contribution of the company by demonstrating how the company constantly was responsive towards their drivers' and customers' demands through adapting their business policy. On the other hand, the drivers' storyline 'online taxi companies exploit our job' highlighted the asymmetrical position between drivers and companies, and drivers and customers.

To convey these storylines, the actors used slightly exaggerated metaphors. For example, the metaphors of 'greening' was used as a threat or reminder from the drivers if the government would ignore their concerns. The term 'greening' originated from the jacket color of Gojek and Grab drivers. It meant that they would mobilise online taxi drivers to participate in street protests, blocking streets and as such colouring roads 'green'. The other example of a metaphor used was 'bonus bait'. It was used as a message to explain the 'trick' of companies to force enhancing drivers' productivity. The drivers pictured the company as a fisherman who used their bonus as a bait to increase drivers' motivations. When the driver was eager to take the bait, the company would gradually pull or lift up the bonus standard so it would be difficult for drivers to get the maximum bonus.

Taking a closer look at these meetings, we observed both an inclusive and an exclusive battle of storylines during this critical moment. It is inclusive because it allowed more storylines to clash in one space in which the actors' positions were governed as being somewhat equal. The pre-written draft from the Ministry explicated the unfinished and even unhinged nature of the issues, inviting the participants of the meetings to attempt to influence and rewrite the dominant storylines. Even though the draft was pre-written by the Ministry, the final draft accommodated priorities of all attending actors. The Ministry prioritised the safety guarantees, the drivers prioritised to have a regulation that safeguarded the basic fare of online taxis, and the companies wanted to keep their status as applicator (provider of digital application) rather than transport companies.

At the same time, the meeting invited for an exclusive battle because the incumbent taxi actors and the informal motorbike taxi 'ojek' were not included in these meetings. The Ministry acted as a stage director who decided who should be invited and what should be discussed. Furthermore, in terms of deliberative process the meeting was somewhat hurried and under pressure of a political deadline. The political pressure was felt by the President who realised that online taxis form a major potential of voters and supporters, and accommodating their demands of basic fares would win them to his cause. For the drivers, cooperating to draft regulation was a better option than protesting on the street. There were no guarantees that the other, future president candidates would be as accommodating as the current president. For the Ministry, regulating the online motorbike taxi market was best described with a metaphor 'swallow the fireball'. The conflict of online taxi had become a political issue and potential fireball for the opposition party to attack the government's credibility. In this sense, the Ministry took the option to 'swallow' or tame this conflict through accommodating regulation. As one of the interviewees from the Ministry told us: *"At least if we swallow [the fireball], it will not burn our house and we can try to reduce the damage"* – (The Ministry of Transportation staff, 15 March 2019).

[15] Star rating (from 1 to 5) is used as a performance monitoring system by online taxi services. Accumulative performance scores of drivers during one day determine whether they get a bonus that day. In the end, bad scores can also accumulate in getting suspended.

Fig. 4. Internal meeting to discuss the regulation for online motorbike taxis. Three people in the centre are transport experts who were invited by the Ministry (source: first author).

We summarise the five critical moments with the discursive dynamics and the dramaturgy setting below (Table 1).

5. Critical moments and dramaturgy: Conflict as a focal point in transition studies

The case of digital ridesharing in Indonesia revealed that the transition to new mobility services required a non-binary approach to conflict. By employing critical moments as units of analysis we could reconstruct the shifting storylines around which the controversy was played out. The analysis uncovered a battle of storylines and revealed how the battle connected to particular settings that symbolised the different stages of the conflict. Moreover, those settings influenced the performance of actors acting out their commitments as embedded within the storylines. Five critical moments were discussed empirically and showed to have been situations where the dominant storylines were unhinged and led to shifting power struggles among a variety of actors rallying around differing storylines. The focus on the dramaturgical elements of setting, staging and scripting in the consecutive critical moments enabled a detailed understanding of where conflicts in transition took place, and how they played out.

Reflecting on the case of digital ridesharing in Indonesia and its critical moments we want to highlight a few broader conceptual points to contribute to the discussion about the role of conflict in transitions research:

First, critical moments as unit of analysis to study conflict in transition. Critical moments are tangible and observable events in practice as situations where the dominant order becomes unhinged or discursive regularities are broken up and become prime moment of power struggles. Using the critical moment concept enables a contextualised analysis, converging on a specific time and space to show how a complex conflict unfolds. We argue that the five critical moments in our findings are the prime moments during which things became unsettled and ready to shift. These five critical moments show the reconfiguration of discursive regularities as a result of power struggle that has played in a particular staging. For example, we could observe online taxi was perceived as illegitimate services in the first critical moment, but it became legitimate services in the fifth critical moment. Also, from the first until the fifth critical

Table 1
Summary of the critical moments.

	Critical Moment 1: The protest against arrest	Critical Moment 2: The battle on the street	Critical Moment 3: The battle of power structure	Critical Moment 4: The discourse redirection	Critical Moment 5: The in(ex)clusive battle
Discourse dynamics	Uber drivers are detained by police officers. This moment opens the public debate against online taxi. Conventional taxi drivers argue that online taxi is both illegal and unfair.	Massive street protest and conflict. The story 'online taxi is illegal' gets contested by another storyline around 'online taxi providing jobs (and also the national pride). However, the story 'online taxi is illegal' remains dominant.	Online taxi drivers take legal action to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court raises the story that online taxi is 'inevitable innovation' supporting the online taxi. This storyline overpowers the story 'online taxi is illegal'	The conflict shifted towards a conflict between online taxi drivers and online taxi companies. Now, online taxi drivers change their story from 'online taxi is our job' into 'online taxi exploit our jobs'.	For the first time, the government invites online taxi drivers to provide input to the draft regulation for online taxi. This meeting becomes a formal battle between mainly the government, the online taxi companies, and the online taxi drivers.
Dramaturgy	Mobilisation of legal reporting organised by conventional taxi drivers and police officers.	Mobilisation of violence and chaos in massive street protest by conventional taxi drivers. The counter protest from online taxi supporters appeared in social media through Twitter hashtag #angrybird #savegojek.	Mobilisation of regulators by online taxi drivers. The strategy to involve higher power actors in the conflict has proven effective to challenge and change the dominant story.	Mobilisation of opinion and pressure through social media. The online taxi drivers direct the social media, threatening to conduct a street protest on the government's critical moment.	Mobilisation of stories in a formal meeting room. The government plays a substantial role setting the stage and creating a setting that influences the flow of the meeting.

moment we could understand the discursive change of online taxi from illegal to legal taxi services, as well from economic growth contributor to labour exploitation.

As part of our intention to pursue a non-binary approach to understand conflict, we argue that critical moment analysis helps to unpack the complex nature of conflict in transition and bring a more inclusive approach to the analysis. For example, from each critical moment we could learn that online taxi conflict is not a simple conflict between the incumbent taxi and the digital taxi company. The critical moments highlight that the conflicts are multi-layered and play out between conventional taxi drivers and the online taxi company, between policy makers who support and those against the online taxi company, between online taxi company and online taxi drivers. Critical moments as an analytical tool has helped us to move away from simplistic assumptions about the nature of conflict.

A lesson that we derive from the conflict around online taxi in Indonesia is that conflicts may provide a venue to integrate contrasting storylines and allows for the involvement of actors on more equal terms. For instance, the creation of PM 118/2019 and PM 12/2019 regulations as an output of the fifth critical moment included three out of four existing storylines employed by online taxi company, online taxi drivers and the government. This is the first moment when those three actors act and negotiate with each other around the same table.

Second, the focus on dramaturgy that accompanies a critical moments analysis is promising for future transitions research. Discursive approaches are quite often used in transition studies, but these accounts seldom stress how these discourse are 'performed' in particular contexts, and how those particular contexts matter. Our critical moment analysis clearly situates where the conflict in transition took place and how it is played out. For online taxi in Indonesia we demonstrate that a focus on the exact how and where of this performance – the 'dramaturgy' in other words – reveals why in some context discursive storylines could become dominant and in others not. As an example, the different dramaturgy setting in the second critical moment and the fourth critical moment could explain why the protest by conventional taxi (Blue Bird Taxi) could not dominate the discursive debate, while the protest by online taxi could. The protest by conventional taxi in the second critical moment only happened in a street setting, which allowed counter-storylines to emerge in the social-media setting and delegitimate the storylines employed on the street. On the other hand, the protest of online taxi in the fourth critical moment were both played out on the street as well as on social media. This performance became effective to employ the 'online taxi exploits our job' as dominant discourse because not only it took the battle into both offline and online arena, but also it was mobilised during a crucial political moment (the opening of Asian Games that will become a bad precedent if it is interrupted by political protest) that enforce the government to facilitate the actors.

The other dramaturgical comparison between these two street protests are the different scripting dimensions. The street protest by conventional taxi allows violent action as a form of solidarity, while the street protest by online taxi discourage use of violence. The two ways of scripting led to different public reactions. The public supported the protest from online taxi drivers while they criticized the protest by conventional taxi.

The case showed how they use material and immaterial strategies to shape the outcome of the discursive battles – e.g. blocking the road with cars, setting the table arrangement in a meeting room to determine who could speak and how the negotiation should be. The dramaturgical analysis articulates that the actors who control the material design of the battleground have an advantage. Therefore, we argue that the dramaturgy dimension brings up the material perspective on how power plays out in conflicts in the context of transitions.

One implication that we highlight is that the nature of the paper is mostly retrospective rather than prospective. Yet, an important question remains what the implications are for governing prospective transitions. In this respect, we note that prospective transition governance tools such as Transition Management have strongly been informed by historical analysis of past transitions, such as the natural gas transition in the Netherlands (Rotmans et al., 2001). Hence, analysis of retrospective cases can inform prospective tools to expedite a transition that has not yet occurred. We also note, however, that earlier historical analyses have sometimes overlooked the politics of (Heiskanen et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2005) and places (Raven et al., 2012) where transitions take place. The premise of our retrospective analysis therefore is that by developing new lenses that are sensitive to politics and place, we can 'see' the unfolding of historical transitions in new ways, which in turn can inform the development of new or adapted prospective transition frameworks. This paper arguably does not go into much detail regarding the latter, but does provides new views on the politics and place of transition governance. One major implication is that based on our analysis frameworks such as transition management will need to take more account of the places (whether offline or online) where transition arenas and discursive battles are staged, because these spatial characteristics and who controls them, as our analysis demonstrates, will shape the likely outcomes of the arenas. Similarly, for governance tools focusing on strategic niches to shape prospective transitions, it will be useful to consider that (often marginal) niche actors can 'punch above their weight' by staging their experiments and discursive battles with incumbent actors in place they have relatively more control of.

Third, the analysis highlights the multi-faceted character of conflict, generating a more dynamic and inclusive understanding of transition pathways. We argued before that the polarisation of actors (i.e. regime vs. niches or incumbent vs. newcomer) could lead to oversight of the complexity of conflict itself. Using a binary approach of understanding conflict may lead to the perception that niche actors always become the solution of the problem caused by incumbent actors (Cuppen et al., 2019), or that niche actors always agree with each other without conflict (Smith et al., 2014). Our case of online taxi, demonstrates that problems and solutions are not entirely embedded within one single actor group. Actors who promise one solution cause yet another problem – e.g. even though online taxi is perceived as a successful new solution for flexible employment, it also brings risks of labour exploitation. Conflicts are part of a dynamic arena where actions are staged, meanings are discursively negotiated, and stories are becoming a part of a strategic repertoire. In that sense, conflict analysis puts forward a different perspective compared to the 'consensus-seeking' and 'social-learning' approaches in other transition studies accounts. Conflicts do not just repress progress, but they offer a more dynamic and inclusive understanding of alternative ways in which transitions might unfold. Positioning conflict as a generative force to come up with

socially-robust innovations or as a form of informal technology assessment (Rip, 1986) offers the opportunity to highlight the voices of marginalised actors and storylines. Our case shows how conflicts become inevitable consequences of disruptive innovation. Our paper contributes by introducing critical moments and dramaturgical analysis as an approach to better unpack the complexity of conflict by bringing a more inclusive understanding of dominant and marginal actors, where the arena of conflict is in transition, and of how they played out.

In the final analysis conflict becomes not a battleground between niches and regimes but a complex, multi-faceted and multi-layered relations composed of intersecting storylines spun and latched on to by the various actors involved. All actors are attached to particular storylines and decide their actions based on it. Those who share similar storylines (often from varying backgrounds!) become a political force in the form of discourse coalitions (Hajer, 2005). In places where contrasting storylines are intersected, opportunities for change are created. In relation to transition studies, in particular to sustainability transitions, conflict analysis could indicate to what extent sustainability storylines are transformed or neglected in the web of public discourse. For example, ridesharing is considered a form of the sharing economy that could promote a new pathway of sustainable development (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Heinrichs, 2013). However, in our empirical case the notion of sustainability has been overlooked in the enactment of conflicts on ridesharing. In our case, ridesharing as sustainable option was only conveyed by the online taxi company during the preliminary introduction of digital app-based ridesharing. Soon after, ridesharing is regarded differently; it became contentious on issues of illegality and fairness. Subsequently, the company chose to employ the story of how ridesharing contributes to economic growth and employment. The evolving stories reveal how the company's strategies to overcome conflict are interconnected with stories that matter and are relevant to the broader public.

6. Conclusion

This paper provides a more plural and complex analysis of conflict in transition by foregrounding critical moments analysis and adding dramaturgy elements to illuminate the discursive dynamic of conflict. Using the case of ridesharing conflict in Indonesia, we articulate a non-binary approach by employing critical moments as units of analysis to uncover the battle of the storylines and to some extent the performance of actors within the storylines. We have discussed five critical moments in the case of online taxi, in which the dominant storylines were unhinged and led to power struggles for marginal storylines. Adding the dramaturgical analysis underneath the discursive battle in each critical moments enables a detailed and nuanced understanding of hidden power structures as well as political strategy used by actors to mobilize their storylines.

We suggest to use critical moments as unit of analysis because it offers analysis converged on time and space. Also, we suggest to use dramaturgical analysis as a novel practice in transition studies, that helps explain why and how discursive strategy succeeded or failed to become dominant discourse. The dramaturgical analysis includes the role of the situational context in our analysis and helps to understand how conflicts in transition played out. In our case, the dramaturgical analysis illuminates the role of other locations than the formal office meetings, such as the streets or the social media.

We argue putting conflict analysis as focal point in transition studies could embrace multiple stories of sustainability and open up a pathway to sustainability in a more complex set of ways. We argue that our contribution is not to produce a guideline on how to pursue or predict a particular transition agenda. We note that prospective transition governance tools such as Transition Management have quite strongly been informed by historical analysis of past transition. Thus, analysis of retrospective cases can inform prospective tools to expedite a transition that has not yet occurred. We also note, however, that earlier historical analyses have sometimes overlooked the politics of and places where transition take place. The premise of our retrospective analysis is to develop new lenses that are sensitive to politics and place, so we can 'see' the unfolding of historical transition in new ways, which in turn can inform the development of new or adapted prospective transition framework.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors report no declarations of interest.

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