

Chronotopic Governance: Governing and Shaping Markets through Grassroot Movements in Space and Time

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Abstract:

The aim of this study is to develop a framework of chronotopic governance as a spatio-temporal mode of governing market practices. Chronotope, literally means time-place positioned and understood within the context of dialogue with the others. We use an example of the Stop Adani grassroot movement based in Central Queensland, Australia to show how a network of grassroot activists can mobilise resources to govern market practices of mining conglomerate Adani Group and shape coal markets through a) spatial cannibalisation for establishing new market norms, b) temporal linearity to expand market governance boundaries and c) pursue ideological reconfiguration for market transformation. Our study through the chronotopic governance framework contributes to ongoing discussion on inter-firm governance, activist led governance and market shaping.

Keywords: market governance, market shaping, grassroot movements

Track: Business-To-Business Marketing

1. Introduction

Coal is the most controversial resource linked to climate crises. Yet in May 2014, Premier Anna Bligh of Queensland state of Australia approved a Carmichael coal mine in Central Queensland set for operation by an Indian conglomerate Adani Mining, a subsidiary of the Adani Group (Zajac, 2018).

The Australian public disapproved opening Carmichael coal mines on Australian land. The Carmichael project was also accused of exploiting indigenous land that belonged to the Wangan and Jagalingou community where the mine was proposed to be built. As a result, a grassroots movement called 'Stop Adani' was formed in early 2017 with the motive—to stop the Adani Group from building the country's biggest coal mine (Gulliver, 2022). This movement later evolved into one of the biggest dialogues between and within environmental activist in Australia to govern market practices on sustainability-related issues such as, fossil fuel reliance and renewable energy. We use the Stop Adani movement as an example event to theorise 'chronotopic governance' a spatio-temporal mode of governing market practices. Chronotope, literally means time-place (Chatzidakis, 2020) positioned and understood within the context of dialogue with the others (i.e., grassroots movement). Thus, the notion of chronotopic analysis on market governance is a nuanced view on maintaining market integrity through effective dialogue between broader set of market actors within space and time.

Market governance is synonymous to discrete exchange (Dwyer & Oh, 1987). But when discrete exchange is abandoned, some form of a relationship is crafted (Heide, 1994). This view on governance has onboarded a host of social activist monitoring and consequently shaping markets in new and interesting way. Though there are many reasons to believe that market governance will shape markets there are limited studies, most outside marketing examining this link (see study in social policy by Green, Carey, & Malbon, 2022; see study in economics by Mazzucato & Ryan-Collins, 2022). Thus, there is a lacuna in our understanding about how grassroots activist movements govern and shape markets. Similarly, much of the extant research on activist led governance is anchored in social movement organisations leveraging their shareholder rights to control firms' conduct on different social issues (Brauer, Wiersema, & Binder, 2022). This is an important research stream, as evidenced by a growing body of empirical evidence supporting shareholder activism. However, it also provides limited account of what transpires during social movement campaigns to mobilise market governance.

We therefore show, a novel theoretical model of how effective dialogue (i.e., content sharing) within space and time, between broader market actors can govern market systems. We make two significant contributions to marketing literature. First to the market governance literature through the conceptualisation of chronotopic governance visible with appropriate dialogue and or language use. Language used by activist campaign has a lot to offer in terms of content and semantics to mobilise boarder market actors. Second, to market shaping literature by demonstrating how grassroot movements for market governance are reconfiguring markets through the process of relationship maintenance and relationship termination between broader market actors.

2. Theoretical framework

Market governance is a topical issue in marketing. There are two schools of thoughts on governance. One established in transaction economics, that focuses on contractual relationships both written and formal contract by setting obligations and processes to be performed by each exchange party (Cao & Lumineau, 2015; Ryall & Sampson, 2009). Though the objective of contractual exchange is to identify potential conflicts ex ante and formulate proper governance structure to attenuate them (Williamson, 1987). Studies focused on governance of contractual relationship have not attempted to assess the language of written/oral contracts, its semantics that ultimately governs economic transaction. The second school of thought in governance literature is in relational orientation. This view of governance takes on the behavioural research paradigm to conceptualise governance as a “matter of establishing and employing power, subject to the overarching goal of coordinating the efforts of different channel members” (Heide, 1994, p. 72).

Although Heide (1994) pioneered interfirm governance typology as market and nonmarket governance (i.e., unilateral and bilateral) based on the dimensions of relationship initiation, relationship maintenance and relationship termination, there are two limitations with this framework. First, the relationship maintenance process in market governance is focused on individual roles applied to individual transaction. But it excludes the importance of dialogue or any kind of human interaction for relationship maintenance. Second, relationship termination process in market governance views interfirm relationships as nothing more than a series of discrete exchange and these relationships are terminated at the end of an event or discrete transaction. However, this description of relationship termination overrules the possibility of temporal market transformation because of market governance

process. Hence, the relationship termination may evolve into new dialogues between market actors about doing things differently in space and time. Consequently, enforcing new market configurations for market governance.

2.1 Market shaping

A market is a configuration of dependable actors (e.g., government, influencers, brands, customers, suppliers, retailers) whose goal is to meet market needs/demands (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2011). The nexus between market governance and market shaping is because market-shapers do not necessarily work in an orchestrated fashion; nevertheless, vibrant networks of complementary actors contribute positively to the construction of shared identities and normative networks (Baker, Storbacka, & Brodie, 2019). Hence, determining an essence of market shaping requires an explicit understanding on the collective agential effort of diverse group of actors influencing market formation and transformation (Nenonen & Storbacka, 2021). Therefore, we use chronotopic analysis that is primarily developed to deal with the question of (inter) subjectivity of diverse group of actors positioned spatio-temporally in the context of dialogue with the other (Chatzidakis, 2020). This analytical lens enables us to understand negotiations and ideological tensions between market actors about how markets should be shaped and why should they be governed.

2.2 Chronotopic analysis

Bakhtin (1981) devised chronotope to examine the framing of “time and space” in literary text. It is an attempt to deal with the question of (inter)subjectivity and agency of the protagonist in dialogical thinking in novels, and in life. For Bakhtinians, the social world is made up of multiple voices, perspectives, and subjective worlds. To exist is to engage in dialogue, and dialogue must not come to an end. The theory of dialogism shapes the logic by which events unfurl their syntax, the rhythmic quality of plausible actions and counteractions’ (Lemon, 2009, p. 839). Therefore, language through the gates of chronotope can ‘identify diverse streams of arrangements of time-space dynamics of different scales’, e.g., sociogenesis, ontogenesis and microgenesis (Marková & Novaes, 2020). Past scholars distinguished between different scales and types of chronotopes, such as routines and changes in intensive care unit (Brown & Middleton, 2005), including the reconfiguration of spatio-temporal logics during consumer activism (Chatzidakis, 2020). We built on and extend this tradition by examining the space-time chronotope in grassroot movements governing market process in space and time.

3.3. Methodology

We applied a dialogical single case study methodology because of our focus on a grassroots movement in their real location and in real time. A dialogical single case is ontologically situated in a self-other relationship between an actor(s) with their real life (Marková & Novaes, 2020). This allows researchers to understand the tensions and dynamics that flow in a case event. Thus, our unit of analysis is the exploration of the events that form the Stop Adani movement. To support our analysis, we used a monograph on Stop Adani movement written by Gulliver (2022). This book presents a rigorous analysis on civil resistance in the Stop Adani movement covering 492 environmental groups, 193 climate change campaigns, and 36,541 events. We also supplemented the monograph with additional research on the Adani movement in media blogs and newspapers using Factiva search engine. In our analysis we did not simply progress from Gulliver's monograph to coding in an inductive manner to offer a varied theoretical account. Instead, we think with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), by 'plugging in' assemblage of theories of market governance, market shaping, grassroots activism and chronotopes in space-time relations. We conducted an analysis at the threshold of governance- chronotopes -activism nexus to generate a novel theoretical interpretation of chronotopic governance.

3.1 *Stop Adani grassroots movement*

The Stop Adani movement is a network campaign to stop the construction of Carmichael project in the Galilee Basin in Central Queensland, Australia. This grassroots movement is supported by over 125 local sub-groups, organising thousands of events between 2015 to 2022 (Gulliver, 2022). The campaigns also targeted 145 companies that were either funding, consulting, contracting, insuring, or offering supplies to the Adani coal mine (for full list of 145 companies see Gulliver, Fielding, & Louis, 2021).

Some of the concerns related to the Carmichael mine are as follows. First is its size. This project if proceeded, would annually produce upto 120 million tonnes of CO₂, which is more than emission of countries such as Austria and Chile (Zajac, 2018). Moreover, the mine would also degrade the coastline of the Great Barrier Reef area and the marine life systems it supports. There were questionable things about Adani Group. Like, it promised to create 10,000 local jobs through the Carmichael project group. In reality, the mine could only create 1,464 full time jobs (Zajac, 2018). Although Adani group was meant to self-finance the \$16.5 billion Carmichael project later, this company applied for a public loan provided by the federal government via the Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility which was meant to

support major projects in northern region of Australia. Had this federal loan been approved, Adani Group would have received a \$900 million of taxpayer's money at low-interest rates. Finally, this movement was directed toward a mining corporation undertaking work in a clearly defined physical location, the Galilee Basin in Central Queensland (Gulliver, 2022). This provided a focal point for the activist group to channel a consistent blockade camp in the physical location from across Australia to boycott the project.

4. Findings

The key focus of our findings is on how spatio-temporal logics influence market governance and how these are in turn negotiated and reconfigured through grassroots movements. Our findings suggest three themes that explore the multiple intersections of space with time to develop a framework for chronotopic governance.

Spatial cannibalisation to establish new market norms: A central group the Stop Adani Alliance and Tipping Point directed the Stop Adani movement by networking with different local groups across Australia to amplify boycott for coal mining operations in Australia and influence national policies for renewable energy. To achieve that, the Stop Adani activist cannibalised spaces where Adani Group was rebranding itself as a leader for climate change and clean energy. For example, Adani Group released an 'I-Can' campaign which read, "we, at the Adani Group, believe in enriching lives, through world-class and sustainable infrastructure that contributes towards nation-building"¹. Some supporters used #Adani and #Carmichael to lobby for the project². To refute these attempts the Stop Adani movement cannibalised social media spaces with hashtag #StopAdani and encouraged youths to oppose the mine. They aggressively fuelled media spaces through newsworthy content, flashy public demonstrations and releasing two documentaries, so that every time people hear the word 'Adani' they would associate it with the word 'Stop' (Zajac, 2018).

The Carmichael project had political support at the state and federal level for their coal mine operation. Therefore, the Stop Adani Alliance cannibalised political landscape³. During a snap election in Queensland in November 2017 the activist used GetUp!, an independent movement group to mobilise volunteers and engage in a dialogue with politician by attending rallies or contacting local politicians. These actions made the Carmichael coal

¹ <https://ican.adani.com/our-story>

² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-22/adani-group-faces-backlash-after-environment-tweet/7351630>

³ https://www.stopadani.com/shift_the_politics

mine and the state funding for this project a top election issue and eventually evolve into a political campaign to influence national policies on sustainability-related issues such as fossil fuel reliance and renewable energy. This was evident in the following quote from GetUP senior campaigner; “Our politicians either supports Charmichael project or takes action on global warming seriously – we can’t have it both ways” (The Courier Mail, 2015⁴).

Temporal linearity to expand governance boundaries: The Stop Adani movement ‘stretched in’ and ‘stretched out’ in new directions to attack the legitimacy of Adani Group. To a large extent, the activist shifted their focus over their meaning and purpose in coal mining industry. This was evident in the movement posters and flyers that communicated new logics: in 2016 their poster read Stop Adani; year 2017 this shifted to ‘Stop Money’ (funding coal mining projects) then in year 2018 their campaign motto was, Land Rights not Mining Rights. In year 2019 this changed to Defend Queensland Water. Many industries that were supporting the Charmichael project like big four Australian banks, insurance companies, contractors were called out in the process. This strategy is called ‘tactical mapping’ which involves targeting support groups that have the greatest influence on the target (Gulliver et al., 2021). Meanwhile territorial struggles also took on different form and shape. In year 2019 the Stop Adani activist organised a crowdfunding campaign to set up a permanent frontline camp closer to the Carmichael project site in Queensland called Camp Bimbee. This camp site runs hundreds of nonviolent disruptions in Carmichael mine site like human chain, blockades, and countless interventions against sub-contractors helping with the project.

The grassroots movement also challenged the unspoken notion of the linearity of time in the ‘there and then’ and “here and now”. In year 2020, Adani Group no longer wanted the word “Stop” associated with its company “Adani” therefore, changed its company name to Bravus Mining and Resources. It also claimed new concept of ‘(mining) place in space of’ solving energy poverty— caused by rising energy bills that consume a high percentage of household spending. Evident in CEO of Bravus Mining and Resources comment below:

“The objective of our new company is to supply high-quality Queensland coal to nations determined to lift millions of their citizens out of energy poverty, and to create

⁴ <https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/central-and-north-burnett/pressure-to-act-on-coal-mines-rises-after-paris-deal/news-story/86d8136cd485e89d870c5e1761a99384>

local jobs and economic prosperity in Queensland communities in the process” (Stockhead, 2022⁵).

Presently, the Galilee coal basin in Queensland states remains untapped. Mayor of Barcaldine regional council Sean Dillon quotes, “there was genuine hope for local business, and house and land prices to skyrocket” from the billions of dollar investment in coal mining projects (The Guardian, 2020⁶). The broader failure of many of the mines to materialise is down to geography and workforce. After the Stop Adani movement intensified all the mines have become greenfield sites leaving a large undeveloped land still covered in scrub or fields requiring high-cost infrastructure to develop the place.

Ideological reconfiguration for market transformation: The Stop Adani movement eventually became to be ‘new context’ for governing human rights. In this sense it became profoundly ideological: not as an action for ‘market reputation’ but of building ‘new market reputation’ that protects local communities. This was done by introducing newer market disruptions to negotiate different narrative around coal mining industry. First disruption was on the economic rationale of coal as an unprofitable commodity. Tim Buckley, an energy market analyst quote:

“A decade ago, it was about catering for a growth in demand in energy across Asia. But now it is about decarbonisation. It is accepted now that coal is on a slow but terminal decline. The world is completely different now” (The Guardian, 2020).

Second, what started as a ‘here and now’ climate crises evolved into infringement of human rights of future generation, of First Nations Queenslanders, as well as the owners of a private nature reserve. This was evident in a Queensland land court hearing where court president Fleur Kingham rejected a new coal mine project in Queensland on the merit that a coal mine will limit, the right to life, the cultural rights of First Nations peoples, the rights of children, the right to property and to privacy and home, and the right to enjoy human rights equally (The Guardian, 2022). Although the Stop Adani movement is a collective, the ideological basis of this movement is reconfigured into a divestment campaign. Divestment campaigns call to end fossil fuel sponsorship. It asks organizations to sell off or otherwise reduce holdings in companies associated with fossil fuels (Gulliver et al., 2021).

⁵ <https://stockhead.com.au/resources/adani-ready-to-float-first-controversial-coal-cargo-from-its-carmichael-mine/>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/jan/09/after-adani-whatever-happened-to-queenslands-galilee-basin-coal-boom>

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to create a conceptual framework of canatopic governance and assess its impact on market shaping of coal industry using the Stop Adani grassroots movement. It offers insights into a theoretically under-examined issue of how social movement campaigns transpire market governance. Activist led governance research emphasis on dialogue as an effective mechanism to govern responsible corporate behaviour (e.g., Brauer et al., 2022). However, most research under activist led governance follows the ‘orchestrated wolf pack mechanism’ of investor groups willing to acquire shares in target firms before their activist’s campaign is publicly disclosed (Wong, 2020). While scant research focus on boarder community of activist who govern market practice. We broaden this understanding by showing how fluid and interdependent network of actors within grassroots movements can govern market practices in real time and real space without the pressures of relationship termination. At the same time, highlight the importance of language as a powerful tool in mobilising support for corporate governance.

Our work also contributes to the dominant reading on governance that interprets market governance as discrete transaction where the governance process is tied to their role specifications and terminated at the end of the discrete transaction (Heide, 1994). Such a reading under-examines the social incentives to govern market systems and how this is channelled through a conversational discourse between broader market actors that are within the orbit of a market system. We show how network of market governing actors maintain relationships with each other while aggressively cannibalising market spaces of corporation to establish new market norms. As the governance process evolves, the governance orientation also shifts between time and space orientation to establish new market boundaries. Finally, several writings on market shaping literature have closely attended to the issue of market transformation by broadening market vision (e.g., Storbacka & Nenonen, 2011). We add to this literature by showing how grassroots activists can shape markets by simply mobilising a network of actors within market spaces. And that market transformation can materialise through ideological reconfiguration of market reputations. In conclusion, the chronotropic governance framework in our study shows how network of actors can govern resources within space and time to transform market configuration.

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