Markets, Market Making and Marketing

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Abstract

Recent debates in economic sociology have moved away from a critique to *homo economicus* to a focus on how market exchange is formalised and abstracted from society. Rather than dwell on the disparities between the formalism and the practice of market exchange, the work of Michel Callon and associates focuses on the calculating agencies that make *homo economicus* a reality. This paper argues that this work has important consequences for marketing theory and practice. We concur with Callon's argument that marketing theory has a role not just in explaining how markets work but also in performing and formatting markets. However, we look upon marketing's role in performing the market as a series of distributed and loosely coordinated associations and representations rather than strongly convergent networks. In addition, they are always fragile and unstable constructions linking supply and demand, and always likely to be destabilised by divergent interests and rival alternatives.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine some recent contributions in economic sociology that have started to address the role of marketing in market making and have largely bypassed the marketing discipline[1]. Granovetter's (1985) revival of Polanyi's (1957) notion that market exchange is embedded in social structures paved the way for a re-examination of the notion of markets from a sociological perspective. Zukin and DiMaggio (1990) and Halinen and Tornröos (1998) amongst others, elaborated on Granovetter's approach and split the notion of embeddedness into distinct types – e.g. political, cultural, geographic. The work of Callon (1998a, b) has reoriented economic sociology towards market exchanges and market making practices.

If Granovetter's effort had the merit of reminding us how social structures play a supporting role in constructing and sustaining market exchanges, Callon's approach is directed at the very heart of what constitutes these exchanges. Rather than pondering on the inadequacies of *homo economicus* to explain market behaviour, Callon's asks what practices and bodies of expertise are mobilised to make *homo economicus* a reality.[2] The focus on the activities involved in market making and the performativity of expert discourses are the two key areas in which Callon's proposal breaks significant ground in relation to the economic sociology literature. Callon's controversial approach has elicited criticism (Miller, 2002) and praise (Slater, 2002) in equal measures. The aim of this paper is not so much to address the hub of this controversy, but to reflect on the underpinnings of Callon's approach and to examine the extent to which marketing theory is implicated in the production of the very phenomena it purports to explain.

The key argument developed in this paper is that the construction of markets is an accomplishment that depends on the mobilisation of different bodies of expertise, including marketing theory. But rather than seeing market exchange as being

[1] But see Kjellberg (2001). A quick trawl through the Social Sciences Citation Index (performed in March 2004) identified plenty of citations to the relevant works but not a single one could be located in a recognised marketing journal.

[2] Callon (1998a, p. 51) writes "Whether we choose to enhance the economic theory of the agent or to denounce it, in both cases, we formulate the same critique: *homo economicus* is pure fiction. […] Yes, *homo economicus* really does exist. Of course, he exists in the form of many species and his lineage is multiple and ramified. But if he exists he is not obviously found in a natural state – that expression has little meaning".

primarily about the formation of calculating agencies (Callon 1998a) or the alienation of goods (Slater, 2002), we will argue that market exchange comprises transfers of goods, money and property rights. In addition, we will develop two other arguments. First, markets are not simple aggregations of dyadic exchanges but are an institution in their own right, embodying significant investments in physical and symbolic infrastructures (Loasby, 2000). Secondly, marketing can be understood as a distributed and heterogeneous set of practices involved in the process of facilitating market exchange and constructing markets as institutions. Callon's (1998b) notions of frames and overflows constitute a good starting point to examine the role of marketing as performing the market, as Cochoy (1998) has argued. In particular, we will argue that marketing's role in market making is to construct a chain or network of associations and representations that attempt to render the connection between supply and demand seamless. However, these chains are always fragile, provisional and liable to be challenged by rival chains.

The structure of the paper is as follows: in the first section, we will examine Callon's proposals and discuss its most telling critiques of economic sociology. In the second section, the discussion shifts to markets as institutions. The third section looks at the role of marketing in the construction of markets or market making. Finally, we conclude with a reflection on the implications of the previous discussion for a study of marketing practices and the interaction between theory and practice.

Market Exchange and "Callonistics"[3]

The starting point for Callon's (1998a) excursion into market exchange is a definition borrowed from Guesnerie (1996): market exchange is a process of defining the price at which exchange can be effected given two parties with divergent interests. The emergence of calculativeness is the linchpin of Callon's approach and relies partly on a novel reading of Granovetter's (1995) embeddedness argument. Rather than fall for the economists' notion that calculativeness is a hard-wired characteristic of agents, Callon regards Granovetter's embeddedness notion as an elegant solution to do away with the antinomy of the undersocialised *homo economicus* and the oversocialised *homo sociologicus*. The embeddedness of agents in social networks allows the agents'

[3] The derisory term Callonistics is employed by Fine (2003) in his trenchant critique of Callon's enterprise.

identities interests and objectives to be transformed through interaction. Rather than conceiving agents as having stable traits and as traversing interactions unscathed, Callon advances a relational argument in which agents and networks are mutually constitutive.

The emergence of calculative agencies is, according to Callon (1998a, b), the product of framing. Framing is an operation of disentanglement that allows the myriad of associations between agents to be sorted and classified. The networks of relationships in which agents are embedded are still there and as influential as ever, but framing allows these relationships to be abstracted and dissociated from one another. The frame establishes a boundary around which interactions are assumed to take place independently of their context (Callon 1998b, p. 249). [4]

Market exchange is enabled by a process of framing that allows distinct agents to come together and agree a price for the exchange of goods and money. But framing is always a fragile, partial and artificial achievement that requires substantive investments. The counterpart of framing is overflowing, in Callon's terminology. Overflowing is both the supplement as well as the foundation on which framing can exist. Callon (1998b, p. 252) goes as far as saying that without overflows, the whole process of framing would be wholly ineffectual.

Framing is necessary to affirm the autonomy of actors as well as temporally delimit exchanges. The absence of framing would prevent the disentanglement of the web of relations in which the exchange is embedded and the parties to conclude the deal, to be quits. Callon (1998a, p. 19) associates market exchange with the decontextualisation, detachment and dissociation associated with the construction of a stage where actors can perform the roles of buyer and seller and objects can be transformed into something that can be valued and alienated. On the other hand, overflowing represents the connections to the outside world that the frame is unable to abolish or prevent. But rather than limit overflows to social relationships, as Granovetter's (1985) embeddedness implies, Callon argues that overflows have multiple sources and can flow in many directions.

[4] Abbott (1995, p. 872) looks at boundaries and entities in a way that is reminiscent of Callon's frames and overflows: "… the emergence of an entity is the assemblage of various sites of differences (…) into a set of boundaries in the topologically strict sense, boundaries that define an inside and an outside. But the work of creating an entity has the ability to endure, as a persistent thing, in the various ecologies in which it is located".

As mentioned earlier, Callon's contribution has stirred up a lively debate not least in the pages of *Economy and Society.* On one side of the debate, there are those like Miller (2002), who criticise Callon for being too enamoured of the formalities of market exchange and for conceding too much ground to economists. Miller's critique follows the traditional sociological gut reaction that all "formality is a fraud" (Stinchcombe 2001, p. 1) and accuses Callon of mistaking the economist's abstraction of the market for the practice of market exchange. For Miller, Callon's approach exposes the bare bones of market transactions but is incapable of penetrating the obdurate world of practice. Miller further notes that the way business makes sales and profits is not by focusing on the momentary disentanglement associated with a transaction, but through a series of complex entanglements connecting supply to demand.

Slater (2002) reassesses Callon's argument and introduces an important contribution to this debate, sketching the role of marketing in enabling and sustaining market transactions. For Slater, the essence of market transactions is alienation of property rather than the establishment of calculating agencies. As Slater (2002, p. 237) notes, Miller and Callon agree that markets can be conceptually separated from other systems of exchange by a specific form of framing and calculation. However, Miller argues that any ethnographic examination of market exchange quickly surfaces other forms of calculation other than the operation of the price mechanism. For Miller, the diversity of calculations present in "real" market exchange negates the usefulness of Callon's framing and disentanglement operations. But this critique is misplaced. However many forms of calculation permeate market exchange, the specificity of economic calculation remains. The alternative would be to deny the specific character of markets and dissolve market exchange into a nebulous concoction of generic exchange. [5]

Slater's focus on property rights and alienation does indeed provide a more robust abstraction, in Stinchcombe's (2001) sense, for market exchange As Slater (2002, p. 238) puts it, "…the stability of legal entities and frameworks allows for reliable and predictable encounters and in this much broader sense allows "calculation" ". Slater's argument harks back to a different if hardly novel definition of market exchange, one

[5] Much as the generic concept of marketing has pervaded the concept of a management technology whose application is not restricted to markets (Sweeney, 1972). See also Biggart and Delbridge (2004) for another recent example of an undifferentiated approach to exchange systems.

that is more precise than Guesnerie's (1996). Hodgson (1988) defines economic exchange in terms of transfer of products and money (the calculating side) as well as a transfer of property rights (the alienation side). Similarly, Ménard (1995) defines markets as institutional arrangements that enable the routine and voluntary transfer of property rights on a regular basis. Modern market economies depend on the synchronisation of these two types of transfer. If Callon is right to ask where the calculating agencies that build up *homo economicus* come from, Slater is equally justified in pointing out that without a stable legal framework that protects transactions amongst strangers, market exchanges cannot be effected.[6]

In pursuing Callon's reasoning, it is worth stressing that both types of transfer require framing and generate overflows. In the case of transfer of property rights, framing is achieved by both parties bringing everything from the past and everything in the future, to the immediate present - thereby creating a compressed and well bounded time-frame, "sharp-in, sharp-out" as Macneil (1980) memorably put it. Collins (1999, p. 97) asks the question: "how does social behaviour move from taking to trading?" The law plays a key role in establishing and policing trading relationships through regulation such as the laws of theft and fraud as well as laws that protect private rights. But, as Collins (1999, p. 97) notes, the establishment of private entitlements is a necessary but not sufficient condition for trading relationships to occur. The success of contractual relationships depends on communication, cooperation, shared norms and expectations – factors that in Callon's language represent overflows.

In addition, contractual relationships witness the coexistence of multiple forms calculations within the same frame. Collins (1999) distinguishes three different forms of calculation in contractual relationships: the deal, the relationship and the contract. Each of these forms of calculation supplies its own normative and competing standards by which parties guide their behaviour in a contractual relationship. Different frames of reference are likely to carry greater or lesser weight depending on specific circumstances – for example, premature assertions of contractual rights in a

[6] Greif's historical account is of some relevance here. Greif's (1994) analysis of the contrasting fortunes of Maghribi and Genoese traders in the 11th century demonstrates the advantages of formal institutions and the limitations of social embeddedness as mechanisms for governing economic exchange. The collectivist system adopted by Maghribi traders, where order was enforced through moral sanctions, worked well in the case of intraeconomy relationships but was incapable of supporting intereconomy relationships. By contrast, the Genoese introduced formal institutions to support impersonal forms of economic exchange, thus enabling their society to benefit from an expansion in the scope of trading relationships.

dispute may signal that business relationship is of little importance and will not act as driver for compromise in the dispute.

In the case of the transfer of goods for money, as Miller (2002) points out, the objects and actors involved in market exchange come to a transaction already infused with meaning and multiple forms of calculation. The transaction can only take place if it fits within a complex set of entanglements on both sides. In the example used by Miller (2002), the sale of a car can be only be understood by reference to the entangled web of its purchaser lifestyle, finances and projected use of the car, as well as the salesperson's quota, commissions, the franchised dealership relationship to the manufacturer, and so on.

If Callon's enthusiasm for the power of frames privileges the abstract and formal, impurities and overflows are essential to understand the workings and dynamic character of real markets as well as the functioning of institutions that support market exchange. "The market works *because* it is imperfect", as Potts (2000, p. 97) succinctly put it. Similarly, courts work because do not rely exclusively on the letter of contracts to interpret disputes (Collins, 1999). Ironically, whereas institutional economics has moved closer to economic sociology by acknowledging that markets, whilst relying on impersonal forms of exchange cannot dispense with other forms of support in the guise of moral, social rules or codes of conduct, Callon's efforts attempt to move economic sociology in the opposite direction.

The next two sections of this paper focus on two unexplored implications of Callon's approach. On one hand, Callon and his critics conflate market exchange with the notion of the market as an institution. Markets are not simply aggregations of dyadic exchanges but institutions in their own right, embodying significant investments in market making that constitute public goods for market participants (Loasby 1999, 2000). On the other hand, Callon's focus on formalism leads him into examining the performativity of discourses namely the discourse of economics, broadly understood as encompassing accounting and marketing, on the formatting of the calculative agencies central to market exchange. In Callon's (1998a, p. 30) aphorism, the economy is embedded in economics. Whereas the role of accounting in framing calculative agencies has been explored in some depth (see e.g. Miller, 1994, 2001), the role of marketing in market making has remained relatively unexplored (but see Cochoy, 1999).

Markets and Market Making

Loasby (1999) initiates his discussion of markets by remarking that most economists write about exchange when they purportedly discuss markets. But, as Loasby (1999, p. 107) argues:

"To confuse markets with exchange is a category mistake; it is a confusion of institutions and activities. An exchange is an event […]; it is something that happens. A market is a setting within which exchange may take place – a setting which refers to 'a group or groups of people, some of whom desire to obtain certain things and some of whom are in a position to supply what the others want' (Marshall 1919: 182). The relationship between markets and exchange requires some analysis"

Loasby (2000) argues that in much of economics, markets appear as a natural given. Indeed the tendency of economics is to be concerned with explaining the absence of markets, as in the case of public goods or externalities, or their failure, as in Williamson's (1975) attempt to explain the existence of firms as a case of market failure. But this approach fails to acknowledge that markets are goods too, and as such one might enquire about the costs and benefits of setting up and sustaining markets.

For Loasby (2000), the original Coasean (1937) question regarding the costs of using the price mechanism can be reframed in terms of the costs of exchange, finding and negotiating with trading partners that would have to be incurred if exchange was not supported by market institutions. A market can thus be seen not as a source of transaction costs, but as institutional arrangement that reduces transaction costs vis-à-vis the base case where exchange would take place without markets.

Ménard's (1995) inclusion of references to routines and "large numbers" in the definition of markets is important because, as Loasby (2000) notes, a market provides a set of complementary, intangible capital goods to reduce the cost of individual transactions. As in the case of physical goods, the size of the potential investment in market infrastructures is dependent on the potential investor's expected volume. In addition as Loasby (1999) notes, investments in transaction technology help reduce transaction costs for the many agents include those who do not partake in the investment. In short, investments directed at facilitating transactions create externalities or overflows in Callon's terms. Markets are thus the products of investments in continuing transaction capability, accessible to many and constitute a form of public good (Loasby 1999, p. 119).

Loasby (2000) quotes Casson's (1982) summary of obstacles to trade to illustrate the nature of the investments required to construct a market. Obstacles to trade include:

- No contact between buyer and seller.
- No knowledge of reciprocal wants
- No agreement over prices
- No arrangement over the transfer of custody of goods
- No confidence or means of verifying that goods conform to specifications
- No confidence on restitution in case of default.

Investments in market making are thus multi-pronged investments aimed at overcoming the sources of these obstacles. The way to overcome them, as Casson (1982) remarks, is to create a system of conventions and rules that apply to particular classes of transactions rather than attempt to remove obstacles on a piecemeal basis. The setting up of this system of conventions and rules is neither planned nor designed. It is the product of evolutionary processes, of cumulative and deliberate investments aimed at reducing the direct costs of transactions. An innovator's successful investment generates externalities, which encourage others to take advantage of the initial investments and make their own investments in devising new ways to further reduce the costs of transacting. The early history of personal computing provided one such example, when in August of 1981, Apple run a full-page advert in the *Wall Street Journal* that read "Welcome IBM. Seriously". Although this advert is often cited as an ill-advised invitation for IBM to become synonymous with the PC, it illustrates how Apple was aware of the benefits IBM investments in market-making would have on the size and the scope of the PC market.

As Loasby (2000, p. 302) remarks, the widening of the scope of market transactions may indeed benefit the original market maker, but the innovator may hope that others will follow and enjoy increasing returns from their complementary investments. The end result of these multiple investments, cannot be anticipated by anybody and is the emergent outcome of the interaction of many investment plans, some competitive and some complementary, as Richardson (1960) pointed out long ago.

The notion of market making and "markets as goods" discussed by Loasby leads us into the direction of querying what is the role of marketing in market making. Returning momentarily to Casson's (1982) list of obstacles to trade, most marketing theorists would have little trouble identifying activities that would help overcome some of those obstacles. And yet marketing theory, not unlike the economics literature Loasby rightly criticises, is arguably no better at illuminating the nature of markets or even reflecting on its own contribution to market-making.

In particular, marketing theory in its more managerial incarnation, has taken a purely firm-centred view of investments in marketing: they have a competitive character and returns should be only be traced back to the investor. Only in Johanson and Mattsson (1985) do we find a notion that marketing investments may create externalities and thus have a market-making character. In their seminal article, Johanson and Mattsson (1985) introduce the concepts of marketing and market assets to demonstrate the investment character of marketing activities and the role of relationships in building durable assets. Investments are defined as "…processes in which resources are committed to create, build or acquire assets that can be used in the future" (Johanson and Mattsson 1985, p. 186). More tellingly, the temporal nature of investments and assets is deployed with a clear objective: "We need the investment concept in our framework to handle the long term nature of marketing and the "network nature" of markets" (*ibid*, p. 185).

In Johanson and Mattsson's (1985) framework internal assets encompass both production and marketing assets and these are seen as the means for developing and nurturing market assets. Market assets are the positions in a network structure that give a firm access to the assets of other firms, and these positions are the consequences of earlier investments of the firm in the network as well as the investments of other firms, both complementary and competitive. These intricate and coordinated patterns of investments leads to the emergence of a complex market structure that can be best described as a network. Production and marketing investments are responsible for building up the internal structures of firms as well as having a market-making character, through the development of market assets.

For Callon (1998a, b) and Cochoy (1998) the role of marketing in market making is essentially performative. Cochoy (1998) portrays marketing's role as central to modern capitalism:

"Halfway between producers and consumers, half-way between economics and managerial practices, marketing specialists have gradually reinvented the fundamental actors and processes; they have succeeded in disciplining (mastering/codifying) the market economy".

Callon's emphasis on the role of academic discourses in performing and formatting the very phenomena they purport to describe, leads him to turn Granovetter's embeddedness argument on its head. Rather than seeing the economy as embedded in society, we have the economy embedded in economics, understood as encompassing accounting and marketing. Marketing and accounting are seen as the mediators between the economy and economics, between practice *qua* practice and practice as the object of theorising.

Callon (1998a) used a strawberry auction markets as an example of the power of the neoclassical economics discourse to perform a market organisation and *homo economicus* according to its image. As Callon (1998a, p. 22) puts it:

"The conclusion that can be drawn is very simple and yet fundamental; yes, *homo economicus* does exist, but it is not an a-historical reality; he does not describe the nature the hidden nature of the human being. He is the result of a process of configuration, and the history of the strawberry market shows how this framing takes place. Of course, it mobilises material and metrological investments, property rights and money, but w*e should not forget the essential contribution of economics in the performing the economy*".[emphasis added]

In essence, whilst neoclassical economists regard *homo economicus* as a natural entity Callon offers the prospect that it is the discourse of economics that creates the entities they take for granted. Callon's approach has been enthusiastically adopted by other sociologists, in particular those who have studied the operation of financial markets (Mackenzie, 2001, 2003a, b; Mackenzie and Millo, 2003; Knorr-Cetina and Bruegger, 2002).

The performativity of the neoclassical economics discourse is clear in markets that have either been designed according to neoclassical precepts such as auction markets, of markets where theoretically-derived formulae, such as the Black-Scholes-Merton option pricing model, become incorporated into the behaviour of market actors (Mackenzie and Millo, 2003) - but this reminds us of Joan Robinson's observation that "we should not be surprised of seeing rabbits being pulled out a hat if we have witnessed them being inserted in the hat, in full view of the audience".

The construction of most markets requires a more distributed and heterogeneous sets of practices and bodies of expertise than Callon seems to assume. In the next section, we will discuss the nascent contribution of the sociology of marketing professions for the understanding of markets.

Marketing and the Construction of Markets

Cochoy (1998, p. 195) describes how marketers perform the economy in the following terms; first, marketers tried to educate themselves on the workings of markets and train other specialists. This objective was achieved through conceptual innovation and codification of marketing knowledge. Interaction with marketing practice, contributed to the reshaping of both marketing knowledge and practice. Thus marketing practice and knowledge tend to be mutually influencing although over time, as Cochoy (1998, p. 196) argues, each side of the divide becomes progressively more autonomous. Cochoy (1999) chronicles in admirable detail how marketing knowledge evolved since its early days and the sources that influenced that trajectory.

Cochoy (1998) describes this evolution in terms of marketing having to leave economics behind in order to perform the economy. In doing so, marketing ended up borrowing conceptual and methodological tools from a number of bodies of expertise including economics, in its quest to perform marketing management. The performances of marketing are, as Cochoy (1998) admits, hard to fathom and measure empirically. This elusiveness is attributed by Cochoy to the distinctive character of performative sciences, or sciences they arise in and through practice.

The notion that all management sciences are essentially performative in character doesn't begin to address the fact that management sciences are fairly heterogeneous in this regard. In discussing the academic control of managerial skill formation and certification, Whitley (1995) argues that managerial skills exhibit a low degree of standardisation and limited independence from context. As such, they are difficult to codify and teach as abstract knowledge, and employers are able to exert a much higher degree of control over the definition and certification of those skills than those in more traditional professions.

Nelson (2003) adds that in cases where technologies are largely tacit and social, as in educational research, management or economics, is difficult to do precise experimentation and gaining reliable knowledge from on-line variation and so-called “best practice”. Rather than lament the poor quality of research in these fields, we would gain by acknowledging the limitations of research and codification of knowledge in the case of technologies that are largely tacit and social.

The argument developed in this section is that marketing is not just another performative science, but one that is deeply embedded in specific market contexts, spatially distributed, and dependent on complex forms of sequential coordination amongst different actors and heterogeneous bodies of expertise. In this respect, marketing differs from other management disciplines whose domain of governance is more clearly bounded – e.g “the firm”, “the employee as productive agent”.

Miller and Rose (1990) argue that a domain is rendered governable to the extent that it can be represented in summary form, allowing calculations and judgements to be made from a distance. The notion of “action at a distance” (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1987) is crucial for understanding how a domain is constituted as an object of knowledge and made governable. The way action at a distance occurs is through a network of associations involving heterogeneous elements - e.g. measuring devices, artefacts. When these networks can be stabilised and mobilised as faithful allies, the centres that are able to mobilise these networks constitute themselves as “centres of calculation” (Latour, 1987).

Miller and Rose (1990, p. 10) point out that discourse plays a key role in establishing these loose networks and in bringing about the possibility of ordering them. It is through common vocabularies and shared language that loose associations between agents across time and space can be established. A variety of different forces can only be enrolled in a governing network if a shared vocabulary exists and objectives and values can be translated from one 'language' into another. The language of expertise and professionalism plays a role here, in setting claims to disinterested truth and in suggesting means for achieving the desired results.

Miller and Rose (1990, p. 19) argue that governing an enterprise operates through managers and organisational employees; the activities of individuals as producers have become an object of knowledge and a target of expertise. In the 20th century, different attempts have been made to link the political and economic endeavours of politicians and businessmen to the activities of individuals as producers. Governing economic life relies on the enrolment of individuals as allies, as different technologies of calculation and norms get translated into the values and judgements of individuals as professionals and members of productive organisations. Governing economic life thus depends on the ability of politicians, businessmen, experts, etc. to transfer aspirations, values and objectives into self-steering mechanisms of individuals (Miller and Rose 1990, pp. 18-9). For example, Taylorism was a set of programmes allying political aspirations and a body of expertise and articulated in the language of 'efficiency' and 'competitiveness'. A heterogeneous assemblage of tools, methods, books and records, etc., was stabilised into a technology of government that linked individual performance at work to higher level objectives of national competitiveness and efficiency in the use of productive resources - natural, mechanical and human resources.

Miller and Rose (1997) follow a similar approach to study how the notion of the post-war consumer was constructed in Britain. Making up the consumer turned out to be the mobilisation of psychological bodies of expertise (e.g. psychoanalysis) to map the needs of consumers, linking those needs with specific products and linking products with their context of usage.[7] In particular, through the application of psychological expertise, the notion of consumer choice was placed in a broader context of subjective meanings and lifestyles rather than linked to the physical attributes and functions of products.[8] As Miller and Rose (1997, p. 30) noted, the application of these bodies of expertise fell short of providing a full theory of consumer choice. However, their power and usefulness to manufacturers and their allies, namely advertisers, stemmed from their ability to render the process of choice intelligible in terms of the make-up of psychological factors affecting choice and the potential to influence the process at different stages. The application of psychological theories to consumption turned consumer choice into a legitimate object of knowledge even if that behaviour cannot be governed in the terms envisaged by Miller and Rose (1990).

Following a parallel approach, Barrey et al (2000) and Cochoy (2002) introduce path-break contributions to the study of marketing as practice. Barrey et al (2000) focus on one marketing scene, the consumer in the supermarket shopping for packaged goods, and dissect the multiple bodies of expertise and the coordination patterns that help

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[7] See also Boyd and Levy (1965) for an early argument on the need to study the total consumption system.

[8] The traditional marketing notions of core and augmented product were introduced to highlight this shift in emphasis (Levitt, 1969).

configure and format that scene. Product designers, packaging designers and merchandisers all contribute in different ways to configure the choice of consumers drawing on different representations of that consumer and the different phases of the buying process. The product designer looks at the aesthetic and functional elements and works at the interface between production, the purchasing environment and usage of the product. The packaging designer is concerned with the projection of the intrinsic characteristics of the product and facilitating choice when consumers face the product in the shopping environment. On the other hand, the merchandiser is not directly concerned with the product but with the configuration of the space in which consumer choices are made, both in terms of the overall layout of the shopping space as well as the allocation of shelf space and product "facings".

All these different professionals' interfaces with the consumer are mediated by their common client, the retailer acting as a spokesperson for the final consumer. The client in turn, interfaces with these different professionals at different levels and with its own set of specialists – e.g. specialist buyers, product or category managers, store managers. In summary, the consumer no longer appears as a singular entity represented by one overriding logic, but as a series of entities modelled according to different criteria and not easily amenable to integration. As Barrey et al (2000) remark, the coordination amongst these professionals poses a number of problems. For example, product and package designers have a common focus on the product, follow the same educational and professional routes, often working in the same agencies. A merchandiser by contrast has a different focus (shopping floor space), works according to different performance criteria (e.g. revenue per square meter, stock rotation) and looks at the allocation of space to different categories of products rather than products alone.

The coordination amongst these professionals is thus sequential (e.g. packaging is defined before merchandising), spatially dispersed (e.g. the same product and package is spread over multiple points of sale) and asymmetric in terms of the distances they face from consumers and their purchasing environments. Thus product designers and packagers have to anticipate from a distance not just how consumers will look at and eventually use products, but also the actions of retailers and competitors. The conclusion of Barrey et al's (2000) exemplary study is that marketing in the context of fast-moving consumer goods sold through retail chains, is a highly distributed, heterogeneous and loosely coordinated set of tasks. The consumer is depicted in multiple roles, subject to multiple representations and undergoing a sequential and spatially distributed set of tasks that do not finish with the act of purchase. Different bodies of expertise and imaginative powers are mobilised at different stages and places in an attempt to influence this process.

In the marketing process there is no powerful "centre of calculation" (Latour, 1987) mobilising and aligning all these different activities in a strong and durable network. Surely, all these activities entangle the consumer (Callon, 1998b) and help format the market (Cochoy, 1998), but they neither ensnare the consumer in a particularly tight web nor can they be easily understood as examples of "action at a distance". In addition, these attempts at governing demand and manipulating consumers have a double-edge, as Barrey et al (2000) recognise. On one hand, the professionals deploy a variety of methods and tools hoping to manipulate purchasing choices. Some of these methods have strong roots in the social sciences (e.g. psychology) whilst others are closer to practice and idiosyncratic experience. On the other hand, consumers are adept at manipulating objects, symbols and framing choices in a variety of ways. In some cases, consumers are indeed happy to choose within the framing context that professionals have formatted for them, whilst in other cases they can break out of these entanglements and mobilise resources that will help them disentangle the very frames the professionals have patiently built around them (e.g. consumer reports, product guides, specialist magazines).

The second major implication of Barrey et al's (2000) study is that the activities and specialisms involved in formatting markets are likely to vary widely across different types of markets (e.g. packaged goods, services). We should therefore learn to speak of "markets" and "marketing practices" in the plural rather than attempt to squash a series of heterogeneous practices under a single label. As Barrey et al (2000) have demonstrated, the very notion of what is a "customer" or "consumer" is and how it should be represented, varies according to different specialisms operating in the same market and is likely to be variable across different market contexts. Marketing activities are thus likely to cohere into different assemblages for each market, as Easton (2000) highlighted in a different context, even if they can be construed as different assemblages of the same bodies of expertise.

The performativity of marketing activities and their links to marketing theory deserve a comment too. Cochoy (2002) and Osborne and Rose (1999) describe how the notions of "customer" and "public opinion" have co-evolved with marketing theory and public opinion research. Cochoy (2002) shows how the notion of “customer” has emerged and mutated according to different epochal shifts. For example, industrial customers have under the aegis of national and international standards such as ISO 9000, become “quality customers”, auditors of quality in their suppliers’ operations and potential clients of pre-qualified suppliers.

Osborne and Rose (1999) describe how the notion of “public opinion” was progressively constructed through a series of tools and methods aimed at extracting opinions from representative samples of populations through questionnaire surveys. The techniques employed by pollsters and market researchers were based on the same principles and benefited from each others’ experience. The sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld, a pioneer of research into mass communication, had some experience of conducting market research prior to his migration to the US (Fullerton, 1990) and his brand of empirical social research had long-lasting influences on both market and opinion research. However, as Lazarsfeld (1957) himself acknowledged, the emergence of public opinion research preceded the involvement of psychologists and sociologists.

The phenomena of “public opinion” and “the consumer" are both artefacts of the techniques, tools and bodies of knowledge that are mobilised to capture and influence it. Over time, people learn how to cooperate in the creation of these phenomena; they become willing subjects for market researchers and pollsters, and they portray themselves as the consumers and “opinioned citizens” they perceive to be expected of them.

Osborne and Rose (2000) argue against a simple performative model in which knowledge developed in academic social science is simply transferred to the “real world”. Opinion and marketing research present a more imbricative and complex relationship between academics and practitioners. At one level, the very act of theorising practice and developing relationships with established disciplines opens up new sets of possibilities for understanding and acting. Miller and Rose (1997) account of the contribution of psychological theories to illuminate the process of consumer choice illustrates this argument. But once the consumer is understood and configured as an entity with passions and desires, attentive to both functional as well as symbolic aspects of consumption, and prone to a variety of influences up to the point of sale, it doesn’t take long for the world of marketing practice to construct the chain of representations and associations described by Barrey et al (2000).

Osborne and Rose (1999) argue the social sciences as operating in a wide "spatial mix" and a low "tempo of creativity", a point that should be emphasised in the context of marketing activities. First, marketing practice operates within a series of spatially distributed sites which generate its own set of logistical and coordination issues, as Barrey et al (2000) showed in the case of product designers, packaging and merchandising professionals in fast-moving consumer goods. The spatial distribution of marketing activities leads to interesting specialisation and coordination issues within and across the boundaries of different actors (e.g. manufacturers, specialised agencies, retailers) as well as multiple and often conflicting representations of the same entities (e.g. products, consumers).

Secondly, marketing practice require the set-up of sequentially coordinated assemblages of activities that are hard to align and stabilise. The language of "centres of calculation" and "action at distance" that seem to fit accounting so well (see e.g. Robson, 1992), is patently inadequate to describe marketing activities. Rather than one powerful "centre of calculation" around which a strongly aligned network can emerge, we have a multitude of actors trying to build competing networks by attempting to enrol other actors (e.g. retailers, consumers) in a series of coordinated and dispersed efforts (Araujo and Mouzas, 1997). In short, the assemblage of activities grouped under the label "marketing practice" are loosely coordinated, have to contend with competition as much as they rely on cooperation, and are continuously being undermined by other, equally fragile but rivalrous assemblages that attempt to destabilise and redefine their representations and calculations. [9]

Conclusions

The initial argument of this paper was that the construction of markets requires the mobilisation of a variety of bodies of expertise, from contract law to economics, accounting and marketing. Departing from a definition of market exchange as comprising the exchange of products and/ or services for money as well as the exchange of property rights, we reached the conclusion that the construction of markets requires activities that disentangle exchanges from their context (e.g. that make goods alienable) as well as activities that embed exchange in a specific context

[9] Both Slater (2002) and Callon et al (2002) are alert to this point, Callon et al by drawing on Chamberlin's venerable contribution to product differentiation and monopolistic competition.

(e.g. relate product design to usage context). It is this dual and paradoxical nature of market exchange that allows it be framed as an abstract and instantaneous act, as Callon (1998a) argues, as well as an activity that is deeply embedded in socio-technical networks as Miller (2002) counterposes.

More importantly perhaps, is the notion that markets work not because they conform to the abstraction encapsulated in the notion of the frame, but because they don't! Callon's metaphors of frames and overflows should indeed be, in Miller's sense, the other way around. Market frames need to be abstracted from an existing set of socio-technical networks and relationships, but they are fundamentally dependent on the very context they are drawn from. In short, it is not so much a case of overflows from supposedly tight frames, but one of symbiotic immersion of frames into a variety of overflow ecologies.

The notion that markets are constructed rather than a primitive state of nature is underscored by Callon, but there is a long tradition in economics that looks at markets as goods and the role of entrepreneurs as market makers. Nevertheless, Callon and others are right to examine the performativity of academic theories in constructing markets. As we have argued, markets are constructed through a series of heterogeneous and distributed set of contributions. The legal system makes an important contribution to the construction of markets but a Collins (1999) remarks, the invocation of the legal process more often than not, thwarts rather than fosters trading relationships. Accounting provides the calculating agencies that allow market actors to use money as a medium of exchange, determine costs and prices, undertake investments and so on. Marketing's contribution to market making, as we have argued, is to construct networks of associations and representations that connect supply and demand in as seamless a way as possible. Investments in marketing activities, as Johanson and Mattsson (1985) and Loasby (2000) pointed out, are also investments in creating market assets that constitute public goods for those who have made the appropriate investments.

In contrast to the examples of law and accounting, marketing practice is less structured, more diffuse across time and space, and dependent on a mix of knowledge derived from scientific disciplines and tacit, local knowledge on the workings of market types. A sociology of the marketing professions, following the pioneering work of Barrey et al (2000), promises to throw further light on the role of marketing in performing the market as well as provide interesting comparisons with other, similarly important contributions to market-making.

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