Workshop

Multiple Markets

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The workshop is a joint effort of the Copenhagen Markets and Valuations Group (CMV) at Department of Organization, Copenhagen Business School and the Center for Research on Culture and Economy (NuCEC) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. CMV and NuCEC are currently partnered in network on ‘The ethnography of markets after market design’ of which this workshop is a part.

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Place: Room Kl 2.35, Kilen, Copenhagen Business School, Kilevej 14A, 2th floor, DK-2000 Frederiksberg, Denmark.
Format: With this workshop we wish to have a constructive conversation. For this reason, we plan to discuss no more than 10 papers. We aim at fostering a true collective exchange of ideas.

Theme of the workshop

In some situations, at the same time and in the same space, more than one market can be found. In such multiple market situations, one market is often not easily distinguished from one or more other markets. What at first may seem like one market may show in fact to be several markets. Buying an ice cream, for example, can simultaneously be part of an ice cream market as well as part of a snack market (Loasby, 1999, p. 111). Also when the market identified by a competition authority in a decision on antitrust differs from the market identified by the firms involved (Onto, 2014), we may be pointed to a multiple market situation. Moreover, marketplaces located geographically in one place, such as The Night Market in Brás in Sao Paulo, sometimes show to be a simultaneity of multiple markets (Vereta-Nahoum, 2019). Indeed, there are reasons to believe that such simultaneity of market contexts is a relatively common situation.

Multiple markets have received some attention in the market studies literature (Chimenti, 2019; Peres da Silva, 2018; Frankel & Galland, 2015; Kjellberg & Olson, 2017), yet they remain to be discussed more systematically. With this workshop, we invite to such a discussion from empirical, methodological as well as theoretical angles. We expect through this discussion to work on an important addition to market studies by pointing to types and aspects of markets that too often have been overlooked. We also expect this discussion to raise central issues to market studies as found in sociology, STS, anthropology, and more. Below some such issues are mentioned; more can be added and, we hope, will be added during the workshop.

One issue concerns the individuation of markets. A common tenor of market studies is to counter abstract models of markets with knowledge of individual markets. Such knowledge of individual markets may arguably rectify abstract market models (Smelser & Swedberg, 2005; Fligstein, 2001; Aspers, 2011) or explain how individual markets sometimes come to resemble abstract market models (Callon, 1998; Callon & Muniesa, 2005; MacKenzie & Millo, 2003; MacKenzie, 2006). But if the situation investigated is in a simultaneity of multiple markets, is then the claim of studying an individual market not yet another abstraction or analytical construction of the researcher? This issue also concerns the definition of market.

Market is defined in social theory, and often social scientists studying markets understand it as their prerogative to define the concept of market. Yet market is also a discursive construct at the center of for example legal practice (Weiler, 1999; Christophers, 2013; Davies, 2013); of political ideologies and so-called thought collectives (Mirowski, 2013; Mirowski & Plehwe,
of engineering efforts (Jenle & Pallesen, 2017; Pallesen & Jacobsen, 2018; Breslau, 2011) as well as other types of practice. Seen together there is a diversity of market definitions. Thus ‘market’ may sometimes be regarded as a floating or an empty signifier (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), not having any stable definition or even any definition at all, and yet be central to neoliberalism (Birch, 2017) for example. Thus ‘market’ is only sometimes a specific type of social order, such as the one found in a marketplace for strawberries (Garcia-Parpet, 2007). At other times ‘market’ may as well be understood as an observer category, such as a second-order observation of prices (Luhmann, 2000, pp. 63-64; Esposito, 2011, p. 62ff) resulting in a situation of polycontexturality, in which the market is potentially distinct to each observer (Luhmann, 1988, p. 96). Taken together, this plurality of market concepts in social science discourse as well as in social life inquired into by social science, makes it unsurprising that at the same time and in the same space, more than one market can be found.

Market concepts are sometimes defined relatively independently of the social situations they are employed to understand or describe. But sometimes market concepts and market practices are entangled, such that market concepts become internal to market practices and such that multiple market situations may emerge. “Give me a two-by-two matrix and I will create the market” (Pollock & D’Adderio, 2012) is one example of such an entanglement; and with two two-by-twos, we may suspect, a multiple market situation arises. The arrangement of an auction house as informed by economic theory may make a (strawberry) market (Garcia-Parpet, 2007; Callon, 1998); and the simultaneity of multiple concepts of (strawberry) markets may point us to a situation of multiple (strawberry) markets (Frankel, 2018). Also the design of markets, for example in the form of school choice platforms (Roth, 2007), show that situations not immediately resembling a market (Li, 2017) are enacted by unfolding distinct concepts of markets in algorithms and rules defining roles of actors; and, when such markets are redesigned (Roth & Peranson, 1999) it is plausible to find multiple market situations.

Markets for collective concerns (Frankel, Pallesen, & Ossandón, 2019) offers an example in case. These are markets used as policy instruments to solve issues such as children at risk of going into care (Neyland, Ehrenstein, & Milyaeva, 2019), secure and affordable electricity (Reverdy & Breslau, 2019), and public transport (Ossandón & Ureta, 2019). Often such markets are carefully designed; and often such markets fail, with the result that policy-making becomes the evaluation, diagnosis, design, and repair of markets. In such situations of failure, several and sometimes competing concepts of markets and market designs make multiple market situations a likely outcome.
Issues such as these raise many questions:

- How is a market individuated? A more systematic view of multiple markets may render situations that have hitherto been understood as ‘a market’ as multiple markets. A question here is how can we tell markets apart from the fluxes of exchange.
- How are markets recognized? Sometimes a market may be identified by pointing to a given set of devices, actors or even a well-defined space. But often the identification of a market is more complex, and may, for example, involve various implicit as well as explicit criteria. In this sense, it seems fundamental to retrace the analytical operations whereby a market is defined.
- How does the identification of markets by different market actors differ and how do multiple identifications and conceptualizations matter for the ways markets are realized?
- How do circumstances in which market concepts become explicit in the area inquired into, such as in the case of market design, alter the way we imagine and construe markets?
- ‘Market’ is arguably sometimes concrete, sometimes an abstraction, and sometimes a situation in between, possibly at most levels of a ladder of abstraction. How do such distinct levels of abstraction work together in multiple markets?
- How do multiple markets relate to another? Do regulators, customers and retailers, for example, operate at different markets?
- How are markets enacted when their actors (such as retailers and customers) do not share the same conception as their designers? In situations in which there are competing conceptions of markets and how they should operate (what are the devices in operation), how is exchange possible?
- How can the multiplicity of conceptions, boundary-definitions, and uses of markets be employed strategically by actors?

References


