



# Managing to make market *agencements*: The temporally bound elements of stigma in favelas

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## ABSTRACT

How do entrepreneurs working at the bottom of the pyramid (BoP) manage to make new, powerful, associations between people and places to break down the barriers of Rio's stigmatised markets? Drawing on the notion of *agencement* and, specifically, the role of historical narrative devices in generating *agencements*, this paper offers a nuanced conceptualisation of BoP markets as *stigmatised marketplaces*, a deeper understanding of the work done by micro-entrepreneurs (MEs) to make market engagement possible, and insights into the temporally bound nature of *agencement* in recursively enabling safe times to visit a novel favela tourism market at the BoP. This is the first study to explicate the temporal nature of a market *agencement*.

## 1. Introduction

How do entrepreneurs working at the bottom of the pyramid (BoP) manage to make new, powerful, associations that break down the barriers of Rio's stigmatised favela markets? Powerful associations between market actors – referred to here as *agencement* (Callon, 2015) – are known to organise certain types of market action. *Agencements* are constituted by assemblages of people, institutions, ideas, objects of exchange and infrastructure, (Biraghi, Rossella, & Pace, 2018; Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018; Vargo et al., 2017). However, when market *agencements* are absent, Rio's entrepreneurs still seek out opportunities for action. Adopting a market studies approach, this study follows the work that micro-entrepreneurs (MEs) do to create a favela's market *agencement*: mobilising actors beyond the boundaries of the favela to reassemble infrastructures, media stories and practices. This study explains how new market *agencements* are created and old *agencements* are broken-down (Müller, 2015) to reconfigure market engagement (cf. Araujo, 2007; Mason & Spring, 2011). The analysis reveals that Rio's MEs are disassembling and reassembling *agencements* to create novel favela markets in specific, temporally bounded ways.

Brazil's famous favelas – the slums and shantytowns within large cities – are rarely visited or enjoyed. Favelas have been referred to as BoP markets – where people live on less than US\$2 a day (Prahallad, 2009). Characterised by limited means and strong social relationships, these communities manage local supply and demand (Anderson & Billou, 2007; Weidner, Rosa, & Viswanathan, 2010). In Rio's historical development, policy-makers have neglected and segregated favela

populations, leading to the stigmatisation of favelas as unsafe and undesirable places, and constituting Rio as a “divided” or “broken” city (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2013; Lacerda, 2015; Valladares, 2005). Stigma has been described as a negative belief attributed to people and places that results in discriminatory actions (Goffman, 1963; Wacquant, 2007). Stigma affects consumer behaviour and marketplace interaction (Hamilton, 2012; Trujillo, Barrios, Camacho, & Rosa, 2010; Viswanathan, Sridharan, & Ritchie, 2010) and acts as a barrier to market engagement (Blocker et al., 2013).

In the literature of sociology, the historical stigmatisation of place, and particularly the stigma of Brazilian favelas, has been widely recognised (Fernandes, 2014; Lacerda, 2015). In Rio de Janeiro, favelas suffer from what Wacquant (2007, p. 67) calls territorial stigmatisation – marking a shift from the notion of favelas as fixed, human, and culturally familiar *places* to be feared, lawless *spaces*, devoid of stability and safety. However, in marketing, such sites of entrepreneurial practice are rarely explored through the situated concerns, beliefs or practices of market actors, but rather through a resource-based perspective (Seelos & Mair, 2007; Viswanathan et al., 2010). Beliefs (and practices configured by those beliefs) are given minimal attention in comparison with actors' capabilities, and financial, social or other market resources. While generating valuable insights in its own right, the resource-based view does little to explain the everyday lives of entrepreneurs working in stigmatised markets to *agence* market action. It is necessary to know *how* entrepreneurs, living within these communities, manage to organise themselves as legitimate, credible market actors (DeBerry-Spence & Elliot, 2012). It is necessary to understand the associations they must

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make both within and beyond the boundaries of favelas in order to create new, powerful *agencements* that break down barriers and *agence* market action.

This paper sets out to explain how stigmatised favela *agencements* are broken down by the collective efforts of MEs and the other market actors they mobilise. Beginning with a review of the market *agencement* literature and considering the implications for stigmatised marketplaces at the BoP, an analytical framework is developed. A three-phase study is presented, encompassing a review of the socio-cultural history of the favela, interviews with favela-based MEs and an exemplary case of the development of a new favela market *agencement* in Rocinha, the largest favela of Rio de Janeiro. The analysis uncovers temporally bounded *agencements* that *agence* a specific form of tourism market engagement.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. *Agencement* in market settings

The concept of *agencement* is grounded in Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Cochoy, Trompette, & Araujo, 2015). ANT derives from Science and Technology Studies and assumes a flat ontology in which objects (epistemic, technical or natural), are recognised as having the same potential for agency as humans to configure action (Latour, 1987). When powerful associations are created between objects, ideas and human actors, certain activities are configured and held together in recursive patterns of action, such as those that constitute markets (Callon & Muniesa, 2005).

Market studies literature draws heavily on ANT to explore “the web of human and non-human entities engaged in any given project or course of action” (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006, p. 3). These actors constitute a market system, with distributed but interconnected market actors, each with differing roles and competences, performing the mediated practices that constitute markets (Geiger, Harrison, Kjellberg, & Mallard, 2014; Giesler & Fischer, 2017; Vargo et al., 2017). Government agents, indexes, technological devices, laws, consumers, entrepreneurs, and ideas (including attitudes and beliefs) interact through entangled practices to perform markets. From this performative perspective, market devices such as market rules and conventions, scientific and market knowledge (and its representation) and other technical and epistemic objects, are understood as helping actors work out or calculate the value of their actions and so mediate how markets are performed (Callon & Muniesa, 2005; Mason, Chakrabarti, & Singh, 2017). Kjellberg, Azimont, and Reid (2015) argue that marketing is the ongoing process of stabilising and altering norms and rules, market devices and technical infrastructures, disseminating images, models and representations and enacting practices, routines and habits. Thus, networks of subjects and their relations perform the production of market offerings, pricing, and brand positioning in a sequence of activities organised to generate conditions “felicitous” (Butler, 2010, p. 148) to market exchange (Mason, Kjellberg, & Hagberg, 2015). This approach rejects the separate conceptualisations of society and market and instead proposes an assemblage: an actor-network that continuously acts to reproduce or reform a marketised society (Cochoy, 2014). By analysing the world as collective assemblages, interesting questions emerge regarding the types of *agencement* that hold a collective together and how it might be possible to extend or hold together new worlds that *agence* wider market enrolment and action (Chakrabarti & Mason, 2014).

The concept of *agencement* is useful to understand the means by which actors work out how to intervene in markets. In focusing attention on uncovering and making visible the actor-network, three key challenges are presented. First, by adopting an ANT approach and following the powerful associations that constitute markets, deeper insights into the types of markets configured are missed. For example, the particular histories of stigmatised places which are pertinent to the favela setting are likely to be overlooked (Faria & Hemais, 2017;

Valladares, 2005). Second, it does not reveal the boundaries of, or barriers to, enrolment in the socio-marketised worlds that are preventing market action. Third, the notion of *agencement* alone does not reveal the objective or concern behind the distributed, co-ordinated action required to build new *agencement* and so create the felicitous conditions for market action.

A recent market studies debate has raised the question of market typologies (Geiger et al., 2014), proposing concerned markets as specific market forms where socio-political unease is invoked by multiple market actors to contest extant market practices, images, competences and ideas (Cochoy, 2014; Mallard, 2016). The notion of concerned markets is useful in considering market interventions, designed to alter how markets work and who they engage and enrol as they draw attention to the effects of existing market configurations. An important implication in accounting for concerns is the intent to bring about some form of co-ordinated, collective action for change. By making something into a concern to a group, a collective can be mobilised to address it (Chakrabarti & Mason, 2014). As Cochoy (2014) puts it, this is to question what markets are and what they do, enabling a move to what they should be, should do and how they could be shaped to do it (Mason et al., 2017).

Concerned markets recognise the entangled relationship of the “scientific, political, social and economic realms in and around markets” (Geiger et al., 2014, p. 3) and to some extent the socio-cultural histories that travel into markets through the actors they enrol and the places where they are performed (Faria & Hemais, 2017). Callon (2015) highlights the inherent uncertainty associated with such markets, and the complexity and multiplicity of their configuration. However, where marketplaces have become stigmatised, the social histories of beliefs and the dynamic nature of socio-marketised practices of favela life are both active in shaping and obstructing market engagement. As Faria and Hemais (2017, p. 2) point out, for concerns to be considered, “forgotten” histories that comprise stigmatised *agencements* must be made visible and acted upon. To understand what these stigmatised *agencements* might be, the literature on stigma must be considered.

### 2.2. Stigma

Stigma is more often associated with people than places and has been defined as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (Goffman, 1963, p. 12–13). Goffman (1963, p. 15) considers the “normal” – us, society, the dominant group – as representations of ideal and stereotypical individuals. To consider someone as “normal” is to assume that an individual complies with an ideal type constituted from understandings of patterned attributes and actions associated with a given context. When certain attributes arise in conflict with an ideal type, they can become prioritised over others and the individual reduced “in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman, 1963, p. 12–13). For Goffman (1963), stigma is the difference between the virtual and the actual social identity. This distinction is relevant to the concern with the way favelas are portrayed on social media and in myths, stories and the news. Further, understanding what counts in a process of stigmatisation, what objects, images and competences are held in place to generate the stigma of an individual, provide important clues to understanding the stigmatisation of place.

Goffman (1963) lists three main types of stigma, namely, abominations of the body (physical deformities), blemishes of individual character (addiction, unemployment), and tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion, and it is to the latter that Wacquant’s (2007) work on territorial stigma contributes. Wacquant (2007) extends the notion of stigma to places believed to be the “eponym of all the evils” (p. 67). For Wacquant (2007) stigma is rooted to a place in such a way that mobility (leaving the place) can attenuate or even annul it. Wacquant (2007) drew on Smith’s (1987) notion of place and space to explain the noxious effects of stigma in territories.

Places are conceptualised as “familiar”, “culturally charged”, “fixed”

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