Performing Sales: Material Scripts and the Social Organization of Obligation

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Abstract

Can a dramaturgical analysis of sales encounters further our understanding of the social organization of selling and buying in contemporary markets? The main argument of this paper is that limiting economic action in markets to the formal and often stylized and abstract properties of the exchange, as economists suggest, misses the material and social organization of this endeavor. Employing ethnographic methods, we apply our dramaturgical approach to three research sites in three different countries. We show how an often overlooked fundamental ingredient of economic transactions, the situated constitution of social obligation, is achieved locally on the sales floor. Social obligation allows the sellers and the buyers to move from one stage of the sales encounter to the next, and enables the closing of deals. As part of the constitution of obligation, market actors appeal to scripts which are observable, recurrent activities and patterns of interaction characteristic of a particular setting. Scripts are presented here as a basic unit of analysis in social studies of markets. We place most emphasis upon what we call "material scripts", and show how they are organized to produce an escalating scale of obligation which helps buyers and sellers to produce and reproduce the underlying social and material logic of markets.

Keywords

market performances, materiality, obligation, sales work, scripts, sociology of markets

Introduction

One of the more influential critiques of economics and neo-liberalism in recent years has been inspired by social studies of science, applied mainly to the exploration of global financial markets (Callon, 1998, 2007; Knorr-Cetina & Bruegger, 2002; Knorr-Cetina & Preda, 2005; MacKenzie

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et al., 2007; MacKenzie & Millo, 2003; Sassen, 2005; Stark 2009). Utilizing concepts widely employed within the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK), such as performativity, these studies have exposed the constitutive, rather than descriptive, nature of economics as a distinct field of knowledge and practice.

Most of the SSK-inspired studies have diverted research attention away from the social organization of markets, and towards economics and economists with their distinct practices and market devices, as stipulated in Callon's (1998: 30) controversial assertion that the economy "is embedded not in society but in economics". This statement, and the studies which followed, also implicitly attribute almost omnipotent agency to economists[1] and their market devices which seem to be the driving force behind the social constitution of markets. Sales work and sales workers, who produce and re-produce markets through social interactions, are all but absent from many of these studies. The few studies of financial markets which do position sales encounters at center stage provide compelling evidence for the crucial role of the social organization of sales practice in the structuration of markets. For example, studies have demonstrated how even in global financial markets, which operate through complex computer networks and in which exchange in dematerialized and often takes place in cyberspace, the social embeddedness of economic actions within a global occupational community of traders still matters in facilitating smooth exchange (Abolafia, 1996; Beunza & Stark, 2004; Knorr-Cetina, 2005; Knorr-Cetina & Preda, 2005).

Sales encounters are also an important area of research for uncovering the social fabric of market exchange outside the shrines of modern capitalism such as Wall Street and global trading banks. In fact, mass-consumer and industrial markets in which material commodities are traded through face-to-face encounters on the sales floor or between salespeople and purchasing agents still compose the backbone of advanced economies, and as such deserve more research attention.

Building upon a materialist reading of the dramaturgical tradition within the social sciences associated with Goffman (1959, 1974), our work attempts to bring the social organization of sales in diverse markets to center stage. Rather than study the performativity of economics (Callon, 1998; MacKenzie & Millo, 2003; MacKenzie et al., 2007), we study here the performances of sellers and buyers on the sales floor in a variety of contemporary markets.

In our work we depict the sales floor as a stage and ask whether a dramaturgical analysis of framed sales encounters (Gonos, 1977) can further our understanding of the social and material organization of selling and buying in mass markets. Our main argument is that the defining feature of selling and buying is not, as economists would have us believe, the formal exchange of money in return for goods or services. Likewise, it is not limited to the search for information about quality and cost. In fact, limiting economic action to the formal and often stylized and abstract properties of the exchange misses the material and social organization of this endeavor. We apply our dramaturgical approach to show how a fundamental ingredient of economic transactions, the situated constitution of social obligation, is achieved. Obligation is a pillar of almost any economic action. Social obligation – essentially the idea that social actors feel more or less compelled to carry out a social action because of an already established social relationship between them and/or some shared normative commitment – allows the sellers and the buyers to move from one stage of the sales encounter to the next, culminating with the closing of deals.

Our studies of sales work reveals that sellers and buyers who engage in sales encounters produce and re-produce the social order of selling and buying by way of structured performances which we call scripts. We adopt the terminology of Barley and Tolbert (1997: 98) to identify scripts as "observable, recurrent activities and patterns of interaction characteristic of a particular setting". We specify in particular the role of what we call "material scripts" which market actors explicitly appeal to in their sales performances. Such scripts are important resources in helping to establish a

socio-technical space in which obligations can be established and transactions can take place. As part of accomplishing sales encounters, sellers and buyers strategically employ the material setting and the materiality of the objects they trade in what we call an escalating scale of obligation. Material scripts, as we shall see, are entwined with other scripts such as "identity scripts" and "morality scripts" which enable sellers and buyers to express selected aspects of their real or fictitious identity, and refer to generally accepted normative structures as a way of presenting themselves as moral agents. The three scripts appear regularly across the three research sites we study, and they are empirically intertwined but analytically distinct. Before we delve into the empirical section, we provide a short review of the social studies of sales work.

Social Studies of Sales Work

Why study sales work? We have already noted that the detailed exploration of sales encounters is a key for uncovering the social and cultural embeddedness of economic action (Abolafia, 1996; Cockburn & Ormrod, 1993; Knorr-Cetina, 2005). In addition, neo-institutionalists (e.g. Lounsbury, 2007) have stressed the need to focus on work practices and on social actors as a manifestation of institutions, a call also echoed by leading sociologists of markets who claim that an analysis of sales encounters is central for explaining the situated production and re-production of value, competition, collaboration and, more generally, the constitution of the social foundations of markets (Beckert, 2009; Bourdieu, 2005; Fligstein, 2001; Smith, 2007).

Another spur to study selling and buying comes from the sociology of work. Sales work arguably forms the backbone of an emerging service and information economy. Sales work is taking center stage in the emerging occupational landscape (for the USA see Hecker, 2005; For the UK see Warhurst & Nickson, 2007), and since the 1980s the sales force has also been going through a process of up-skilling, with growing numbers of salespeople holding engineering degrees, and engaging in technical sales within the high-tech and bio-tech sectors (see Darr, 2006).

Despite its importance, with a few notable exceptions, studies of sales work and sales encounters remain a neglected topic in sociology. Scholars concerned with the growing prominence of interactive service and sales work (Bolton & Houlihan, 2005; Korczynski, 2005; Leidner, 1993; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007) have stressed the need to constitute a service and sales triangle encompassing management, workers and customers. Sales and service encounters are described as a locus of contradictions in contemporary capitalism. Bolton and Houlihan's (2005) study, for example, shows that a service encounter is underpinned by the built-in tension between the ethos of quality service and the managerial concern over cost effectiveness. Korczynski (2005) highlights the contradiction inherent in the capitalist firm's empathy towards customers and the instrumental desire to obtain their money. Korczynski (2005: 74) claims customers are encouraged verbally to feel in control of the sales encounter, but in reality the salespeople stay in control.

Exerting influence over the sales partner has also been central to Prus's (1989a, 1989b) important studies of sales and marketing, where he applied Goffmanian ideas to analyze the lived experience of sales and marketing people and tried to understand the specific ways in which they manipulate their clients. Like Prus, we apply a dramaturgical approach to our study of the sales encounters, but one key difference is that we stress materiality. We also engage with the much broader literature on the sociology of markets, in an attempt to draw attention to the local constitution of social obligation as an important ingredient of the micro-foundations of contemporary markets. Obligation was taken up in the micro studies of market "pitchers" carried out by Clark and Pinch (1995; see also Pinch & Clark, 1988). Their approach drew upon developments in conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1978) and in particular its extension to institutional talk and the rhetoric of

persuasion – including the role of gesture (e.g. Drew & Atkinson, 1979; Atkinson, 1984). Although we draw heavily upon that approach, the analysis we present here is different with its particular stress upon materiality, market performances, and scripts.

In his comparative study of the sales of emerging and standard products in the US electronics industry, Darr (2003, 2006) points out the existence of an elaborate and vibrant gift economy in the mass industrial market for passive electronic components. The existence of a gifting economy in any mass market is surprising since it is usually seen as an alternative to the capitalist commodity exchange. Gifts solidify social ties and create social obligations to reciprocate by buying, and the fact that both gift and commodity exchange exist side by side suggests that the mass market might have more of a social structure than the literature implies. In fact, gift giving should be seen as part of the deep and multi-faceted role of morals in markets (see Zelizer, 1979, 2007). As we will see below, the materiality of gifts also has an important role in securing the obligation of clients to seal a deal.

Having established the importance of studying sales work and reviewing the literature, we will now move on to discuss in more detail the specific approach towards studying selling we adopt here and trace its roots to the dramaturgical tradition within sociology.

Foundations of a Dramaturgical and Material Approach to Market Exchange

Like many sociologists we have been enormously influenced by the work of Erving Goffman, who not only developed several distinctive analytical approaches throughout his rich career but also profoundly influenced traditions such as ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Burns, 1992; Scheff, 2006). In search of inspiration for our approach towards studying sales work, we turn to Goffman's earliest studies where he depicted social life within a broad dramaturgical model. We note that underpinning his dramaturgical model are little-noticed considerations of the material mediation, staging, and performance of social interaction (Pinch, 2010). These material foundations turn out to be crucial for understanding how obligations are secured in selling.

Depictions of social life as a theatre and treating social agents as actors on the stage has a long tradition within the field of sociology, originating with the Chicago School and developed further in the work of Goffman (1959, 1974). Goffman's dramaturgical approach towards social interaction works particularly well for sales because the main actors involved – buyers and sellers – have differentiated, well circumscribed social roles to play and the interaction often takes place in a staged location, such as a shop floor or special pitching booth on a market. One of the key constraints placed upon buyers and sellers stems from what Goffman calls their copresence – this means "being accessible, available and subject to one another" (Goffman, 1963). Being copresent during a sales interaction also means that the interactants must attend to a series of norms and obligations which follow from this specialized sort of activity.

"Selling" is by and large the act of offering goods and/or services to others in return for receiving money, and "buying" is the act of offering money in return for gaining possession of those goods and/or services. The acts of buying and selling – the exchange – are reciprocal and place obligations on each party at different stages of the sales process. Often sales activities are truncated into one simple act – such as buying goods at a supermarket – but sometimes sales encounters last many hours, and can involve several visits to the salesroom, such as in buying a car. In both cases the final act of exchange will involve obligations. For instance, having sold the goods at a certain price, a seller usually cannot rescind the offer. Similarly, having agreed to buy the goods at a certain price, the buyer cannot usually then go on and demand a lower price. These obligations sometimes

take a legal contractual form, but in most cases rely upon well established norms and conventions for appropriate behavior. In dramaturgical terms, sellers and buyers have distinct social roles and adhere to often well defined scripts while selling and buying.

Following Goffman's dramaturgical tradition, scholars mainly within schema theory have employed the term scripts "to denote structured forms of action which tend to repeat themselves under similar circumstances" (e.g. Mandler, 1984; for a comprehensive review see Mangham & Overington, 1987; for an application of a dramaturgical approach in organizations and management studies see Czarniawska-Joerges & Wolf, 1991). In defining scripts as "observable, recurrent activities and patterns of interaction characteristic of a particular setting", Barley and Tolbert (1997: 98) note that they "encode the social logic of what Goffman (1983) called an 'interaction order'". Here we want to stress that the interaction order and the scripts which encode it also depend upon considerations of materiality. For us, scripts encode not only the social logic but *the material logic* of an "interaction order". For instance, Goffman's important distinction between backstage and front stage (Goffman, 1959) and the sorts of performances expected in the different locations depends crucially upon his discussion of "regions" and how regions are materially bounded (Goffman, 1959; Pinch, 2010). For example, Goffman was very interested in radio and contrasts how the glass window of the control-room studio enables visual interaction, but serves as a barrier to sound, in contrast to the beaver-board partitions used in many American offices at the time, which block sight but allow sound to travel between cubicles (Goffman, 1959). The different sorts of behavioral norms attended to by interactants front stage and backstage in the hotel in the Shetland Island he studied only make sense interactionally if the kitchen and scullery, where backstage interaction and working-class norms are found, are materially screened (visibly and audibly) from the front stage "parlor", where middle-class norms and deportments are attended to. In short, there is a material as well as a social logic to the staging, mediation and performance of social interaction.

How does this apply to selling? The front stage/backstage distinction applies in an exemplary way. If we take the locus classicus for sales interaction – the shop floor – we can observe sellers and buyers attending to when they are front stage and backstage. The sales floor is arranged materially with different sections screened off (for sight and hearing) from others. A stockroom, for instance, offers a refuge for sales staff. Typically, sales staff will congregate in stockrooms and exhibit backstage behavior before meeting their customers front stage on the sales floor. Customers will in turn orientate their behavior towards the sales floor – differentiating typically between how they behave on the street before entering the store and the sort of behavior appropriate once front stage on the sales floor. The different "stages" where selling and buying occur are often rendered in a material form in everyday shopping. For example, the person working at the check-out in the supermarket and the customers are clearly differentiated by arrangements of material objects surrounding them, such as the carts loaded with goods pushed by the customers, and the weighing scale and cash register behind which the check-out clerk sits. Material architectural arrangements and specific machines (such as the rubber conveyer belt on which the goods are placed) guide the buyer through the exchange. We can see in this simple example how obligations are tied in with materiality. Within this material setting, standing in the queue and placing your item on the conveyer belt forms part of a social obligation to buy. The obligation is not binding or preordained. For example, even at the last moment supermarket customers can reject items on their conveyor belt, although a mass rejection, particularly if observed by the check-out clerk, typically needs to be accounted for. In short, social norms and obligations proscribe the customer from returning too many items. Thus, sales situations depend upon buyers and sellers knowing their roles and obligations, and these roles become embedded in specific material forms.

In this study we treat the sales floor as a stage and view economic action as a form of acting on a stage within a set of structural frames which enable and disable certain lines of action. We define market performances as the public enactment of scripts by actors during sales encounters. Scripts are similar to the notion of "frame" in that they are shaped by the culturally bound social roles of "sellers" and "buyers", by broader interests such as management's desire to control the sales force, by legal constraints and regulations, and by the material setting of the sales interactions and the nature of products being exchanged. Social roles, macro-level structures and materiality enable and constrain the enactment of specific and contextual scripts. The scripts we identify are flexible and interactive, and leave actors ample space to perform social agency. These scripts help build trust and rapport and are also often designed to secure the obligation of the exchange partner to continue with the sales process. As in ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), we see the constitution of obligation on the sales floor as a social achievement of market actors who perform the scripts in a creative way to serve their local and context-bound interests.

Research Sites and Methods

The data which we use in this paper are derived from three different studies conducted by the current authors over different periods: sales of computers and computer accessories in an Israeli chain-store (2007–8), sales of cutting-edge technologies in trade-shows in the US (mid-1990s), and sales of mass-produced consumer items sold by pitchers in open markets in the UK (mid-1980s). Our aim in this paper is to identify those elements of the social organization of sales work which are persistent across the research sites and cultural boundaries, as well as across time. Each of the studies was conducted independently by us and our comparison here thus constitutes a post-hoc design.

Although the original studies were not carried out with the present comparison in mind, they broadly shared the grounded theory (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1998) sensibility towards directed data analysis: all the studies were ethnographic, interpretive studies which required interpolation between theoretical concepts and empirical analysis. For our reanalysis both authors had complete access to the data and we derived the coding by a constant process of comparison and refining of categories. We looked for observable, recurrent activities and repeated patterns of interaction characteristic of each setting, and then compared these "scripts" across sites. We found that overwhelmingly the types of scripts we identify (identity, moral and material scripts) were found in all three sales locales. As Nicolini (2009) points out, complex multi-sited ethnographies (such as these) require the constant zooming in and zooming out between theoretical dispositions and patterns of observable or inferred interaction (from interviews). Zooming in places more emphasis on the local conditions and discourses which produce specific lines of practice, while zooming out allows a comparison across sites. Thus over time our concept of "script" has become more refined within each research site; so too has our analysis of the exemplary instances we draw upon across the sites in this paper. We now describe each locale and the research methods used in more detail.

Retail computer store: This study is based on 50 interviews (41 of salespeople and branch managers and nine of suppliers and IT purchasers) conducted in Israel in 2007–8. Extensive observations were also carried out by two research assistants at a branch of a large chain of computer stores in Tel-Aviv, Israel, leading to the documentation of 122 complete interactions (some short and others lasting over 20 minutes). The sales interactions were tape-recorded and transcribed. The salespeople knew about the study and were thus aware of the presence of the observers. It is unlikely that this knowledge had a significant impact on their behavior, especially given that the study lasted over eight months and that rapport had been built between the research team and the sales staff. The data presented below contain key examples which were translated into English

from Hebrew by one of the authors. The coding of the interviews in the original study focused on the classifications of types of customers and types of sales encounters. The 122 sales encounters were coded according to the stages of the sales interactions and the types of practical and discursive elements which were used to build rapport and to legitimize a specific transaction (e.g. the judgment of the transaction in terms of good or bad, just or unjust). ATLAS software was used for data analysis.

Trade shows in micro-electronics: The data we draw on here are part of a larger comparative study of the sales of standard and cutting-edge electronic components conducted in the USA in the mid-1990s. The study focused on sales in industrial markets, that is, economic exchange among organizations, rather than individual buyers and sellers. Interviews with 62 buyers' and sellers' representatives, including sales engineers, field application engineers, salespeople, purchasing agents, and design and test engineers, were conducted. Interactions between sellers and buyers at six trade shows were also documented. The trade shows took place at different locations across the US, typically in large hotels just next door to large potential clients. The organizers attracted visitors, mostly design and test engineers, by offering a free lunch, free parking and free admission. The salespeople were aware of the study. The original coding of the trade-show data followed the basic stages of the sales process, from the initial contact between the technical salespeople and the visitors to the show, through product demonstrations and culminating with the extensive customization work.

Open markets: The data we present here are drawn from a corpus of video recordings, participant observation, and interviews carried out on markets in the UK (with some samples of comparative data from France, the Netherlands, and the US) between 1985 and 1988. Most of the selling studied was of a special sort known as "pitching", which involves the sales of goods by a pitcher to a group of customers. Pitchers are patter merchants who mainly use their voices to sell goods. It is one of the most traditional forms of selling found on European markets, but has slowly been dying out since the 1990s. Mainly household consumer items are sold, such as towels, toys, crockery, pots and pans and the like. Pitching involves the seller attracting a crowd ("the edge") and describing and demonstrating the goods in such a way as to make their bargain status apparent. Over 60 hours of video recordings (sometimes with two cameras, one on the pitcher and the other simultaneously on the audience) were transcribed and 25 interviews conducted. The participant observation part of the study involved one of the researchers being trained and operating as a pitcher for a year. The pitchers and audience were usually aware of the audiovisual recordings taking place (the largish cameras used in the mid-1980s were highly visible), although the audience was often encouraged by the pitchers to think of the cameras and researchers as being part of a TV crew making an advertisement – an additional reason offered by the pitchers for the bargain status of their goods! Thus the presence of the research team itself became part of the scripts used to conduct this form of exchange. The video material was transcribed in full and coded using conversation analysis techniques and conventions. Sequences of sales interaction were identified by coding key transition points, such as the commencement of sale (known as "building the edge"), the demonstration of the goods ("the dem"), the formal price offer of the goods on sale ("the bat"), and a sequence of extended sales offers and post-sales work ("twirling the edge"). The interviews were also fully transcribed.

Scripts in Action

We will now describe the empirical findings from our reanalysis of the earlier studies. We first examine what we call "identity" and "moral" scripts before developing the notion of "material scripts".

Of course for many sociologists it is obvious that key elements of patterned interactions will be organized around issues of the participants' identity and morality. Perhaps what is more surprising is that such notions pertain to economic exchange, which is often taken to be a highly ritualized and largely anonymous transaction. Much economic exchange, such as the routine buying and selling of goods in stores, is indeed of this kind – highly ritualized and anonymous. But research shows that even moments of routine selling in stores, such as the first approach made by a member of the sales staff, can involve intricate and subtle patterns of interaction (Clark & Pinch, 2010; Darr, 2006). In all three sales locations the inferred identity and morality of participants turned out to be important to how sales interaction transpired.

Performing Identity Scripts

If we accept the assumptions of many economists regarding the nature of exchange in a mass retail market, sales interactions should be short, and focused on issues of quality and price. Yet, the empirical data from the computer store demonstrate a wider set of issues raised and played out by sellers and buyers. For instance, customers often went out of their way to convey personal information, as the following example from an interview with a salesperson illustrates:

> I once had a client who came to buy a memory stick. After we met and spoke a bit she started telling me things about herself, and at the end she went out of the store with a portable computer, a printer, cables and paper. From a deal of 99 NIS I reached 7,000 NIS, a real upgrading of the sale [*Q: What did she tell you?*] She told me she lives alone with her father, and that he helps her financially. She told me that she is dating someone and other personal stories about her life. People like to talk and they like to be listened to. People in the centre [of Israel] don't like to tell things to others since they are afraid of being hurt. But they do tell their stories to me, and this works to my advantage since they feel close to me and then they buy. These are the people who tip you and who return to me to buy again.

This excerpt exemplifies the wide range of attributes which are performed by the buyers as part of what we call "identity scripts". The buyer clearly acts out personal aspects of her identity as part of the sales encounter. Note that social obligation looms large in the excerpt. The salesperson portrays his role as an audience to the client's performance as a strategic move. For him, acting out the role of supportive audience is in fact an obligation-enhancing mechanism. Here, it is not only money which switches hands in return for commodities. Instead, being an audience to the clients' performance of an identity script is exchanged for obligation on behalf of the customer to continue buying, even over extended periods of time, by becoming regular clients.

At times, personal information was conveyed in order to secure the obligation of the salesperson to receive returned merchandise. For example in one sales encounter we recorded, a woman who wished to return a violent computer game her son had purchased tried to make the seller obligated to refund her money or exchange the game. She offered information about her son's young age, recent birthday, and even his disobedience as an explanation of why he had opened the software.

The sales floor provides the buyers with a stage, and the identity scripts performed are sometimes exaggerated or even imaginary. In an interview a salesperson at the computer store described a client who used the sales encounter to portray different aspects of his life:

> … So he has a motorcycle which is worth 150,000 US dollars [laughter] and he starts telling you about his whole life, how he collects things and does all kind of things. And you listen, being nice and selling him

things, and he continues to mess around with your brain, and at some point you realize that he is bullshitting you, and you feel like saying "What do you want? Why are you bullshitting me?"

In this sales encounter the client portrayed himself as a wealthy person – a depiction which might be seen as a manifestation of an obligation to proceed with the sale, even if, in the eyes of the salesperson, this presentation was not necessarily true. In other, more extreme cases potential clients acted out imaginary fantasies on the sales floor, at the same time as knowing that their lies were likely to be exposed at the cash register. In the following excerpt a client performed the identity of an affluent person, which proved empty at the point of sale:

> … you have these clients who approach you with this pose … look, come and show me the most expensive computer, the most expensive one! And at the end I try to charge him and his credit card is declined. You call the credit company and ask: Why can't I get this deal through? Well, this credit card is limited to 4,000 NIS, I mean, what? [*refers to the client pretending to be rich*] who are you? … coming here and telling me stories, "I will close deals with you", and then the woman from the credit company says that … and he goes again: "Just yesterday I had a 40,000 NIS deal using this card." I mean, why are you lying to me? What do you get by lying?

In this excerpt the salesperson is clearly upset with the false identity, and false sense of obligation performed by the client. This performance has the salesperson, and possibly other clients, as a captive audience, and seems to serve the psychological needs of the client rather than to improve his bargaining position. The anger expressed by the salesperson following the breaking of a manifested obligation to buy demonstrates how important the performances of identity scripts are in the tacit yet powerful constitution of obligation. Note that in many instances the constitution of obligation failed. Clients who presented "honest" identities were often simply interested in information about the product and had little intention to buy. In other cases customers followed the salesperson to the shelves on which the products were displayed, but were reluctant to move on to the area where they could sit down, take the product out of its original wrapping, and finalize the deal.

Constituting identities is also an important part of pitching and here, as in the case of selling in the computer store, there is a sales strategy behind the performances of these identities which are often scripted as a key part of the sales routine. Because pitchers sell goods cheaply, they often have to overcome reservations from audience members that the goods are schlock or shoddy goods. Pitchers maintain to their audiences that in fact the goods are high quality but hint at their somewhat dubious or dodgy origin. This is why high quality goods are being sold so cheaply – they have just been acquired in an unorthodox manner. They often point to warehouse "fires" or "salvage stock" that has somehow fallen into their hands as a bargain, perhaps illegally. This necessitates the pitcher constructing his identity as somewhat of a "wide boy". This can be seen in the following instances:

Pitcher [selling perfume]: They're not stolen, love, they just haven't been paid for.
Pitcher [selling towels]: Every towel is wrapped, it is sealed. It has never even seen daylight, moonlight, gaslight. I'll tell you what, the only thing they've seen is torchlight.
Audience: [Couple of titters]
Pitcher: An' that was the night the buggers were knocked off.

But at the same time the pitcher must walk a delicate tightrope between the identity of "wide boy" and someone who can be relied upon. This is nicely captured in the following example:

Pitcher: I've been on this market every Saturday for the last ten years. My father was 'ere
            before me. [Points over the top of the market building] He's up there now, God bless
            him. [short silence] Getting lead off the roof.

Pitchers also play on the national identity of themselves and the audience. The British pitchers
often used phrases such as "this is a British made product" and "this isn't made in Hong Kong, ding
dong it goes wrong". National identity is performed in this setting as a way of enhancing the audi-
ence obligation to purchase the goods. In the following example the pitcher seems to attend to the
fact that the audience will find it hard to believe that the goods were actually made in Britain:

Pitcher: This is a British ironing board cover. We 'ave a laugh and a giggle but ah'm being
            serious. They're all made in England, to fit any big ironing board.

Again identities are used to reaffirm the quality of the goods on sale. When pitchers sell toys they
will refer to their identities as parents, again building trust and rapport with their audience:

Pitcher: All the kids love Jedi an' Star Wars. 'Ere, ah don't want four pound, two pound, one
            fifty, an' not even one twenty. Ah've got two lads of me own, one's five months an'
            one is six on Wednesday. Ah know what kids go for.

While identity scripts have a strong empirical presence in each of the three research sites, the exact
content of the performances varies according to the research context. In the above example the
pitcher presents himself as a father, in order to overcome the inherent suspicion and lack of trust by
the potential buyers. In the trade show in micro-electronics both the buyers and the sellers strove to
present themselves as technical experts, and from the initial stages of the sales encounter near the
display booth they performed identity scripts which focused on their professional experience,
knowledge and skills. In this setting, performances of self as a technical expert provided important
clues as to the feasibility of adapting the product offered for sale to the specific needs of the clients.
   Identity is also often closely tied in with morality and moral codes of appropriate behavior.
When interactants make available and appeal explicitly to one or more moral values and virtues
which are widely accepted in a given society, they can be said to be following "moral scripts", as
we shall see below.

Performing Moral Scripts

The existence of a moral economy within a mass consumer market has recently attracted
increased research attention (Darr, 2006), partly as a critique of common conceptions of advanced
markets which leave little room for a normative infrastructure underpinning the exchange of
commodities. The performances of various moral scripts partly overlap the performances of
identity scripts, but they are also distinct in that they include an appeal to commonly accepted
normative structures.
   Sales people perform moral scripts by referring to an aspect of the sales process in terms of good
or bad, just or unjust. They may do this by way of a moral story or by a direct appeal to commonly
accepted values and norms. Such a moral script can be used to spell out the sorts of moral commit-
ments and obligations involved in their selling activities. For instance, if a seller points to and
condemns shoddy goods being sold by other sellers, the implication is that the seller is more

virtuous and would not sell such goods and the buyer is thereby given additional reason to buy his or her goods.

In their daily work the salespeople at the computer store encountered situations which led them to invoke public demonstrations of moral sentiments and moral argumentation. The acting out of moral scripts was often designed to obtain the trust and obligation of the buyers. The acting out of moral sentiments and beliefs often has popular cultural perceptions of the immoral and greedy salesperson as a backdrop. Many of the interviewees in the computer store study tried to distance themselves from this widely accepted image and to present the moral guidelines to which they adhered in their daily work, guidelines which sometimes were at odds with store policy. Clearly, the salespeople experienced a tension between the appropriate moral conduct and the demands of sales work. This tension is echoed in the field data, for example in this excerpt from an interview with the vice manager of one of the stores of the computer chain:

> I have a slight problem with the field of sales, which sometimes requires people to be really dishonest … not to be candid with the client. I don't like this aspect. Someone might argue that it hurts my sales a little, because I'll never … I'll never make people buy something they don't need, just to get another sale.

In some situations salespeople at the computer store felt that an aspect of a particular sales transaction violated what they perceived as good moral conduct. For example, during the interviews a few of them described how the chain store, for various reasons, encouraged the salespeople by offering commissions and money vouchers, to sell products of a specific brand. While aware of the economic value of adhering to the management's incentive plan, some of the salespeople refused to cooperate. In the interviews they explicitly used moral arguments, judging management's suggestions in terms of "good" and "bad", and juxtaposing the prescribed practice with what they perceived as good salesmanship. Sometimes they even felt more obligated morally to the client than to the chain store.

While performing moral scripts, practical considerations were always present. Here is an example from an interview with a salesperson in the computer store in which the connection between the presentation of self as a moral agent and the constitution of obligation to proceed with the sale is made manifest:

> There are some products … which management really wants us to sell. These products have high margins and we have a surplus. Personally, I feel really uncomfortable selling this product, since it is of low quality. So far whoever purchased it ended up returning it. So I have decided to tell my clients that I don't recommend this product. Some salespeople don't care. If management doesn't have sufficient sales they would lower the price, but I still recommend not to buy. I prefer telling clients the truth and this way I win their trust, the clients know I'm telling the truth and that I'm here to help and not only to sell for the sake of selling.

At first it seems counterintuitive that a salesperson would not recommend part of his or her own stock in order not to lie. But what the salesperson is doing is actually a subtle form of obligation work. By not recommending something explicitly he is showing that he is on the side of the customer and hence is to be trusted as a moral agent. When it comes to selling something the salesman can recommend, the customer will now feel under more of an obligation to buy.

The tight coupling between the performance of moral scripts and the constitution of social obligations is also made explicit in the following excerpt from an interview with a salesperson who was asked if he ever felt uncomfortable with a specific sale:

> I once had a sale where they purchased a table top computer with little memory space, so I told them right there: upgrade because you will get much better results and personally I will feel uncomfortable, that is how I told her, personally, I would not feel honest with myself if you leave with this computer with so little memory, I'll feel uncomfortable. Because I know how it will work! And I explained to them and I told them personally: 'the extra 150 NIS won't give me anything, it really won't, but it will mean the world to you', and that is how I directed things.

In this example the salesperson tries to obligate the buyers to invest more money to enlarge their memory space by exposing the "pure" motives behind his suggestion. By arguing that he will feel dishonest if he fails to convince them to upgrade the computer, he clearly appeals to commonly accepted moral guidelines regarding honesty, which are now used as a resource to try and obligate the buyer to pay the extra money. Economic interest, morals and obligation are all tied together on the sales floor.

Next we turn our attention to the specific role played by materiality in securing obligations during sales encounters. We develop the important notion of a "material script" which parallels the identity and morality scripts identified above.

Performing Material Scripts

A "material script" can be defined as a recurrent pattern of interaction involving material objects in a specific setting. It is important to note that this definition of a material script differs from the use of "script" for dealing with material objects found in actor network theory by Akrich (1992) and Latour (1992). In actor network theory scripts are more restrictive, they are semiotic embeddings (reflecting the imagination of the designer) within a material artefact – typically a piece of technology – of a program of action for a user to undertake in interacting with the aretefact. For instance, in a well-known example discussed by Latour (1992), a car seat belt will "script" a user to buckle it across his or her chest. Although the Akrich/Latour notion of script can be seen as a limiting case of our use of the term "material script", in general our notion of a script is more dependent upon the interpretative work carried out by actors in the specific settings. Material scripts will be accompanied by other sorts of scripts such as, for instance, moral and legal scripts. Thus, as Gherardi and Nicolini (2000) have argued, seat belt use is also dependent upon considerations of legality and morality – what we might call moral and legal scripts.

The need for a less restrictive notion of material script than that used by Latour and Akrich is underscored by many of the sorts of mundane material objects we will be discussing in the context of sales. Material scripts, although they may be embedded in material artefacts, depend for their interpretation upon the specific sales context – what we might call the setting – in which the artefact is used. Material scripts require that humans are able to recognize the appropriate courses of action and the obligations entailed. In short, for us a material script means an appeal to a commonly shared understanding of the use of the material object in a particular setting, and how it figures in exchange contexts. The script is dependent not only upon the material object or arrangement of objects, but also upon the object's use in a specific setting and how that use may be accompanied by other sorts of scripts, for instance identity, moral, and/or legal scripts.

For example, the appropriate material script of a well-laden supermarket trolley as it is wheeled towards the checkout in the supermarket is as a container for conveying goods shortly to be purchased, and the accompanying moral script is that of a good consumer who, as we pointed out earlier, is under a weak obligation to purchase those goods in the trolley. But a supermarket trolley full of objects being wheeled in other contexts has a very different material and moral script. For

instance, when being wheeled by a homeless person on the streets it does not mean the objects in it are to be purchased and signifies a very different moral script. In short, the setting is crucial. For instance, shoppers when shopping understand that the material object "the shopping bag" is something that holds goods and that when a person takes a shopping bag that is offered to them in a store by a salesperson this denotes the shared understanding that the goods placed in that bag have to some degree already been "purchased" by the person. Stated differently, the shopping bag in this setting conveys a limited sense of social obligation to buy.[2] But, once at home, a shopping bag entails no such obligation and can of course be used for multiple purposes such as conveying a school lunch.

Materiality and material scripts are particularly important in how obligations are established during the course of sales interactions because they can be used in sequence to produce what we call an *escalating scale of obligation*. By this we mean that sales interactions are incrementally arranged in sequences such that obligatory work can be carried out in steps or stages. Each sequential step or stage places the actors under more and more of an ineluctable obligation, thus forming an escalating scale of obligation. For the pitchers a sales routine is carefully staged with attention paid to key aspects – one of the most important being the material arrangement of the audience in relationship to the pitcher. Some pitchers work from specially raised pitch stalls – a classic instance of being "front stage" in Goffman's terminology – this gives them the advantage that they can see and monitor a large crowd and also enables the crowd to better watch and follow the pitchers' performance. Crucially it enables, as we shall see, pitchers to render individual audience responses into public responses which can be witnessed by all. This means individual obligations between a pitcher and an audience member are rendered into obligations to the audience as a whole and thereby are made more warrantable. Other material arrangements such as portable microphones (often worn by pitchers around their necks), amplification systems, and loudspeakers enable the crowd to hear what transpires. Specially designed pitching lorries, which have built-in lighting rigs to illuminate pitchers and their sales wares, are also sometimes used.

Material scripts are important in pitching in sequentially obligating the audience that has gathered. The pitcher, having carefully gathered a crowd and constituted it as a front stage social gathering, interacts with it to establish that several people are interested in the goods on sale. Audience members who might have an interest in the goods are asked "to raise a hand" (this is known in the argot of pitching as "getting the forks up"). The materiality of the raised hands is important because it is a visible display of interest which can be marked and counted by the pitcher. This not only reinforces the interest shown by these audience members but, because it is made more visible and audible, also serves to entice other people to join the sale. The following example which comes from a pens sale on a Northern market is typical:

Pitcher: Ah won't charge you five ninety-five, ah won't charge you three ninety five or one ninety five, in fact ah'm not even chargin', look, a pound and ten pence for all the five of 'em. Now who can use 'em if ah go a bit lower than a pound ten pence? Raise an' 'and?

Audience: [Many audience members raise hands]

Pitcher: [Making a big display counting the hands that are raised] One, two, three, four, Ah can only do it for so many. Five, six, seven, eight, nine, anybody at the back? Ten, eleven. Here's what ah'll do with you. First come first served. All the five of 'em, you must have fifteen pounds worth of pens, [CLAP] Ah'll take a pound the whole jolly lot.

Those hand-raising members of the audience who have merely been asked if they can use the pens are thus placed under a form of obligation to buy the goods if the pitcher does indeed go lower in price. Showing interest is of course not yet the same as a commitment to purchase. The interest in the goods can in some circumstances be rendered into a more ineluctable obligation by handing out shopping bags to audience members who have earlier professed an interest in the goods. This is done before the audience members have agreed formally to buy the goods and before the final price has been announced. It is the visible act of taking this material object which is significant. Taking the bags, which is not only an accountable but witnessable act, seems to serve as a form of almost inescapable obligation.

Sometimes the goods themselves (again, their materiality is crucial) are even handed out to willing audience members before the final price is known. These types of goods are known colloquially as "nailers" – a beautiful description of how once you take those goods you are "nailed" to the spot and forced to pay for them. Thus, in the very argot of the pitchers, social obligation and materiality are inextricably woven together. It seems that here pitchers play on and subvert the shopping norm that possession of the goods is equivalent to having paid for the goods. Indeed, in retail stores, getting customers to actually hold (or try on in the case of clothing) goods for sale is half the battle in getting customers to buy. Obligation is a social process, but as we see in these instances it is made manifest by following material scripts.

The different stages of the sales process – getting the person to stop and interact with the seller, getting some sort of expression of interest in the goods, turning that interest into some sort of an obligation – can be described as an escalating scale of obligation to buy and sell. The way these stages of obligation are managed of course depend on the setting – an open sales floor with one-on-one sales will be managed differently than a pitcher selling en masse – but the same sort of material logic avails itself. In the case of retail stores, such as the computer store studied, the escalating scale of obligation is embedded in the architectural layout and physical separation between distinct areas.

A typical sales interaction starts when a client enters the store, and is then approached by a salesperson who asks the client about the type of product she is interested in. The salesperson then guides the potential client to a high and round table, just opposite the entrance, where the store catalogues are presented. The initial sales encounter focuses on graphic and pictorial representations of the items of interest. Once an agreement about the exact type of product or group of products is reached, the salesperson and the buyer move to a different area of the store, where computers and accessories are organized on shelves. Here the client has the first chance to see and at times touch or play with the actual product, reflecting a potentially more manifest social obligation to buy. The third stage of selling takes place in a quiet sitting area in the far corner of the store. The salesperson brings the requested item from the storage area in its original wrapping, opens it and discusses the technical details as well as the form of payments, etc., with the buyer. This reflects a third level of obligation tied to a specific material setting, and this discussion around the table usually results in closing a deal. A transition from one material setting to the other, reflecting escalating levels of obligation, also occurs in other settings, for example when shoppers move from the general store area to the fitting rooms in apparel shops.

Escalating levels of obligation which are tied in with material objects were also present at the trade shows in micro-electronics. In the following example one can observe how the performances of material and moral scripts sometime occur as part of the same sales encounter. At the trade show the first engagement with potential buyers happened when they approached the booth, touched an object on display, and started a conversation with the sales engineers standing in front of the table on which computer boards were displayed on special stands. The sales engineers strove to identify

the clients with the greatest potential to buy. In this cutting-edge industry, where products required adaptation to the specific needs of the clients, this meant to identify the client's application which required as little customization work as possible and was therefore most feasible. To identify the best sales leads the sales engineers took the potential buyers, mostly design and test engineers, through a screening process composed of a series of questions about the application the buyer was working on. Once they had identified a client with a potential to buy, they typically asked him/her to sit down next to a table, usually at the back of the display area, and to go through a product demonstration.

On one occasion a salesperson at a trade show identified a visitor who had been close to buying his testing software in the past. He grabbed this person by the elbow as he was walking by his booth, and led him towards the second salesperson he was working with: "This is Eric from Houston University. We came to his lab twice and gave him a demo of our last version, but he ended up buying from Bob. [*The salesperson points down the hall to a display booth of a competitor.*] But I still call him a friend. Can I still call you a friend?" This performance is carefully designed to make the potential buyer feel guilty, and to present his decision to buy from a competitor in moral terms. The salesperson suggests that Eric has somehow violated a moral code which the salesperson expected him to follow, after the investment ("we came to his lab twice") in demonstrating his product at Eric's lab. But by still calling him a "friend" the salesperson signals that the identity work he has put in may still pay dividends in terms of potential sales.

This example is also an indication of the way in which the salespeople view product demonstrations as something which can enhance obligation. The performance of this moral script was designed to pressure Eric to follow the demonstration of the new software which was on display. Once Eric sat next to the salesperson in front of the computer screen, he was guided through the different menus by the salesperson, who had control over the mouse. The long engagement with the software under the salesperson's guidance and the questions Eric asked as he interacted with the software represent a greater degree of obligation than simply touching the different products on display. The investment of time by the sales engineer and by the potential buyer as well as the physical engagement with the software, which allowed its presentation as a material and real solution to the needs of the client, helped to foster obligation. Yet Eric could still decide not to buy the software, as he had done in the past.

Materiality can play a crucial role in securing obligation in the final stage of the sales encounter, as the following example of a closing gift illustrates. At the computer store different types of gifts were offered when the buyer was close to making his or her final decision. Here is an example given by a salesperson in an interview as an answer to a question about the ways in which they close deals:

> You always keep something for the end, something that will allow the closing, This might be a gift, let us say in a deal involving portable computers, sometimes we give a nice carrying bag for it, depending on the specific transaction. With most portables this is the way we do it. Or with regular computers it might be a mouse, something as a gift. We always keep something small to the end that will give him [the client] the last "push" [said in English] of "OK, let's go, you've convinced me."

The gifts offered by the salesperson to close a deal typically relate to the products being purchased. For example, with the sale of an iPod a protective cover might be offered as a gift. The cultural norm of reciprocity is embedded in the materiality of the gift ("something small"), which carries with it an obligation by the potential buyer to reciprocate by finalizing the deal.

Obligation can take on an even more explicit material form: it can be designed into artefacts. A technical salesperson in a market for cutting-edge technology described such an example where particular design features of the circuit board being sold lock the customer into returning to purchase additional features and upgrades (a practice known as "scrape offs"):

> What we were looking at was elements of his overall requirements, which some highly differentiated features of our products could speak to in a way that could eliminate competition, take competition out. We coined a phrase, "scrape off". We were looking for a scrape off that would scrape off other competition and will keep us in [brief laughter] and we were also looking for ways in which anyone who had been there before us has planted scrape offs designed to eliminate us.

This practice represents for the salespeople the most concerted form of obligation since the buyer has little chance to resist. In this example obligation is embedded in the very material object itself. In a way the escalating scale of obligation has been collapsed into a singularity – what we might call an obligatory point of passage. Material obligation is no longer restricted to just part of the sales encounter. The sellers try to locate and diffuse scrape offs embedded by competitors and then attempt to insert their own, without the knowledge of the client's engineers.

Discussion and Conclusions

The social organization of sales has been the focus of this article. The application of a dramaturgic approach to the study of sales encounters, and in particular our depiction of the material scripts performed on the sales floor, underscore the importance we attach to the study of the micro-foundations of markets. The scripts we identified constitute a basic unit of analysis in the sociology of markets, and they offer a way to chart the operation of markets from the economic actors' point of view. Scripts are performed by the sellers and the buyers, but they also encapsulate broader social and cultural institutions. We also highlight the more general need of sociology to address the role of materiality in social life (Pinch, 2008), and in particular the need to examine how materiality and economic action are interwoven.

We have developed our notion of scripts in the arena of selling because, despite the growth of sociological studies of markets within the "new economic sociology" framework, sales encounters remain a neglected area. Partly as a result, the social organization of micro-structures which facilitate economic exchange remains mostly an uncharted territory. Our depiction of the sales floor as a stage has provided an emic look at the social organization of economic transactions, and started to point to some important dramaturgical elements that underpin this sort of activity. As we demonstrate, the essence of sales encounters goes beyond the formal exchange of money in return for commodities, in both temporal and substantive terms. In fact, the breadth and wealth of the content of sales encounters reveals that sellers and buyers alike engage in complex and sometimes lengthy performances on the sales floor.

One crucial element of economic transactions on which we focus in this paper is social obligation which, when constituted, compels sellers and buyers to move from one stage of the sales process to the next because of an already established social relationship between them or in relation to a commonly accepted normative commitment. As this article argues, obligation is a social achievement which is constituted locally and gradually on the sales floor, through the interactive performances of different scripts. We focus on material scripts, moral scripts and identity scripts. A significant finding of this study is the process by which obligation is constituted in the three different research sites, and how it is linked to materiality.

Materiality is not only crucial in the staging of sales encounters, but also in how obligations are made manifest. The physical structure and architecture of the sales setting are important, but so too are the goods themselves. The "nailers" handed out by the pitchers obligate the buyer to take the goods. The materiality of the closing gifts carries with it the obligation to seal the deal. The practice of "scrape off" goes even further by attempting to materially embed a relationship of obligation within the products themselves. Of course this latter form of obligation is more pertinent to one-off, highly customized designs rather than mass market products. But this also tells us something about the social and material underpinning of selling and buying.

Importantly, we were able to demonstrate in a few instances how the performances of a sequence of material scripts foster escalating levels of social obligation to continue with the sale. The spatial division within the computer store into areas which represent escalating levels of obligation is one example of how materiality and obligation are interwoven. The transition from a technical discussion in front of the display booth in the trade show to a table in the back area where a lengthy product demonstration is conducted is yet another example. During the interactive encounter with the software offered for sale, and with the guidance of the sales engineer, obligation is made manifest through the investment of time and effort by the potential exchange partners, and through the physical engagement with the product, which positions it as a real material solution for the buyer's desired application.

It can be seen that the material scripts rarely stand alone but have accompanying them implicit moral and normative scripts that help ensure that social obligations are recognized and maintained. By moral scripts we mean the presentation of self as a moral agent, while normative scripts relate to more broad and deeply entrenched normative structures within a given society which help govern economic exchange. It is these often implicit references to scripts which make material scripts so powerful in selling, indeed more powerful than moral and identity scripts. For instance, when morality is appealed to directly participants can contest, resist, or refuse that moral value and its accompanying obligations. But when a script is bound up with a material object, such as in the case of gifts, morality is already embedded in the materiality of the artefacts being offered as gifts, and in this sense it is less available and in most circumstances harder to contest, resist, or refuse.

Why should an economic actor share details about her work, personal relationships and economic status in some of the most anonymous encounters in our society such as sales interactions? Our depiction of the sales floor as a stage provides a few possible answers. We have already noted the possibility that sales partners try to improve their bargaining position and to secure the obligation and trust of their sales partners by the presentation of self as trustworthy, affluent, or as a technical expert. Indeed it is the anonymity of most sales encounters in mass commodity markets which provides the opportunity to re-shape personal identities and even to perform scripts which are clearly fictitious. Given the alienated mass market and modern society more generally, it is plausible that for some buyers and sellers the sales encounters provide the opportunity to create an island of intimacy, false and ephemeral as it might be. Here, the service oriented salesperson acts as a captive audience to the stories buyers tell about themselves and often to themselves. Pitchers do something similar in first creating a captive audience and then enacting for that audience various identities created both for themselves and audience members.

One can ask whether the use of materiality to enforce obligation in practices such as "scrape off" is becoming more or less common. For instance, companies, such as Microsoft, with software such as Windows and with Web browsers such as Internet Explorer, try to "lock in" PC manufacturers and customers. But then new platforms such as the iPhone allow software applications (apps) which can be bought cheaply from a whole variety of producers of software. In studying sales in

these sorts of advanced market sectors, paying close attention to obligation and its material manifestation may be a productive research strategy.

Lastly, it is worth noting that our approach may also be applicable to online selling. It may not always be possible to identify a "salesperson" when buying online, as typically one is interacting with a website, but one knows one is engaged in the *act of buying*, and indeed most websites ensure there is no ambiguity over the buyer's role, using symbols and language drawn from retail encounters such as "shopping basket", "shopping cart" and "checkout". Materiality also matters online, with shoppers guided by technologies which are often invisible to users. For instance, the ability to buy something with just "one click" involves a complicated sociotechnical assemblage as evidenced by the patent dispute over Amazon.com's development of "one-click" shopping. Online shopping carts involve not only material but also moral scripts. For example, the increasingly common practice of joining a professional society or registering for a meeting via an online "shopping cart" renders what was previously seen as a necessary professional fee into something more akin to a consumer choice. Online selling frequently takes the form of many individual interactions dispersed in time and space, but again features such as the shared website offer a route into studying this form of selling as interactional process (Licoppe, 2008).

Our dramaturgic approach assisted in describing the operation of material scripts, and the constitution of an escalating scale of obligation which helps buyers and sellers to produce and reproduce the underlying social and material logic of markets. It is tempting to search for a general structure which governs the sequences and inter-relations of the different scripts which are performed on the sales floor. Yet our approach is that the performances of different scripts are highly contextual and that market actors have a wide range of options when mobilizing different scripts to further their economic interests. Thus our approach highlights social agency within framed social interactions. We stress social agency even when we discuss material scripts, which often limit the range of agency but fail to eliminate it. By addressing the lack of studies of sales and the scant attention to materiality in sociology, we hope to have shown in a new and interesting way how both are actually related. Selling depends upon obligations being established which in turn can depend upon materiality for their manifestation.

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Notes

1. Callon considers in practice a much wider range of economic actors than just economists.
2. As Cochoy (2009: 48) points out, behavioral scripts can be embodied in different artefacts involved in the consumption process, and this makes them an important object of study. For the history of the shopping cart see Grandclément (2008).

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