

## **Integrating the 3 Pillars of the 2011 Naples Forum on Service: S-D logic, Network & Systems Theory and Service Science**

The *2009 Naples Forum on Service* was quite an experience for us. It overwhelmed us. It was a new concept, a desire to focus on certain themes which we experienced as the future for service research. But launching a new conference is a gamble. Our target was modest: 60 participants – and then we got 240 abstracts!

What to do? The venue, Anacapri and the Villa Orlando on the very top of the Isle of Capri, could not handle that. The solution was a big tent in the garden and in that way we could take 150 people.

Now that we run the *2011 Naples Forum* – we decided to make it biennial – we see the pattern repeat itself. This makes us very happy and proud. But we remain in the same place. Its ambiance is magic; it has personality.

The idea of the *Naples Forum on Service* was born in 2007 on a rainy November afternoon in Stockholm, Sweden. The discussion was about marketing theory and service management, and the need for new concepts, new grand theories, and new paradigms. Intriguing issues such as complexity, networks, viable service systems, and so on were addressed. Cultural and behavioral change of customers, globalization of systems and competition, information and communication technology with the Internet, web sales, social media and other changes – all require novel and more adequate theory.

New approaches to service and marketing have been brewing for the past four decades challenging the 1960s marketing management and marketing mix (which were once a challenge to microeconomic theory focused solely on price). The new approaches included service marketing and management, relationship marketing and CRM (Customer Relationship Management), and relational and network applications in B2B (business-to-business) marketing. But we were left with a fragmented and confusing view. Service research had been growing worldwide, but after a few decades of pioneering contributions we felt that it had reached a state of complacency. The focus was on the past with a backpack of intersubjectively approved but often doubtful assumptions. The disciplines of business and management had reached a turning point calling for more systemic and integrative theory with scholars who dare address real world complexity with adequate methodology.

In the 2000s service has become the unifying concept for a new way of perceiving not only business but also the role of governments. The new millennium began well by presenting new approaches: *service-dominant (S-D) logic*, *service science*, and the more general theories *many-to-many marketing* and the *Viable Systems Approach (VSA)* based on a systemic view and relationships, networks and interaction. These recognize the weaknesses of the mainstream service research and offer new conceptualization. They open up for complexity, context, interdependencies, and theory generation. Some of this was already there but it had been held back in the literature and at conferences.

We now refer to the foundation of service theory as the 3 Pillars of Service. How we see them is further explained on our website: [www.naplesforumonservice.it](http://www.naplesforumonservice.it)

A wealth of recent literature is developing these themes (see Bibliography below). The 2009 Forum alone spawned 22 articles in journals' Special Issues and several book chapters, and many delegates submitted articles to publications of their own choice. We edited a special issue of *The International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, (vol.2, n.1, 2010), a new Emerald journal, and the lead article "Transitioning from service management to service-dominant logic: Observations and recommendations", by Gummesson, Lusch and Vargo (2010) received *The Emerald Literati Network Highly Commended Award*; moreover we edited a special issue of the journal *Service Science* (vol.2, n.1/2, 2010) titled "System Thinking for Service Research Advances" and a special issue of the journal *Mercati & Competitività* with an *The 2009 Naples Forum on Service – Introduction*, (vol.1, 2010).

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