

# Against the implicit politics of service-dominant logic

**Joel Hietanen**

Stockholm Business School, Stockholm University, Sweden

**Mikael Andén**

Aalto University School of Business, Finland

**Alan Bradshaw**

Royal Holloway, University of London, UK

## Abstract

Few recent topics in marketing have met such immediate popularity and critique as Vargo and Lusch's service-dominant logic (SDL). While many have criticized SDL scholarship for a lack of cultural sophistication, coherence, and relevance, it has nevertheless maintained and expanded its own distinct stream of ideas. Recently, Vargo and Lusch have proposed that SDL could be extended into a theory of society. We criticize this notion by contrasting their views on commodity value with Marxist and post-Marxist literatures, finding SDL ill-equipped to understand consumer culture, but also continuing to propagate simplistic and misguided views of "value" in commodity markets. We conclude by challenging SDL's suitability as candidate for all-encompassing social theorizing because of its tacit neoliberalism.

## Keywords

Baudrillard, commodity fetishism, Marx, neoliberalism, service-dominant logic, value

## Introduction

As a purported novel logic in marketing (Lusch and Vargo, 2011; Vargo, 2007; Vargo and Lusch 2004) and recently a potential theory of society (e.g. Vargo and Lusch, 2008a, 2016), service-dominant logic (SDL) celebrates over a decade of academic impact. While certainly influential, SDL is highly contested. In this conceptual review, we reassess SDL's undergirding assumptions and offer a political economic rereading of its central promises, and focus on issues of economic relations in capitalism. Specifically, we wish to further the critical work of Arnould (2014) and Venkatesh et al. (2006), by arguing that SDL's central tenets, like the conceptualization of how

---

### Corresponding author:

Joel Hietanen, Stockholm Business School, Stockholm University, Stockholm SE-106 91, Sweden.

Email: [johi@sbs.su.se](mailto:johi@sbs.su.se)

*value* manifests and is determined by use, fail to account for central problems; problems, we argue, that undermine SDL's explanatory value and therefore its desirability as a theory of socioeconomy.

Under SDL scholarship, the concept of *value* in exchange is reconceptualized. Initially, SDL claims that marketing, following its economic lineage, had continuously mistaken value as a component of economic exchange, or *value-in-exchange*. Synthesizing relationship marketing literature (e.g. Gummeson, 1998; Normann and Ramirez, 1993; Raval and Grönroos, 1996), Lusch and Vargo (2006) and Vargo and Lusch (2004) instead purport that value is only actualized in human interactions with the offering, that is, *value-in-use*. For them, businesses cannot offer value to customers, but can only make value propositions to be realized during consumption thanks to consumers' skills and know-how. While SDL has been continuously reworked thereafter, and its "fundamental propositions" revised (Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2008a, 2016), a key idea, the foregrounding of value-in-use and the backgrounding of value-in-exchange, remains SDL's mainstay.

Several studies criticize SDL scholarship for insufficiently accounting for consumers and consumption in terms of cultural, societal or political considerations (Arnould, 2006; Flint, 2006; Peñalosa and Venkatesh, 2006; Schembri, 2006). Following SDL tenets, "value" is instead normalized as a generally positive outcome of exchange in benevolent market relations (see Desmond, 2013). Foregrounding use-value, SDL hence downplays any political dimension of markets, like how social status relates to buyer power. We demonstrate how such oversights lead to a neglect of how inequalities become reproduced during these very moments (e.g. Baudrillard, 1981, 1988; Lyotard, 2004; Marx, 1979). Now that Vargo and Lusch (2016) wish to extend SDL's relevance to broader issues, we insist that it considers how SDL compares to other political economic frameworks, in this case drawn from Marxism and Post-Marxism, and account for the consequences of a wider acceptance of SDL as a means of understanding economy.

More specifically, we assess SDL's applicability to the *commodity form* of exchange and ideas of *consumer needs* and *satisfaction*. We examine *markets* rather than marketing, capitalist ideology rather than a self-styled pragmatist "science of customer persuasion and the logistics of developing marketing strategy and implementing market exchanges" (Venkatesh et al., 2006: 254) that continues to constitute much marketing scholarship. Consequentially, our approach does not stem from any *normalization* of value as consumer satisfaction, nor do we accept implicit premises of capitalism as the reified order of contemporary culture (see Gill, 1995; Shankar et al., 2006).

We intervene by examining how value-in-exchange and value-in-use constitute and maintain a system of *commodity fetishism* rather than reflecting a "benign and natural" order of the market that SDL generally assumes. Moreover, SDL glosses over the idea that exchange takes place in cultural contexts that are by no means a "given," but must be learnt by every consumer so to become competent citizens (Bauman, 2013a, 2013b; Lyotard, 2004). From our critical perspective, markets are not "autonomous mechanism(s) for spontaneous coordination that ostensibly neither require nor induce any political structuring" (Adler, 2011: 181). Instead, we explore how the economic structures and market processes influence and are influenced contextually by political economy. To us, commodity markets require a more heterogeneous conceptual mix than what SDL provides.

## The idea and debate

### *Inception and development*

When initially coining SDL, Vargo and Lusch (2004) argued for a novel logic for marketing scholarship that would loosen paradigmatic ties inherited from economic models based on the

exchange of manufactured goods. This would allow marketing to better understand contemporary market phenomena, such as markets consisting of servitized offerings, intangible resources and the co-creation of value and enduring market-based relationships. While not claiming ownership or to have solely invented the emergent ideas constituting the broad spectrum of SDL thought, Vargo and Lusch (2004) were highly successful in academic branding (Campbell et al., 2013) that has generated its own discursive genre with dedicated conferences and academic positions (Vargo, 2011a; Vargo and Lusch, 2016).

SDL proposed to radically reconceptualize value and the roles of the marketer (producer) and the consumer. Vargo and Lusch (2004) recognize that the lineage of marketing thought generally follows classical and neoclassical economic assumptions, where goods are tangible carriers of utility that is embedded during production. Despite earlier critiques of this lineage of marketing thought, the general view was that the hegemony of the goods focus dissolves in marketing scholarship only with the gradual acceptance of customer orientation and the relationship marketing perspectives associated with the Nordic School of Marketing (e.g. Grönroos, 1994, 2008; Gummesson, 1998). This development shifted focus from transactions to long-term relationships. SDL synthesized these ideas to broaden the understanding of marketing and consumption as a relational co-creative process where value is negotiated throughout an entire span of interactions (see Ballantyne and Varey, 2006). Equally, SDL departed from ideas of services marketing as a mere sub-discipline by purporting that interactions that produce value(able) outcome constitute the service provision. Market offerings are thus valuable when interacted with, and insofar as they produce tertiary outcomes, or an event where they are put into *use*, providing a service (Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

For SDL, value-in-use is actualized when tangible elements of consumption consisting of *operand* resources and an ability to use them consisting of intangible *operant* resources produces “service” provision. Thus, value transfer’s conventional *loci* (or marketing scholarship’s orthodox unit of analysis), the *value-in-exchange*, should be backgrounded and the service experience, as manifest in *value-in-use*, given novel analytical primacy. Lusch and Vargo (2006) and Vargo and Lusch (2004) carefully explain that this does not mean that economic value-in-exchange is unimportant, but nevertheless they focus on the *use* of a market offering when approaching value. Thus, SDL was not concerned with creating a theoretical approach to services as market offerings, but rather construed all acts of consumption as constituting service provisional events that put market resources into use for consumer needs.

SDL alters marketing’s premises because the marketer is no longer assigned the role of creating value for customers, but now only makes value propositions for consumers that put them into use. This implies a more active role for consumers as coproducers (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) or co-creators of value in everyday practices (e.g. Grönroos, 2008; Lusch and Vargo, 2006), thus blurring previously stark distinctions between marketer and consumer.

### ***Recent developments and amassing critique***

From its inception, SDL has been constantly revised and augmented yet its core remains. Notable recent developments include the broadening of SDL’s scope from value-in-use to “value-in-context” (Chandler and Vargo, 2011: 45) to “value-in-social-context” (Edvardsson et al., 2011: 334) and most recently, “Value co-creation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements” (Vargo and Lusch, 2016: 18). Here, we see gradual broadening of what originally resembled an “understanding (of) markets, international trade, outsourcing, and

marketing” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008b: 29) to now claiming a position of “a more encompassing theory of economics and society” (Vargo and Lusch, 2016: 6). Ideas on the level of, they point out, for which Nobel Prizes are awarded (cf. Vargo and Lusch, 2016). The adaption of systemic and institutional elements to SDL’s conceptual toolkit “nudge(s) S-D<sup>1</sup> logic from framework to theory” (Vargo, 2011b: 218), and constructs theory that is not limited to “marketing,” but encompasses broader perspectives of “markets” as networks of interactions (see Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007), or “as complex configurations and systems” (Vargo, 2011b: 220). These concepts from institutional, practice-based, and actor–network theory now allow SDL to consider “*institutions*—rules, norms, meanings, symbols, practices, and similar aides to collaboration—and, more generically, *institutional arrangements*—interdependent assemblages of institutions” (Vargo and Lusch, 2016: 6). Accordingly, Vargo and Lusch (2016) now propose that SDL will advance marketing in an increasingly holistic fashion and even “enhance societal well-being” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008b: 35).

Brown and Patterson (2009) noted that refining SDL has been akin to “the lexical equivalent of running repairs” (p. 529), where a persistent challenge has been clarifying the ambiguous concept of “value” (see Carú and Cova, 2003). Thus, analyses of value creation recently appear (Arnould, 2014; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Karababa and Kjelgaard, 2014; Löbler, 2011; Venkatesh and Peñaloza, 2014), but what remains is either recognizing value as an enduring chimera in managerial and social sciences (Arnould, 2014) or that value becomes thoroughly subjective, a matter of consumer’s personal experiences (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Helkkula et al., 2012; Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Following Grönroos (2008) and Grönroos and Voima (2013), value, in service relationship, is an “emergence” that leaves the consumer “better off” (also Echeverri and Skålén, 2011) and involves relational goals (Epp and Price, 2011). One core notion persists: value is created and “encountered” in complex interactions but cannot be conceptualized as following the logic of value-in-exchange, as value “cannot be assessed before usage” (Grönroos and Voima, 2013: 136).

SDL scholarship also attracts critical interest pertaining to how it:

- adopts a unitary (grand theory) focus and consequentially overgeneralizes (Brown and Patterson, 2009; Grönroos, 2011; O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2009, 2011),
- caters to overt individualism and objectifies consumers (Brown, 2007; Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006; Schembri, 2006),
- features a lack of communicative elements (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006),
- promotes the subjugation of the consumer into free labor (Cova et al., 2011; Zwick et al., 2008),
- harbors a lack of clarity between positivistic and interpretivist approaches (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2009),
- reflects a lack of managerial reflexivity or applicability to managerial practice (Brodie et al., 2006; Brown and Patterson, 2009; Flint, 2006; Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006),
- omits the centrality of service provision’s materiality (Campbell et al., 2013), and
- fails to account for practice-based and long-term perspectives (Arnould, 2014),
- is simply unfeasible (Achrol and Kotler, 2006; Desmond, 2013; Wilkie and Moore, 2006).

In spite of this critical work, we still find core issues in SDL that receive little critical interest. Here, we note Peñaloza and Venkatesh’s (2006) call for more culturally sensitized notions of SDL and Venkatesh et al. (2006), who laid groundwork for conceptualizing markets as *sign systems*

within marketing scholarship. Additionally, we draw inspiration from Vargo and Lusch's (2004: 5) ruminations on the vague multiple applications of "value"; they quote Alderson's (1957) advice that "What is needed is not an interpretation of utility created by marketing, but a marketing interpretation of the whole process of creating utility" (p. 69). We broadly interpret this to mean a more holistic conceptualization of how *value* is both consumed and exchanged. And while Venkatesh et al. (2006) offer considerable insight, we submit that the political economic underpinnings of the market as a sign system deserve closer analysis.

It seems to us that SDL, perhaps due to its managerial inclination, lacks a robust and explicit account of its political economic framework. Perhaps this is unsurprising because SDL began as a list of vague assertions, or heuristics, sometimes proposed to have reached "axiomatic status" (cf. Vargo and Lusch, 2016), rather than theory proper. We now reconsider how SDL constructs value-in-use as primary in relation to value-in-exchange and reassess what these notions mean in practice. To do so, we require nuanced depictions of commodity exchange logic and correspondingly, the idea of human needs within such a system. As SDL scholars have noted the promise of semiotic analysis in augmenting SDL theorizing (Akaka et al., 2014; Vargo and Lusch, 2016), we attempt to present one such perspective, starting with a direct account of political economy based on Marxist analysis.

## Value in Marx

In their conceptual movement from value-in-use, Vargo and Lusch's echo Marx's (1979) initial formulation of political economy was found in the very first chapters of *Das Kapital*. As the question of commodity value was foundational to Marx's analysis of markets, and as Marx's analysis, in turn, is foundational to a vast body of work influential to marketing, like post-modernism, feminism, and cultural studies, it is worthwhile to contrast Vargo and Lusch's analysis of value with Marxist and post-Marxist literature. In both cases, we believe strong insights that allow for reassessing SDL are identifiable.

### *Monetary matters*

To begin, both Marx and Vargo and Lusch emphasize the use-value (value-in-use) of the object, and both conceptualize this value as coming into existence during consumption. On this Marx (1979) is clear, for while use-value is conditioned by the physical properties of the object itself, "use-values are only realised in use or in consumption" (p. 126). Consequentially, Marx regards commodities as having a qualitative relationship with each other as their value is tied to usage. However, for Marx, a critical moment of capital's logic occurs when the object's value nonetheless *transposes away* from the object's use toward its exchange value. At this moment, the commodity's use-value becomes abstracted and the commodity falls into a quantitative relationship with all other commodities whereby, as per Marx's famous example, 20 yards of linen has equal value to 1 coat which in turn has equal value to 10 pounds of tea, 40 pounds of coffee, 2 ounces of gold, and so on (p. 140). Significant implications transpire, all essential to capitalist logic; the object,

changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will. (pp. 163–4)

It is this magic moment, we argue, that disappears from Vargo and Lusch's analysis, but for Marx, it is the moment in which *everything happens*.

To begin, the quantitative relationship between commodities becomes mediated by money and this occludes use-value. In constructing the framework, SDL scholars demonstrate little pre-occupation with either the quantity or quality of *money*. So, it would seem that the barter they imagine, whereby owners of carbohydrates and owners of protein (Dr Atkins notwithstanding) trade in order to arrive at a sensible distribution of use-values. Thus imagined, a *rational* market might now consist of producers each accumulating a single commodity for the purpose of trade so, as Luxemburg (2003/1913) parodied, one party might attempt to entice the owner of a pocket watch by offering a vast quantity of salt (see Evans, 2015). This will not happen because money mediates the relationship between commodities and this, Marx argues, transforms our relationship with any potential use-value and instead establishes the *accumulation of money*—not the pursuit of use-value—as driving exchange. The difference between an exchange in which money is temporarily acquired in order to access use-value—for example, our protein owner, in line with SDL, sells surplus protein for money in order to buy carbohydrates (commodity → money → commodity, or CMC)—versus an exchange in which the commodity is exchanged in order to accumulate more money—money is invested into acquiring protein in order to sell it for extra money (money → commodity → money, or MCM)—is the difference between an exchange process that will naturally conclude as use-values satisfy consumer need, versus a market in constant expansion to facilitate money accumulation. However, we know that CMC is not how capitalism functions, and thus we are clearly amid MCM, meaning that the idea that markets exist to satisfy consumer needs is a misunderstanding of economics. As Marx (1979) put it,

Use-values must therefore never be treated as the immediate aim of the capitalist; nor must the profit on any single transaction. His aim is rather the unceasing movement of profit-making [...] boundless drive for enrichment, this passionate chase after value. (p. 254)

Any consideration of a society as being determined by SDL ought to accept that this logic is enveloped by a capital-accumulation logic, and therefore SDL be understood as a fragment of this wider context; a context in which, rather than engaging in a mutual process of co-creation, consumers are absorbed into a nexus designed for capital reproduction (see Arvidsson, 2005).

### *The fetish*

A consequence of the abstraction from use-value to exchange-value in Marx's thought is that the commodity gains "a secret" at this moment as it becomes "fetishized." For Marx, the use-value of the object disappears and it matters little what the object and its use is—for example, in derivative and "fictional" markets, investors need barely concern themselves with a commodity's use-value (if there is to be an "underlying" at all) and, as Fine (2013) attests, there is a tendency to vastly overstate consumer demand as driver of what gets consumed. Moreover, Marx argues, the labor necessary for producing commodities also disappears from view. As Harvey (2014) puts it:

we don't notice that we have no idea where most of the items come from, how they are produced, by whom and under what conditions, or why, exactly, they exchange in the ratios they do and what the money we use is really all about. (p. 6)

In other words, commodity exchange mystifies and occludes both the use-value *and* the social relations behind production.

It is important to state, then, that consumption is not only the moment in which use-value materializes, but also the moment in which we lose sights of the means of production and move inside an ideology of capitalist reproduction. Once the relationships between commodities transition from a qualitative to a quantitative relationship, capitalism stratifies labor into class, from which point onward the business school professor might start to earn more than the cleaner and regard this differential as deserved and natural. Implicit is an acceptance of primitive accumulation; that is how the means of production become privatized and how their social relations become reified. Moreover, the basic feature of exchange, in which surplus value is generated by a capitalist who underpays the laborer forced by virtue of having no access to capital to rent their labor, is obscured at this moment of fetish. None of these consequences of how commodities are valued, and what ideological function these abstracted values serve, appear in Vargo and Lusch's analysis—they ignore the broader political economic frame.

A crucial moment in Marx's analysis is that the abstraction of the commodity's use-value is mirrored by the laborer's value. Accordingly, "labour, too, possesses the same twofold nature; for, so far as it finds expression in value, it does not possess the same characteristics that belong to it as a creator of use values" (Marx, 1979: 132), which is "crucial to an understanding of political economy" (p. 132). At this moment, it is worthwhile to return to what we argue to be a parallel critique of SDL advanced by Campbell et al. (2013); namely that SDL presupposes a pervasive culture of demateriality both in marketing and contemporary post-industrial theory—"the idea that 'stuff' does not count" (p. 306). For Campbell et al., this presupposition is unacceptable because of its ecological consequences. We add by submitting that this dematerialization is a twofold dynamic played out in Vargo and Lusch's analysis, in which both the material resources and the productive labor are occluded. In addition to this, Cova et al. (2011) argued that SDL is a logic of immaterial labor in which the contribution of consumers to the exchange value is discounted. Thus, for example, we end up with logics of co-creation such as Facebook consumers entering biodata for free while Mark Zuckerberg is worth an estimated \$38 billion. We here arrive at a multiform fetish playing out in Vargo and Lusch's paradigm. At a time when US salaries, for instance, remain frozen (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014) and the levels of social inequality expand, this devaluing of material and immaterial labor is as urgently problematic as the commodity's demateriality. This is to say that from a Marxist analysis, SDL scholarship perpetuates a logic that maintains and ameliorates the extant economic system, or in more critical terms, SDL is active, if implicit "class warfare" from above.

This filtering of SDL through Marxist analysis might be regarded as exposing the "context of context" (Askegaard and Linnert, 2011), or the specter that haunts the "context of context" as it illustrates what is missing from SDL; a conceptual frame for understanding how and why capitalism is reproduced in everyday practices of marketing and consumption in commodity markets that operate under the logic of desiring brand acquisition, ownership and next, importantly, *social display* of "value."

## Value in a Baudrillardian perspective

What is the theory of the leisure society, the theory of the convenience shopper?  
(Achrol and Kotler, 2006: 320)

While Baudrillard is widely criticized for his polemic style and largely ignored in management literature, his influence in social and cultural theory is undeniable (Bishop and Phillips, 2007). In marketing and consumer research, he is mostly noticed in postmodern reflections of consumer markets (Arnould, 2007; Firat and Venkatesh, 1993; Goulding, 2003) and advertising semiotics (e.g. Joy and Venkatesh, 1994; Rumbo, 2002). Importantly, Peñaloza and Venkatesh (2006) and Venkatesh et al. (2006) brought his ideas forward in their initial analysis of SDL from the perspective of consumer culture. We further engage Baudrillard's social criticism to reassess SDL's central tenets from the perspective of markets as *sign systems*.

Baudrillard provides a pessimistic view of capitalist markets as commodity exchange and departs from Marx by strictly focusing on relations from the perspective of consumption. For him, it must be first recognized that consumption is not a passive enjoyment or even active experiencing, but crucially a form of *labor*; work that produces distinctions between consumers. Thus, his work is distinct from SDL's implicitly pragmatist notions of consumption, where value-in-use is generally conceptualized as something that simply improves the consumer's quality of life, enhances societal well-being (e.g. Lusch and Vargo, 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2008a, 2016), or enables everyday practices (Grönroos, 2008). For Baudrillard, more is at stake. Any account of value must be recognized as changing over time depending on how consumption signs interact (i.e. a movie star smoking in a nightclub contra a smoker dying of cancer). The key is that notions like "improving one's quality of life" or even "everyday consumption practices" are not innocent, but saturated with cultural tensions where commodities are used to negotiate and reproduce capitalist logic.

For Baudrillard, value becomes a more complex set of relations than the dualistic treatments between value-in-exchange and value-in-use offered by SDL scholarship or even Marx's treatments of use-value and exchange-value. Additionally, the idea of value in consumption makes little sense without an assumption of *needs* requiring fulfilment. The problem is that in capitalism, it becomes impossible to ground needs to anything beyond the capitalist commodity market itself.

From Baudrillard's perspective, in consumer society, the fulfilment of basic consumer needs is untenable because needs themselves are inherently culturally bound and not aspects of some essential humanity (Baudrillard, 1981, 1988). Adopting this perspective allows us to propose understanding markets as consisting of commodities that signify meanings. Analysis of this type is semiotic, for it operates through the system of images in circulation in the commodity market because

The object/advertising system constitutes a system of signification but not language, for it lacks an active syntax: it has the simplicity and effectiveness of a code. It does not structure the personality; it designates and classifies it. It does not structure social relations: it demarcates them in a hierarchical repertoire. (Baudrillard, 1988: 19)

These significations thus have little to do with usefulness or use-value in a pragmatic sense. Rather, these signs circulate precisely to legitimate the semiotic web that they are part of. Consumer society reproduces itself through reconstituting social standing, or in effect, class distinctions.

### *The logic of the sign system*

In this perspective, the signs of capitalism, like brands, prestige, and social status, are not relations superimposed to create value, as imagined by SDL and orthodox marketing and consumer



research. Rather, it is the very system of signification that produces the commodity market. We exchange commoditized symbols that act autonomously of their production within their web of signification (also Grandy and Mills, 2004):

It is because the structure of the sign is at the very heart of the commodity form that the commodity can take on, immediately, the effect of signification – not epiphenomenally, in excess of itself, as a “message” or connotation – but because its very form establishes it as a total medium, as a system of communication administering all social exchange. (Baudrillard, 1981: 146)

How then, should value be constructed in a system where every object of consumption produces a sign that signifies the existence of a market order while simultaneously reproducing it? Baudrillard (1981) distinguishes four logics of value:

1. A functional logic of use value;
2. An economic logic of exchange value;
3. A logic of symbolic exchange;
4. A logic of sign value (p. 66)

Here, the first operates in the realm of practical operations (or utility), the second in equivalence (or market logic), the third in ambivalence (or symbolic), and the fourth in difference (or status). The point is that these constructions of value all partake in discourses that together produce and maintain dominant market ideology. Put differently, use-value is to engage in a purposeful activity with a commodity, exchange value is a general understanding of the commodity’s economic worth, symbolic exchange (such as a gift) is subjective value, and sign value is how commodities act as signifiers of distinction. But these constructions of value remain deeply connected to the idea of commodity exchange; offerings that are inherently separated from the labor that produced them.

### *The commodity form in consumption*

To function, the political economy of sign value relies on the ideology of commodity consumption. As a reproducible and repeatable object with no uniqueness, a commodity can only signify the system itself. Every object (or market offering) is a distinction in the system, and thus we never simply consume an object in isolation—rather, we consume its signification in relation to the whole commodity market. We use, but in doing so we consume an entire ideology of Western consumerism as we frame the use as prompted, even necessitated, as a solution to a preexisting condition. This entails an active production of the signs of consumption in a culturally embedded system of meanings.

Marketing and consumer research literature, including SDL, *normalizes* consumption as a foundational necessity stemming from consumer needs that capitalism can fulfill. Indeed, when “We believe in ‘Consumption’: we believe in a real subject, motivated by needs and confronted by real objects as sources of satisfaction” (Baudrillard, 1981: 63). In a strict sense, following SDL, every human interaction is in essence service provision—with an attached conceptual “value-in-social-context” apparatus. Yet, the perspective of how a commodity signifies a thoroughly relational distinction in an entire market of exchangeable and consumable objects receives little attention. As a commodity, a desirable object, it becomes a sign only when its exchange value is generally understood (a Rolex is just a watch if not understood to be imbued with symbolic properties such as being expensive; or as constituting something beyond a watch; a transformation

into a “timepiece”). Otherwise, it operates according to another logic, for example that of a gift, which is only meaningful as a function of the relations that were a part of its giving and receiving. A gift, in this sense, has no exchange value.

From an SDL perspective, one might object that commodities nevertheless offer value-in-use when we consume them to satisfy our *needs* in terms of mundane problem solving. The problems begin when these concepts that SDL generally use straightforwardly in a pragmatist sense are brought under scrutiny.

Here, the use of a market offering as a vehicle for creating signs of distinction reveals an ideology wrought with productive tension; brought to bear in a capitalist rhetoric “where one brand devours the other, each living for its own endless repetition” (Baudrillard, 1988: 17). But as reproducible commodities, they find no grounding and thus freely circulate in the system of signification. It is thus obvious that all “service” that marketplace offerings bring about are culturally embedded; each operant resource being virtual in their constitution can only be grounded in an ideology that enables its identification as such (see Arnould et al., 2006). As both contemporary marketing and consumer research take the act of consuming as the primary unit of analysis of value creation, we must first ask what are *basic needs* or a baseline from which “surplus” value is determined?

### *The fiction of needs*

For Baudrillard, a fictitious assumption is needed to maintain the ideological underpinnings of consumption. One such form of “magical thinking” (Baudrillard, 1981: 70) is the reification of *needs* as a necessity for taking part in the market order of Western consumerism. A problem arises at the point of ontological separation of subject and object, thus necessitating a construction of relationality between them in economic thought. To construct a need is to reify a more abstract notion of desire. But unlike psychoanalysis, that considers desire an insatiable drive that temporarily attaches itself to objects, economic thought reifies needs to necessitate a market of commodities that would fulfil them. For Baudrillard,

the operation amounts to defining the subject by means of the object, and the object in terms of the subject, it is a gigantic tautology of which the concept of need is the consecration [...] *Mana*, vital force, instincts, needs, choices, and preferences: it is always a question of the same magic copula, the equal sign in ‘A=A’. (p. 71)

By allowing the idea of needs to operate as a baseline function “the analyst of modern society reproduces the misconception of naïve anthropology: *he naturalizes the process of exchange and signification*” (p. 72, italics in the original). For marketing, and SDL in particular, this tautology is *value = value*, or value manifests in what’s valuable for the practical everyday pursuits of the consumer (“in-social-context”).

Marketing and consumer research generally finds its mooring in the idea that consumption needs are satisfied by market commodities. This logic stems from an implicit acceptance of the existence of *basic* or *primary needs*, which are deducible to notions like minimum levels of discretionary income. However, it becomes impossible to fathom any such “Real” basic needs for the existence of a human being as all our needs operate in a semiotic order. Basic needs have nothing to do with sustenance or survival, as, in our culture of consumption “no one is free to live on raw roots and fresh water” (p. 81), unless one becomes an outcast rejected from the social network of relations. Needs are abstractions of commodity markets, and thus the object of consumption is vacuous.

Any functionality or the consumer's need for the object of consumption is an act of reification and rationalizing, and thus a theory of tangible needs is meaningless and only "a theory of the [culturally bound] ideological concept of need would make any sense" (p. 79). Once our problems of existence shift to an institutional one, then all meaning becomes abstract, floating signifiers, and take on meaning only within the web of signification. Even products that are commonly thought of as "authentic" or "natural" (e.g. locally produced groceries) are irrevocably attached to their pedigree, whether these are the lifestyle choices they signify or the context where they are purchased.

Thus, commodities are invariably to be understood as vehicles for conspicuous consumption (see Veblen, 1994, 1899); a derivative of a display of social stature even (if not especially) where it is claimed that the notion of class has irrevocably fragmented (Hetherington, 1998). The pursuit of "keeping up with the Joneses" requires constant effort and money (also Shankar et al., 2006), for there "exists an anxious anticipation, not that there may not be enough, but that there is too much, and too much for everyone" (Baudrillard, 1988: 30).

However, these forms of social relations are not a part of SDL, as Vargo and Lusch (2004) see them rather as constituting a co-productive role for the consumer. This notion was later softened to "co-creation," perhaps in an attempt to bring interactions closer to a mythical equilibrium, or the idea that cooperation is primary to the natural competition in the capitalist market (see Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Nevertheless, engaging in consumption entails putting consumers to work (Cova and Dalli, 2009; Cova et al., 2011; Zwick et al., 2008) and in SDL, this free labor is what both creates and solves its "needs" allowing the company to offer the offspring of the interactions as mutual "value propositions." But the way that "'consumption' has become a kind of immaterial labor, 'an active manipulation of signs,' is a sort of *bricolage* in which the individual desperately attempts to organize his privileged existence and invest it with meaning" (Levin, 1981: 5; also Baudrillard, 1969). To consume signs is to produce theatres of commodity fetishism as distinctions. It is the active reproduction of the simulacra of needs that legitimizes progress, "the double articulation of consumption and production" (p. 17).

In their criticism that SDL is too vague and overgeneralizing, O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2011) remark that "there would be more substance to the notion of a company being an Idea, or an image articulated through the language of brands, rather than a mechanism of service delivery" (p. 1317). Similarly, Venkatesh et al. (2006) note that researchers' proliferating "focus on *brands* as the drivers of consumption activity is yet another indication of the proliferation and hegemony of the sign system" (p. 260, emphasis in the original). Both notions can be interpreted as pointing to how the sign logic circulates in commodity markets. Seeing the market from the perspective of a system of signs presents a metaphor to assess the underlying (and often implicit) logic of capitalism that effectively abandons arbitrary dichotomies of products and services. While SDL certainly constructs a worldview of marketers and consumers as active co-creators of value (that produces the entirety of the *socius*), it holds that we know little about why consumers find such activities appealing (Shankar et al., 2006; Woodruff and Flint, 2006).

## **Tying the strings: The predicament, the pessimism, and some tentative implications**

... one wonders what this gold is for. It is for almost nothing, it is not mainly reinvested, but consumed in feasts, representations and expenditures of prestige [...] where wealth is dissipated, destroyed, treasure squandered in *jouissance*. (Lyotard, 2004: 192, emphasis in original).

### *Implicit ontologies—Satisfaction in displaying distinction*

SDL scholars, typically writing from perspectives of marketing management, generally assume a pragmatist stance for analyzing what consumers consider a “valuable” service. Here, “value” remains undefined in any exact terms (e.g. Arnould, 2014). This ambiguity takes on a continuum, where “value” is extracted by fulfilment of “general needs” or meets a desire for heightened end-states that a service can facilitate. Originally, Vargo and Lusch (2004) coined these “individual and dynamic needs” (p. 6), or, following Bastiat, “state from which they could satisfy their desires” (p. 7). In addition, and now following Gutman, they also speak of “happiness, security, and accomplishment” (p. 9). Ballantyne and Varey (2006) speak of service as an interaction that “is a valued route to the betterment of quality of life” (p. 345), and Grönroos (2008) calls a valuable service an interactive process that “support customers’ value creation in everyday practices” (p. 300). Accordingly, Vargo and Lusch (2016) reinterpret value co-creation as “the actions of multiple actors, often unaware of each other, that contribute to each other’s well-being” (p. 8). All these definitions of value fall short of an explanation that does not return to another concept like “need,” “desire,” or “quality of life,” which in turn warrants additional qualification, which SDL scholarship generally does not attempt.

Interestingly, some forms of conceptualizing satisfaction by SDL scholars bear close resemblance to explicit acts that could readily be seen as partaking in a Baudrillardian sign system of objects. For example, Vargo and Lusch (2004) explain that an important form of satisfaction, beyond utilizing a simply functional service, can constitute the “purchase [of] goods because owning them, displaying them, and experiencing them (e.g. enjoying knowing that they have a sports car parked in the garage, *showing it off to others*, and experiencing its handling ability)” (p. 9, emphasis added). Grönroos (2008) notes that a “precious painting is not bought only for the sake of the painting, but in order to look at it, *to show it to others, or just for the sake of knowing that it is in the buyer’s possession*” (p. 301, emphasis added), and, echoing the previous notion, “consumers don’t even buy fashion garments for the sake of the clothes, but in order to be *considered trendy and fashionable by friends*” (p. 303, emphasis added). Grönroos and Voima (2013) continue to note that “[v]alue is created (emerges), because the user feels well dressed and *gets compliments on his or her appearance*” (p. 142, emphasis added). Thus, even in SDL scholarship, we observe how the idea of use in terms of “practical problem solving” is undermined by producing status and distinction. We see this relationality in the form of commodity fetishizing trickling through its seams, when it is understood that within a culture shared symbols have consistent meanings (Flint, 2006), and these symbols are only made meaningful through monetary exchange.

### *The politics of the nonpolitical*

SDL’s notions of value are guided by assumptions (1) that consumers are goal directed and rational, (2) generally know what they are looking for in service experience, and (3) that capitalism is the natural system where such “needs” are met. Arguably, these assumptions showcase the ideological positions of their purveyors; the worldview of marketing taken to constitute reality (see Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006). But no matter what underlying scholarly inclinations pertain, these concepts disregard class antagonisms and the implicit disciplining forces of capitalism. The ideology of consumer culture generally parades “freedom of choice,” but what is not recognized is that the freedom is to make the right choices, “to fit in” or to gain acceptance and status. It would seem there is only one choice. Furthermore, a pressing sociocultural question is disregarded, namely, is it accurate to assume that consumption truly constitutes a virtuous satisfaction-

generating practice (see Shankar et al., 2006)? Value, however, conceptualized in its conventional forms in SDL scholarship, assumes a conservative approach of Western well-to-do consumers which creates “theoretical discontinuities and blinkers” (Arnould, 2014: 131). Here, “value” operates as an alibi for maintaining the stability of the extant market order with no consideration to “dealing with major social issues such as poverty, violence, urban deterioration, and environmental damage” (Peñaloza and Venkatesh, 2006: 305). SDL remains uninterested in such matters while continuing to normalize consumption as service co-creation; the sanctification of commodity fetishism in contemporary markets.

To answer some of the previous criticism on the potentially contested nature of satisfaction, SDL scholars generally contend that value is inherently subjective and cannot be defined beyond the individual definition of it in the situation it arises (Vargo and Lusch, 2011b; 2016). We ask: is value in SDL simply relativist? What would this mean for (1) its general pursuit of “scientific” status, and (2) its normative relevance for marketing practice? We argue that value, as approached in SDL literature to date, is paradoxically elevated to constitute its very foundation, but simultaneously trivialized to the point of tautology and reverberates as an apolitical slogan for the sanctification of commodity markets. While Vargo and Lusch (2016) now recognize the “limited cognitive abilities” (p. 7) of humans, so that “[c]ivilization advances by extending the number of important operations which we perform without thinking about them” (p. 7), we believe that SDL lacks a political economy exactly because it refuses to critically assess the “civilization” they claim to theorize. Moreover, they now recognize that institutions can lead to “ineffective dogmas, ideologies, and dominant logics” (p. 7). SDL scholars could do well by looking closer to home.

### *Implicit neoliberal normativity*

What SDL scholars’ continuing narrative seems to (perhaps unwittingly) attempt is not a philosophically grounded notion of “value.” Rather, it can be shown to conceptually spread “value” to all human relations. While SDL as an example of marketing orthodoxy certainly does little to hide its discursive trajectories, such a positioning is a pure neoliberal project (see Zwick, 2013). While in their oeuvre Vargo and Lusch claim to depart from axiomatic notions of previous marketing thinking, they continue to echo their own ideological trappings, which are actually consistent with a Kotlerian “belief” in marketing (Smithee, 1997). Here, markets and marketing are continuously rewritten as benign entities in which “the mode of production and value creation of the consumer publics leads to some kind of equal, sovereign, just and collective management of the commons” (Zwick, 2013: 403).

It would seem that a political economy perspective renders any claim of SDL serving as a theory of society as comprised entirely of shoppers and marketers who continuously balance out market relations by co-creating mutually beneficial “value.” This is of course the simple rewriting of the image of society in terms of a neoliberal schema where everything is rendered into a commodity, where the primary production of subjectivity is one of self-interest and mutual competition (e.g. Harvey, 2007; Read, 2009), and where society is “ahistorical, materialistic, ‘me-oriented’ short-termist, and ecologically myopic” (Gill, 1995: 399). Even more so, one can easily fathom that for SDL, a preferable way to conceive, say two friends sitting in a bar and chatting about ice-hockey, would be to view the encounter as a service provision where both co-create and extract use-value. And business is, and has thus necessarily been truly good, incessant and limitless.

While this may indeed work for the majority of marketing journals and business school textbooks, to make the claim of SDL deserving a status of “philosophy of society” is not

only an example of how poorly our own field understands and interrogates its assumptions, it is, in quite direct terms, philosophically indefensible and, perhaps unrelatedly, for us, even frightening.

When we fail to theorize market systems with reference to a theory of capitalism, not only do we reify a class structure, but we also render our research as “technically, logically, specifically, about nothing” (Dunne et al., 2008: 282). This is because,

When business extracts struggle from the real business of business and considers it an externality (even one that must be accounted for or dealt with) it is essentially defining itself as nothing, or more exactly as the science of managing wealth-making without wealth-making, the science of nothing or worse still perhaps, the science of managing nothing! (p. 282)

In a more formulaic fashion: “capitalism=struggle but business=capitalism–struggle therefore business=zero” (p. 282). Avoiding engaging in the contested terrain of ideological argument, as is the case of Vargo and Lusch’s oeuvre, does not lead to more neutral or objective research as might be hoped, but simply research that fails to question the ideological “unknowns” it nevertheless implicitly “knows” well enough to repetitiously rewrite (see Žižek, 2006), or worse, becomes research that studies market systems without studying market systems. Schwarzkopf’s (2010) appeal is worth repeating:

I propose a ‘complicator’ to assess the value of intellectual production in marketing studies. As practitioners and academics, we should openly and actively reject forms of representing reality, which are evidently poorer and less complex than reality itself. This, in turn, also leads me to a call for more, not less ideology in marketing, using ‘ideology’ in the original sense of the word. (p. 107)

What is gained through synthesis of Marx and Baudrillard and the gaps apparent in the understanding of markets and consumptions through a SDL lens is a means to dispense with an understanding of value that is neutral or necessarily beneficial and to replace this with a tentative means of explaining how value is negotiated on a more nuanced level. We expose value as contingent on a superordinate system of meaning as a performance of producing distinction that operates within the sign system of commodity markets. Rooted in exchange value, the sign system presupposes and defines value, as it provides the basis of understanding the circulation of any object within the system, and as a result marketing operates within the framework of culture.

Even though the importance of understanding the consumer market as a sign system is downplayed by Vargo and Lusch (2006) when they state that “S-D logic will emerge as a higher order construct than ‘sign value,’ and thus provide a foundation for not only a theory of marketing, but also a theory of markets” (p. 245), we feel that this conceptualization carries significant potential for marketing and consumer research academia and even practitioner-focused literature. While SDL remains focused on the possibilities of use-value, conceptualizing the commodity marketplace as a sign system opens a vast world of relations where use can be seen to rather consist of an alibi for the active production of signs. In terms of managers, one only needs to look at marketing communications especially in luxury segment to notice that they have already understood this well. It would also make a call for everyone to reflect on the ethics of our actions that come to constitute the market each passing day. Perhaps it is also time for marketing scholarship orthodoxy to reconsider some of its own implicit understandings of usefulness.

## Lingering logics

SDL continues to provide a *logic without political economy* in its incapability to question its relationship with culture and inequalities of power. For SDL, culture is comprehensively embedded in capitalist logics of exchange, and the only possible logic of this is Western consumerism. As we have seen, while making grand claims of societal relevance, SDL remains overwhelmingly vacuous about society itself in its inherent assumptions about the “benevolence” of market exchanges and its complete relativism of value as always phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a).

The lack of political economy naturally stems from SDL’s origins, in which a simple erecting of a list of vague assertions can hardly hope to constitute a consistent system of or for societal analysis. Nevertheless, SDL provides a grand example of academic “enframing” (Campbell et al., 2013), the marketization of marketing thought (Fairclough, 1993), or a “conceptual comfort blanket” (Brown, 2007: 296) that works, if only subversively, to colonize theorizing of society itself (see Ritzer, 1983; Shankar et al., 2006). For us, the idea that “use-value” is “of course unequal” (Arnould, 2014: 130) should receive more attention even in traditionalist canons of marketing thought.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers and in particular acknowledge Henrikki Tikkanen, Antti Sihvonen, Jacob Ostberg and Tomas Falk for their helpful comments during the development of this manuscript.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Note

1. Vargo and Lusch abbreviate service-dominant logic “S-D.” Instead, we have used “SDL” simply in order to follow the tradition of *Marketing Theory*.

## References

- Achrol, R.S. and Kotler, P. (2006) ‘The Service-dominant Logic for Marketing: A Critique’, in R. F. Lusch and S. L. Vargo (eds) *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions*, pp. 320–33. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- Adler, P. (2011) ‘Political Economy’, in M. Tadajewski, P. Maclaran, E. Parsons, and M. Parker (eds) *Key Concepts in Critical Management Studies*, pp. 181–5. London, UK: Sage.
- Akaka, M.A., Corsaro, D., Kelleher, C., et al. (2014) ‘The Role of Symbols in Value Cocreation’, *Marketing Theory* 14(3): 311–26.
- Alderson, W. (1957) *Marketing Behavior and Executive Action: A Functionalist Approach to Marketing Theory*. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.
- Arnould, E.J. (2006) ‘Service-dominant Logic and Consumer Culture Theory: Natural Allies in an Emerging Paradigm’, *Marketing Theory* 6(3): 293–8.

- Arnould, E.J. (2007) 'Should Consumer Citizens Escape the Market?' *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611(1): 96–111.
- Arnould, E.J. (2014) 'Rudiments of a Value Praxeology', *Marketing Theory* 14(1): 129–33.
- Arnould, E.J., Price, L.L. and Malshe, A. (2006) 'Toward a Cultural Resource-based Theory of the Customer', in R. F. Lusch and S. L. Vargo (eds) *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions*, pp. 91–104. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- Arvidsson, A. (2005) 'Brands a Critical Perspective', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5(2): 235–58.
- Askegaard, S. and Linnet, J.T. (2011) 'Towards an Epistemology of Consumer Culture Theory: Phenomenology and the Context of Context', *Marketing Theory* 11(4): 381–404.
- Ballantyne, D. and Varey, R.J. (2006) 'Creating Value-in-use Through Marketing Interaction: The Exchange Logic of Relating, Communicating and Knowing', *Marketing Theory* 6(3): 335–48.
- Baudrillard, J. (1969) *The System of Objects*. London, UK: Verso.
- Baudrillard, J. (1981) *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. St. Louis, MO: Telos Press Publishing.
- Baudrillard, J. (1988) *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2013a) *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2013b) *Postmodernity and its Discontents*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bishop, R. and Phillips, J. (2007) 'Baudrillard and the Evil Genius', *Theory, Culture & Society* 24(5): 135–45.
- Brodie, R.J., Glynn, M.S. and Little, V. (2006) 'The Service Brand and the Service-dominant Logic: Missing Fundamental Premise or the Need for Stronger Theory?' *Marketing Theory* 6(3): 363–79.
- Brown, S. (2007) 'Are We Nearly There Yet? On the Retro-dominant Logic of Marketing', *Marketing Theory* 7(3): 291–300.
- Brown, S. and Patterson, A. (2009) 'Harry Potter and the Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: A Cautionary Tale', *Journal of Marketing Management* 25(5–6): 519–33.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) *Median Weekly Earnings, 2004–2014*, URL (consulted August 2016): [www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted\\_20140423.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted_20140423.htm).
- Campbell, N., O'Driscoll, A. and Saren, M. (2013) 'Reconceptualizing Resources: A Critique of Service-dominant Logic', *Journal of Macromarketing* 33(4): 306–21.
- Carù, A. and Cova, B. (2003) 'Revisiting Consumption Experience: A More Humble but Complete View of the Concept', *Marketing Theory* 3(2): 267–86.
- Chandler, J.D. and Vargo, S.L. (2011) 'Contextualization and Value-in-context: How Context Frames Exchange', *Marketing Theory* 11(1): 35–49.
- Cova, B. and Dalli, D. (2009) 'Working Consumers: The Next Step in Marketing Theory?' *Marketing Theory* 9(3): 315–39.
- Cova, B., Dalli, D. and Zwick, D. (2011) 'Critical Perspectives on Consumers' Role as 'Producers': Broadening the Debate on Value Co-creation in Marketing Processes', *Marketing Theory* 11(3): 231–41.
- Desmond, J. (2013) 'A Modest Proposal: A Response to the Marketing Challenges Presented by the Crisis Confronting Humanity in Respect to the Requirement to Feed Nine Billion by 2050', *Journal of Marketing Management* 29(13–14): 1631–43.
- Dunne, S., Harney, S., Parker, M., et al. (2008) 'Discussing the Role of the Business School', *Ephemera* 8(3): 271–93.
- Echeverri, P. and Skålén, P. (2011) 'Co-creation and Co-destruction: A Practice-theory Based Study of Interactive Value Formation', *Marketing Theory* 11(3): 351–73.
- Edvardsson, B., Tronvoll, B. and Gruber, T. (2011) 'Expanding Understanding of Service Exchange and Value Co-creation: A Social Construction Approach', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 39(2): 327–39.
- Epp, A.M. and Price, L.L. (2011) 'Designing Solutions Around Customer Network Identity Goals', *Journal of Marketing* 75(2): 36–54.
- Evans, K. (2015) *Red Rosa*. London, UK: Verso.



- Fairclough, N. (1993) 'Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketization of Public Discourse: The Universities', *Discourse & Society* 4(2): 133–68.
- Fine, B. (2013) 'Consumption Matters', *Ephemera* 13(2): 217–48.
- Firat, A.F. and Venkatesh, A. (1993) 'Postmodernity: The Age of Marketing', *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 10(3): 227–49.
- Flint, D.J. (2006) 'Innovation, Symbolic Interaction and Customer Valuing: Thoughts Stemming from a Service-dominant Logic of Marketing', *Marketing Theory* 6(3): 349–62.
- Gill, S. (1995) 'Globalisation, Market Civilisation, and Disciplinary Neoliberalism', *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 24(3): 399–423.
- Goulding, C. (2003) 'Issues in Representing the Postmodern Consumer', *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 6(3): 152–9.
- Grandy, G. and Mills, A.J. (2004) 'Strategy as Simulacra? A Radical Reflexive Look at the Discipline and Practice of Strategy', *Journal of Management Studies* 41(7): 1153–70.
- Grönroos, C. (1994) 'From Scientific Management to Service Management: A Management Perspective for the Age of Service Competition', *International Journal of Service Industry Management* 5(1): 5–20.
- Grönroos, C. (2008) 'Service Logic Revisited: Who Creates Value? And Who Co-creates?' *European Business Review* 20(4): 298–314.
- Grönroos, C. (2011) 'Value Co-creation in Service Logic: A Critical Analysis', *Marketing Theory* 11(3): 279–301.
- Grönroos, C. and Voima, P. (2013) 'Critical Service Logic: Making Sense of Value Creation and Co-creation', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 41(2): 133–50.
- Gummesson, E. (1998) 'Implementation Requires a Relationship Marketing Paradigm', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 26(3): 242–9.
- Harvey, D. (2007) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2014) *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Helkkula, A., Kelleher, C. and Pihlström, M. (2012) 'Characterizing Value as an Experience: Implications for Service Researchers and Managers', *Journal of Service Research* 15(1): 59–75.
- Hetherington, K. (1998) *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Joy, A. and Venkatesh, A. (1994) 'Postmodernism, Feminism, and the Body: The Visible and the Invisible in Consumer Research', *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 11(4): 333–57.
- Karababa, E. and Kjeldgaard, D. (2014) 'Value in Marketing: Toward Sociocultural Perspectives', *Marketing Theory* 14(1): 119–27.
- Kjellberg, H. and Helgesson, C.-F. (2007) 'On the Nature of Markets and Their Practices', *Marketing Theory* 7(2): 137–62.
- Latour, B. (1999) 'On Recalling ANT', *The Sociological Review* 47(S1): 15–25.
- Levin, C. (1981) 'Translator's Introduction', in J. Baudrillard (ed.) *For the Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, pp. 5–28. St. Louis, MO: Telos Press Publishing.
- Lusch, R.F. and Vargo, S.L. (2006) 'Service-dominant Logic: Reactions, Reflections and Refinements', *Marketing Theory* 6(3): 281–8.
- Lusch, R.F. and Vargo, S.L. (2011) 'Service-dominant Logic: A Necessary Step', *European Journal of Marketing* 45(7/8): 1298–309.
- Luxemburg, R. (2003/1913). *The Accumulation of Capital*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lyotard, J-F. (2004) *Libidinal Economy*. London, UK: Continuum.
- Löbler, H. (2011) 'Position and Potential of Service-dominant Logic – Evaluated in an 'ism' Frame for Further Development', *Marketing Theory* 11(1): 51–73.
- Marx, K. (1979) *Capital Volume 1*. London, UK: Penguin.
- Normann, R. and Ramirez, R. (1993) 'From Value Chain to Value Constellation: Designing Interactive Strategy', *Harvard Business Review* 71(4): 65–77.
- O'Shaughnessy, J. and O'Shaughnessy, N.J. (2009) 'The Service-dominant Perspective: A Backward Step?' *European Journal of Marketing* 43(5/6): 784–93.

- O'Shaughnessy, J. and O'Shaughnessy, N.J. (2011) 'Service-dominant Logic: A Rejoinder to Lusch and Vargo's Reply', *European Journal of Marketing* 45(7/8): 1310–8.
- Peñaloza, L. and Venkatesh, A. (2006) 'Further Evolving the New Dominant Logic of Marketing: From Services to the Social Construction of Markets', *Marketing Theory* 6(3): 299–316.
- Ravald, A. and Grönroos, C. (1996) 'The Value Concept and Relationship Marketing', *European Journal of Marketing* 30(2): 19–30.
- Read, J. (2009) 'A Genealogy of Homo-economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity', *Foucault Studies* 6(1): 25–36.
- Ritzer, G. (1983) 'The "McDonaldization" of Society', *Journal of American Culture* 6(1): 100–7.
- Rumbo, J.D. (2002) 'Consumer Resistance in a World of Advertising Clutter: The Case of Adbusters', *Psychology & Marketing* 19(2): 127–48.
- Schembri, S. (2006) 'Rationalizing Service Logic, or Understanding Services as Experience?' *Marketing Theory* 6(3): 381–92.
- Schwarzkopf, S. (2010) 'Marketing, Realism, and Reality: A Plea for Putting More "Ideology" into Historical Research in Marketing', *Journal of Macromarketing* 31(1): 105–8.
- Shankar, A., Whitaker, J. and Fitchett, J.A. (2006) 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now', *Marketing Theory* 6(4): 485–505.
- Smith, A. (1997) 'Kotler is Dead!', *European Journal of Marketing* 31(3/4): 317–25.
- Vargo, S.L. (2007) 'On a Theory of Markets and Marketing: From Positively Normative to Normatively Positive', *Australasian Marketing Journal* 15(1): 53–60.
- Vargo, S.L. (2011a) 'On Marketing Theory and Service-dominant Logic: Connecting Some Dots', *Marketing Theory* 11(1): 3–8.
- Vargo, S.L. (2011b) 'Market Systems, Stakeholders and Value Propositions: Toward a Service-dominant Logic-based Theory of the Market', *European Journal of Marketing* 45(1/2): 217–22.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2004) 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing', *Journal of Marketing* 68(1): 1–17.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2006) 'Alternative Logics', in R. F. Lusch and S. L. Vargo (eds) *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions*, pp. 245–9. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2008a) 'Service-dominant Logic: Continuing the Evolution', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 36(1): 1–10.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2008b) 'Why "Service"?' *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 36(1): 25–38.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2016) 'Institutions and Axioms: An Extension and Update of Service-dominant Logic', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 44(1): 5–23.
- Veblen, T. (1994/1889) *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Venkatesh, A., Penaloza, L. and Firat, A.F. (2006) 'The Market as a Sign System and the Logic of the Market', in R. F. Lusch and S. L. Vargo (eds) *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions*, pp. 251–65. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- Venkatesh, A. and Peñaloza, L. (2014) 'The Value of Value in CCT', *Marketing Theory* 14(1): 135–8.
- Wilkie, W.L. and Moore, E.S. (2006) 'Macromarketing as a Pillar of Marketing Thought', *Journal of Macromarketing* 26(2): 224–32.
- Woodruff, R.B. and Flint, D.J. (2006) 'Marketing's Service-dominant Logic and Customer Value', in R. F. Lusch and S. L. Vargo (eds) *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions*, pp. 183–95. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- Žižek, S. (2006) 'Philosophy, the "Unknown Knowns," and the Public Use of Reason', *Topoi* 25(1–2): 137–42.
- Zwick, D. (2013) 'Utopias of Ethical Economy: A Response to Adam Arvidsson', *Ephemera* 13(2): 393–405.
- Zwick, D., Bonsu, S.K. and Darmody, A. (2008) 'Putting Consumers to Work: Co-creation and New Marketing Governmentality', *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8(2): 163–96.

**Joel Hietanen** is an associate professor at Stockholm Business School, Stockholm University. His topics of interest include consumer ethnography, particularly from the perspective of video-based criticism of representation. He spent most of the summer reading Deleuze and Guattari in the sun. Address: Stockholm Business School, Stockholm University, Stockholm, SE-106 91, Sweden. [email: [johi@sbs.su.se](mailto:johi@sbs.su.se)]

**Mikael Andéhn** is a post-doctoral researcher at the Aalto University School of Business. His primary interest includes the commercial relevance of place, with contributions to date spanning consumer behavior, international marketing, brands, tourism and critical marketing and management studies. Address: Aalto University School of Business, P.O. Box 21230, 00076 AALTO, Helsinki, Finland. [email: [mikael.andehn@aalto.fi](mailto:mikael.andehn@aalto.fi)]

**Alan Bradshaw** teaches and learns at Royal Holloway, University of London and also at Stockholm University. Address: Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX, London, United Kingdom. [email: [alan.bradshaw@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:alan.bradshaw@rhul.ac.uk)]