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# Collaborative tourism-making: an interdisciplinary review of co-creation and a future research agenda

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## ABSTRACT

For some time, tourism researchers have sought to examine and theorise types of collaborative exchange and the characteristics of relational work in tourism. Different ontological and epistemological framings, and associated language games have contributed to a fragmented body of knowledge. In this paper, we argue that the new term 'co-creation' is part of this language game, and efforts to date have not linked co-creation to the broader and deeper currents of theory building that have come before. We thus place co-creation within its wider context by, firstly, building a meta-narrative review of the literature that draws together a number of disparate disciplinary-inspired lines of thinking, and secondly, by identifying and extending key concepts of co-creation and its logics to tourism. We trace seven threads of scholarship that demonstrate the ideas and values associated with co-creation have diverse historical roots. Using a meta-narrative approach, we unpack the characteristics of co-creation from different disciplinary lenses, directing attention to issues beyond service-dominant logic approaches towards wider issues of participation, inclusion, power, responsibility, and value. In the process, we contribute to a new and fresh appreciation of value co-creation in tourism literature, along with a nine-point agenda that suggest directions for future research and practice.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## KEYWORDS

Co-creation; collaborative; relational work; value; meta-narrative

## Introduction

In 2016, Copenhagen's destination marketing agency, Wonderful Copenhagen, declared 'the end of tourism as we know it':

... it's time to welcome the new traveler – the temporary local, seeking not the perfect picture to take home but the personal connection to an instantly shared experience based on interest, relations and authenticity. In other words, we need to set course towards a future without tourism as we know it. Because by doing so, we can start to focus on something much more interesting: A future of hosts, guests and a shared experience of localhood. (<http://localhood.wonderfulcopenhagen.dk/>)

This declaration illustrates the rise of co-creation as an ideological force in tourism, and how it is shaping ideas about what is value, where value is created, who creates it, and who is responsible for its creation (see e.g. Campos, Mendes, do Valle, & Scott, 2016). In declaring their shifting role from an agency focused primarily on marketing to a broader, more collaborative placemaking and marketing role, the DMO argued for the adoption of 'localhood' (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017). The localhood, they argued, encouraged destination actors to think of visitors as temporary locals rather

than tourists. In the context of rising concerns about overtourism across Europe, the localhood was also aimed at breaking down tensions inherent in traditional terminologies, such as tourists and residents, locals and visitors, home and away, destination and residential areas, and so on. The localhood was thus framed as a place collaboratively created through diverse encounters between visitors and residents. It also marked a shift in thinking about the role (and power) of the DMO from leader-in-charge towards being a facilitator of visitor experiences in a diverse city-scape (Čorak & Živoder, 2017). So, in addition to marketing the City of Copenhagen to the outside world, the DMO also turned its attention towards better understanding and facilitating successful visitor experiences and positive outcomes for the city's temporary and permanent inhabitants. Across the world, Wonderful Copenhagen's declaration was posted, reposted, tweeted and retweeted on social media. Comments amounted to a collective celebration that a major and innovative DMO like Wonderful Copenhagen was acknowledging that tourism is much more than visitor numbers and expenditure, that collaboration across policy sectors was important, and that the blurring of categories like

'resident' and 'visitors' could open up innovation and reframe how we think of tourism.

The above example of Copenhagen illustrates a shift in thinking about where value is created and the type of value that is created in tourism (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017). Value is not just created within the tourism sector by operators and the DMOs but is also generated through interactions and exchanges between a wide range of human and non-human actors both inside and outside the destination (Buonincontri, Morvillo, Okumus, & van Niekerk, 2017; Jensen & Prebensen, 2015). Further, the DMO is not solely responsible for generating, nurturing, and managing the value created, but it is a collaborative responsibility, and success rests on a range of factors including collaboration, synchronicity, shared value, trust, and so on (Cabiddu, Lui, & Piccol, 2013). Indeed, the creation of shared value in tourism is receiving growing attention from a wide range of researchers in marketing, governance, product development, innovation systems, to name a few areas (Lee, Olson & Trimi, 2012).

Our point of departure for this paper is that tourism research has, for some time, sought to examine and theorise types of collaborative exchange and the characteristics of relational work in tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Hall, 1999; Jamal & Getz, 1995). However, different ontological and epistemological framings, and their associated language games have contributed to a fragmented body of knowledge. We posit that the use of the new term 'co-creation' is part of this language game, and tends not to acknowledge the broader and deeper currents of theory building that have come before. Put simply, tourism co-creation is increasingly used as a 'buzz' word, often adopted on a rather superficial level, and without consideration of the history and the broader development of 'co-creation' literature in other disciplines. We also need to acknowledge that co-design, co-creation, and co-production are different forms of collaborative exchange, and that it is important not to simply adopt co-creation as an all-encompassing term. Our own stance is that current attention on tourism co-creation reflects the relational turn in the social sciences, an ontological shift from a predominantly rational scientific view of the world to a socially constructed and interdependent world (Powell & Dépelteau, 2013). But co-creation is not a cohesive theoretical project; it is a metaphor prone to abstraction, and provides little theoretical direction for the development of tourism studies as a field. This turn can be traced back through a lineage of scholars as diverse as Karl Marx, Georg Simmel, Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour. Globalisation, digitalisation, and subsequent recognition that we need to rethink spatio-temporal-material relations

have fed recent attention to this turn towards collaborative creation of value and co-production (Eacott, 2018).

Our aim in this paper is two-fold. Firstly, we seek to critically examine and extend the notion of collaborative tourism making by undertaking a meta-narrative analysis of co-creation. Secondly, we seek to identify and extend key concepts of co-creation, and in the process build and understanding of co-creation as something relevant to tourism researchers, and not just limited to those working with service-dominant logic. Our starting point is that the very act of exchange, the collaborative creation and co-production of something, such as an experience, a marketing message, a product, a service, and so on, is what constitutes tourism. We propose that developing a broader perspective on co-creation can transform how we understand and make sense of tourism and its transformative effects on people, places, and the planet. In much the same way that mobilities studies have provided a new theoretical lens to understand tourism, we believe that taking a more systematic approach to tourism co-creation, and drawing together the diverse theoretical tangents of co-creation can provide a powerful lens to understand tourism better.

In this paper then, we seek to place co-creation within its wider context by, firstly, building a meta-narrative that draws together a number of disparate disciplinary-inspired lines of thinking, and secondly, by identifying and extending key concepts of co-creation and its logics to tourism. We follow the concept of co-creation and its rise within the tourism literature, while also acknowledging the various ontological and epistemological roots within other disciplines and fields of study that have shaped how it is framed and applied in tourism research. Hence, we have deliberately decided not to provide a definition of co-creation here at the beginning of the paper, but to discuss its meaning in later sections after having reviewed the literature. Through this process, the paper seeks to contribute a fresh appreciation and more comprehensive understanding of value co-creation in tourism literature, along with the proposal of a nine-point agenda for future research and practices.

### Approach: a meta-narrative analysis of co-creation

There has already been a significant amount of work done in theorising co-creation from various disciplinary perspectives, with Table 1 identifying a number of systematic literature reviews completed to date.

These reviews have predominantly been generated from management and service studies. While one systematic review on co-creation in tourism was identified

**Table 1.** Systematic reviews of co-creation.

Author	Discipline/Subject area	Keywords	Purpose of review	Contribution
Velamuri, Neyer and Möslin (2011)	Organisational management	Hybrid value creation, customer solutions, product service systems, integrated solutions, servitization, complex product systems	A systematic review of 169 publications on hybrid value creation (i.e. combining product and service offering) in commercial firms	Identified dynamic resources and capabilities as being important to co-creation
Galvagno and Dalli, (2014)	Service management	Value, co-creation, service science, customer participation, service-dominant logic	Systematic review of 72 influential publications (–2014) (utilising co-citation) to explore the past, present and future state of value co-creation in service management	Identified three key theoretical perspectives on value co-creation: service science, innovation and technology management, and marketing and consumer research
Voorberg, Bekkers and Tummers (2015)	Public management	Co-creation, co-production, public sector innovation, social innovation	A systematic review of 122 publications (1987–2013) of co-creation in the context of social and public innovation	Co-creation is associated with co-production and active citizen involvement, terms frequently used in public management literature
Campos et al. (2016)	Tourism management	Co-creation tourism experience; active participation; interaction; tourist psychology	A systematic review of 50 publications (2008–2015) on the co-creation of tourist experience	Identified key dimensions of co-creation for creating tourist experience
Mandrella, Zander, and Kolbe (2016)	System sciences/ IT management	Value co-creation, business value of information technology, inter-organizational networks	A systematic review of 45 publications (2000–2015) on IT-based value co-creation at the inter-organisational level	Authors suggest a framework to understand value in co-creation, which analyses IT-based value at the network, relation-specific, and firm levels. Value is seen as manifest itself in performance, processes, or intangible (e.g. loyalty) dimensions
Alves, Fernandes, and Raposo (2016)	Business and management	Value co-creation, innovation, consumer experience, market relations	Clarifies the field of application and study of co-creation	Authors conclude that field of knowledge has developed after 2007, Four clusters of research identified: business innovation, new products and services; service provision; and relational marketing
Tekic and Willoughby (2018)	Organisational management	Co-creation; open innovation; innovation management; collaborative innovation	Two-stage systematic review (broad and in-depth) of 77 publication (–2017) on co-creation in the innovation management literature	Authors put forward a simple and clear definition of co-creation, comparing and contrasting with open innovation

(Campos et al., 2016), its focus is limited to an examination of co-creation as a component of destination competitiveness and tourists' roles in creating commercial visitor experiences. Furthermore, none of these systematic reviews attempt to bridge disciplinary boundaries or consider the diverse relational roots of co-creation. As a result, the words used to perform bibliographic searches in these systematic reviews were often limited to the terms 'co-creation' and closely related semantic expressions such as 'co-production', 'customer participation' and 'active involvement', together with subject area terms such as 'tourism' or 'service'. These systematic reviews also utilise formal databases, which favour serial publications with an ISSN (International Standard Serial Numbers), and subsequently exclude the significant body of grey literature.

We posit that the development of a meta-narrative understanding of tourism co-creation across disciplinary divides would benefit tourism studies by providing a fresh, novel conceptualisation. Over 30 years ago, Normann and Ramirez (1993) observed that thinking about value creation was locked in an industrial economy mindset, a criticism that still appears relevant. Saarijärvi, Kannan, and Kuusela (2013) further observe

that without systematic and analytical clarification, the utility of the concept of co-creation is diminished. These authors argue that dismantling 'value', 'co', and 'creation' are key to discovering the multifaceted nature of co-creation, a point which we also agree.

So, returning to our approach in this paper, whilst a thematic analysis on the above systematic reviews would bring together some major themes related to co-creation, these existing reviews are limited to business and management fields, and it is unlikely that a thematic analysis would reveal additional insights that would provide a useful, novel, or fresh understanding. The point is that the relational work through which value is co-produced can be expressed very differently depending on the discipline or field of study, so a systematic review of literature based on 'co-creation' and related terms will yield narrow results. The difficulty of identifying appropriate search terms across a fragmented body of knowledge in different disciplines was one challenge, but we were also seeking an understanding of the interactive, collaborative, relational, and value-making dimensions of co-creation. We posit that, in addition to the traditional economic, business, and management foci, the

relational work of co-creation produces social, political and other kinds of value that are not configured in the above reviews. This observation demanded a closer reading of the literature, knowledge of interdisciplinary connections, and a deeper abductive approach to theory building, features that are inherent in a meta-narrative review (Fleury-Vilatte & Philippe Hert, 2003; Snilstveit, Oliver, & Vojtkova, 2012).

A 'meta-narrative review' examines how a particular research area has unfolded over time, how it has shaped the kinds of questions being asked, and the influence these historical antecedents have played on the dominant methods being employed. In other words, 'they examine the range of approaches to studying an issue, interpret and create an account of the development of these separate narratives and then create an overarching meta-narrative summary' (Gough, 2013, p. 2). The challenge of the meta-narrative review is that methodologies can vary widely due to diversity in ideological assumptions, general methodological approaches, specific case studies methods, that are present within the particular streams of literature making up the wider body of research. Gough (2013) identified two broad streams of meta-review: (1) 'aggregate reviews' that aim to aggregate findings within a pre-determined conceptual framework, and (2) 'configuring reviews' that aim to configure, interpret and arrange theories and concepts by employing iterative methods and emergent concepts.

We adopt a configuring meta-narrative approach in this paper, focusing on how tourism co-creation has been researched with particular emphasis on the ideas, data and methods used, rather than synthesising the findings of the research. So, on the one hand, we utilise partially explicit knowledge in both existing systematic and narrative reviews to configure overarching themes. These reviews were identified by searching for 'co-creation' OR 'value co-creation' AND 'review' in four major research databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect and Proquest. On the other hand, we supplement this with our own tacit knowledge (accumulated over 40 years of combined experience) from allied disciplines and fields of study (urban and environmental planning, sociology of leisure, business, economic development, politics, development studies, policy and governance) to critically question and to unearth missing perspectives and knowledge not present in the existing systematic and narrative reviews. In adopting this approach, we do not seek to produce linear continuous historiography, but rather adopt a post-structural archaeological approach where different knowledge contributions co-exist and overlap (c.f. Foucault, 1969; Scheurich, 1994).

Based on both the existing reviews and tacit knowledge, we identified the key terminologies in co-creation in various disciplines (Table 2), which then informed the search and inclusion of relevant references and discussions in this meta-narrative review.

The Table is by no means an exhaustive list of terminologies, but it serves to demonstrate the deeper and diverse roots of co-creation across diverse disciplines, and also the common elements in these discussions. Potential value of this Table then, is to facilitate boundary spanning scholars, enabling them to continue to evolve their interdisciplinary thinking in new contexts.

### An archeology of knowledge in tourism co-creation

According to Kuhn (1970), the evolution, maturation, and uptake of knowledge occur in paradigm shifts defined as 'universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners' (p. xiii). In an attempt to soften the perceived rigidity of paradigms, Lipman (1991, 2003) and Paul (2011) have argued that knowledge comes in waves. In the first wave, a new idea is often enthusiastically embraced, supported and reinforced by researchers. A second wave occurs some time later as cognitive processes, reflective scepticism, reasoning, judgment, and argumentation develop. The absorption of knowledge is influenced by the social worlds inhabited by different tourism actors, and readiness for learning and reflecting provided within these different contexts.

In practice, this is illustrated in the different social worlds in which tourism actors circulate, reinforced by dense social ties with their own kind, that serve to limit opportunities for communication and knowledge sharing (Phi, Dredge, & Whitford, 2014). Over time, judgment and over-simplified characterisations of those in other social worlds reduce discursive engagement and the collaborative processing of insights and knowledge. Knowledge brokers, such as consultants, also have a vested commercial interest in maintaining these separate knowledge worlds so, not surprisingly, second waves of knowledge building, and abductive reasoning from crossing the boundaries of different knowledge worlds take time. This second wave usually seeks to develop more systematic insights about issues and concepts, it responds to ambiguities and conceptual flaws, and identifies practical boundaries that have emerged from observing real-world implications. Theory testing, applications in different scenarios, and diverse contexts permit deeper insights and a richer understanding of key values and concepts.

**Table 2.** Key terminologies in ‘co-creation’.

Terminologies	Potential contribution in understanding tourism	References
<b>Service studies</b>		
Service-dominant logic Experience co-creation Collaborative transactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reframes <b>consumers as active participants</b> in the production of the tourism experience</li> <li>Moves the concept of <b>value beyond money</b> to include other kinds of social, psychological value</li> </ul>	Ballantyne and Varey (2006), Blaschke, Haki, Aier, and Winter (2018), Etgar (2008), Mauss (1970), Slee (2015), Vargo and Lusch (2004)
<b>Planning</b>		
Collaborative planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Inclusive and democratic participation</b> in the planning of tourism</li> <li>Attributes the reflexive <b>planner with responsibility</b> for collaborative, co-creative dialogue</li> </ul>	Jamal and Getz (1995)
Communicative action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nurturing discursive practices that enhance understanding and identification of <b>collaborative actions</b></li> </ul>	Fischer (2012), Healey (1997), Innes and Booher (2007)
<b>Development studies</b>		
Community empowerment Bottom of Pyramid (BOP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reframes the poor as active, involved, informed consumers to co-create the market around the needs of the poor.</li> </ul>	Prahalad, 2005
<b>Post-human perspectives</b>		
Hybrid actors, human/non-human actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>De-centres the human perspective</b></li> <li><b>New hybrid actors</b> produced through complex physical, economic, environmental, and human interactions</li> </ul>	Akrich, Callon, and Latour (2002), Haraway (2013)
<b>Business Systems/Organisational studies</b>		
Multi-sided platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New business models or strategies that coordinate the demands of two or more groups of producers/customers who have a <b>mutual/shared interest in collaboration</b></li> </ul>	Evans (2003), Olson, Lee, and Trimi (2012)
Prosumer/Prosumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Person who produces also consumes, co-creating the product. Emphasis on the <b>breakdown in traditional models</b> of supply /demand and value creation at the source of production; defined as the integration of physical activities, mental effort and socio-psychological experiences.</li> </ul>	Toffler (1980), Tapscott and Williams (2006), Rifkin (2014), Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010)
Open design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Collaborative labouring</b> on projects of <b>shared value</b>, often motivated by need to <b>spread/reduce cost of resources</b> (time, expertise, financial support, etc.)</li> </ul>	Benkler and Nissenbaum (2006)
Crowdsourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Collaborative sourcing of information, ideas, money</b> or other kinds of input by enlisting the services of a crowd of people, either paid or unpaid, typically via the Internet</li> </ul>	Estellés-Arolas and González-Ladrón-De-Guevara (2012)
Crowdfunding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Collaborative funding</b> of projects where donors have instrumental need or emotional connection to contribute voluntarily to the cause.</li> </ul>	Quero, Ventura, and Kelleher (2017)
Commons economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open systems where contributors <b>co-create value which contributes to the commons</b> (i.e. social, cultural and environmental resources held in common and not privately owned)</li> </ul>	Dredge and Gyimothy (2017)
<b>Innovation</b>		
Open innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leveraging of both <b>internal organizational resources and external resources</b> as part of the innovation process. Emphasis is on bridging, sharing resources across <b>organisational boundaries</b>.</li> </ul>	Chesbrough, 2003
Open source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mass collaborative production</b>, and new technologies such as blockchain, transforming notions of <b>ownership</b> of what is produced (e.g. IP), often kicked-started by the broader community</li> </ul>	Lerner and Tiroli (2001), Mauss (1970)
Systems of innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Interactions among actors and networks</b> contribute to the creation of new ideas and innovation e.g. new product, service, process</li> </ul>	Lundval (1985), Ind and Coates (2013)
<b>Governance</b>		
Creating shared value (CSV) Corporate social responsibility (CSR) Blended value Public-private governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration between public-private actors can produce outcomes of <b>mutual or shared value</b></li> <li>Blended value acknowledges a <b>full register of social, economic, environmental, political value</b> that can be produced</li> <li>Emphasis is predominantly on the <b>motivations to collaborate and mutual interest outcomes</b>.</li> </ul>	Crane et al. (2014), Emerson (2003), Dodds and Joppe (2005)



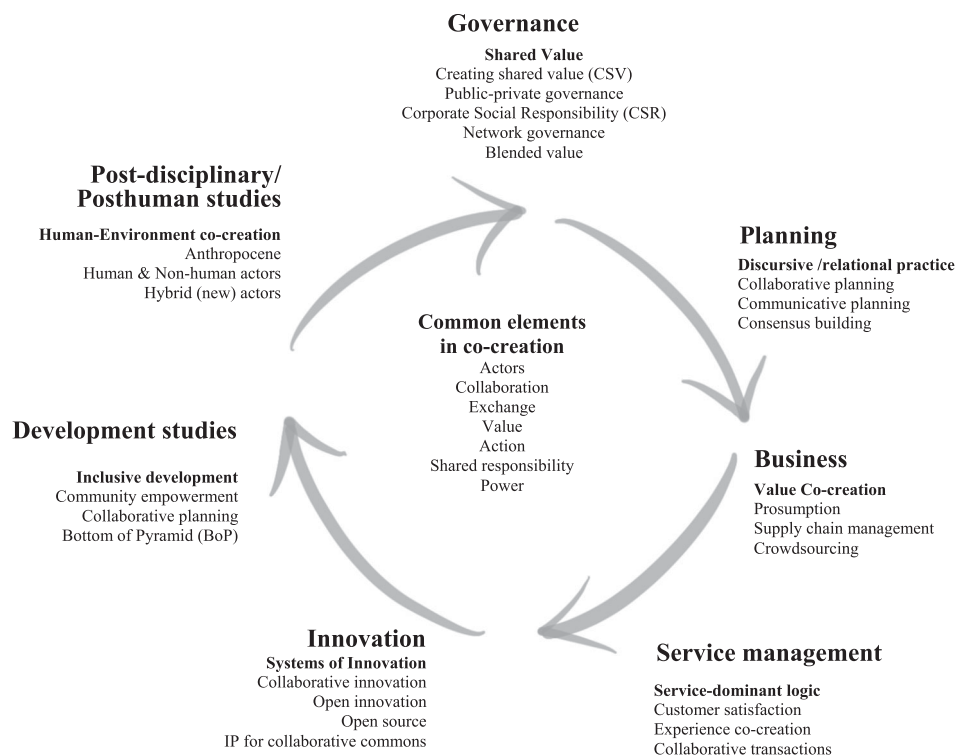
An alternative perspective on knowledge creation is offered by Foucault (1969, 1970, 1980), who asserts messy, post-structural archaeology of knowledge, where knowledge is socially constructed through multiple, overlapping, sometimes contradictory discourses. There are unities and discontinuities in knowledge formation, different scales at which knowledge coalesces, and crises and/or dominant values, such as neoliberalism, serve to empower some ideas over others (Dredge & Jamal, 2015). This messy context in which scientific knowledge is developed is important in examining the evolution of tourism co-creation.

As a new and fashionable term, co-creation has emerged as a heuristic metaphor, or a cogent schema, that helps to (1) capture in broad elements to explain a phenomenon, and (2) to project values about what is important to the knowledge community. Kuhn (1970) further argues that while the values embedded in a particular paradigm might be shared in the broadest sense, interpretation and application of these values might vary across knowledge domains due to different interests held by the researchers undertaking those reviews. The above systematic reviews of co-creation (Table 1) all take an instrumental approach, starting with the key terms, executing database searches and analysing themes. These reviews, while recognising the diverse threads and themes that exist in the body of works they analyse, do not acknowledge historical roots, their

own disciplinary biases, or philosophical stance. While some offer caveats that limit the extent of their data harvesting, or describe other methodological limitations, none of these reviews acknowledge disciplinary biases or limitations. Following on from the systematic analyses above, and critical questioning of the silences and hidden perspectives, a mapping of disciplinary contributions shown in Figure 1 was produced.

### *Co-creation – a business management perspective*

de Oliveira and Cortimiglia (2017) define co-creation as the 'joint, collaborative, concurrent and peer-like practices aimed at creating new types of value'. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000, 2004) observe that growth and value creation are two key themes preoccupying most business managers, explaining co-creation as 'the joint creation of value by the company and the customer; allowing the customer to co-construct the service experience to suit their context' (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004, p. 8). These authors argue that the meaning of value and mechanics of value creation were shifting from, firstly, a narrow monetary definition of value to include other diverse kinds of value. For example, a visitor experience that fulfils a lifetime ambition produces psycho-social value which is difficult, even impossible, to measure in dollar terms. Secondly, the point at



**Figure 1.** A disciplinary mapping of co-creation.

which value is being created in the value chain is shifting from the traditional view that value is created solely by producers who then need to convince consumers of its value to them. Instead, it is increasingly accepted that the exchange process is more complex and that customers are also producing something of value (such as reviews, testimonials, and images of their experience) within the transaction process.

In acknowledging this trend, the term 'prosumer' – a person who is simultaneously a consumer and a producer was first coined by American futurist Toffler (1980). Its related term 'prosumption' or 'production by consumers' was later made popular during the dot-com era in the 1990s (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). Along a similar line of thoughts, Cova and Dalli (2009, p. 333) proposed the term 'working consumers' to indicate 'the phenomenon of consumers who, by the means of immaterial labour, add cultural and affective elements to market offerings'.

Facilitating this process of value co-creation are advances in information technology, where for example, the rise of social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) helps destination and experience marketers build brand awareness, market trust, and through feedback mechanisms, contributes to more responsive and agile product development (de Oliveira & Cortimiglia, 2017). Similarly, the rise of the Internet of Things and online communities have also stimulated the rise of 'crowdsourcing', typically the sourcing of information, money or other kinds of input from a large crowd of people (Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-De-Guevara, 2012). In tourism, this trend is reflected in the increase of online travel information brokers such as TripAdvisor and Wikitravel.

### *Co-creation – a service-centred perspective*

This observation, that value is created at various points in the exchange process, was framed and justified as the key to achieving traditional business values including market expansion, growth, profit maximisation, and supply chain innovation. As a consequence, business managers and marketers have taken an interest in the nature of exchange, and seek to identify opportunities for new value creation. Building upon Prahalad and Ramaswamy's ideas (2004), various scholars such as Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2006, 2008a, 2008b), Frow and Payne (2007), Payne, Storbacka, and Frow (2008), Cova and Dalli (2009), Cova, Dalli, and Zwick (2011) and Schmitt (2010) have contributed to develop two emergent streams of work – service-dominant (S–D) logic and service science – in an effort to co-create a more marketing-grounded understanding of value and the characteristics of exchange that goes beyond the traditional goods-dominant (G–D) logic.

In tourism studies, and based on S–D logic, Prebensen, Kim, and Uysal (2016, p. 1) define co-creation of value 'as the tourist's interest in mental and physical participation in an activity and its role in tourist experiences'. This application of S–D logic in tourism has led to a large and growing body of work that has sought to explore the role of the customer as an actor in the creation of tourism experiences (Campos et al., 2016). Research has tended to reinforce findings that active participation of tourists in the visitor experience enhances visitor satisfaction (e.g. Buonincontri et al., 2017; Prebensen et al., 2016). This view is largely underpinned by the theoretical framework of the experience economy, which posits that a focus on creating personal value for consumers (e.g. personal branding, social connections, transformative changes in physical or mental beliefs of tourists) will subsequently lead to an increase in economic value for marketers and providers (e.g. Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Subsequently, Customer Experience Management – a comprehensive set of frameworks, tools, and methodologies that enables firms to co-create and manage customer experiences – has increasingly been researched and applied in tourism and hospitality context (see e.g. Kandampully, Zhang, & Jaakkola, 2018).

Beyond a customer focus, the service science literature suggests a more holistic view of co-creation as being embedded within the service systems. This view focuses on the diverse combinations of resources (often consisting of human capital (people), ICT (technology) and networks of firms) that enable the co-creation of value to take place (Saarijärvi et al., 2013). In the business and service management literature, 'collaborative transaction' emerges as an umbrella term that encompasses various hybrid market models and conceptualisation of resources such as Peer-to-Peer (P2P), Business-to-Business (B2B), Customer-to-Business (C2B), Customer-to-Customer (C2C) and many-to-many marketing (Saarijärvi et al., 2013).

### *Co-creation – an innovation-centred perspective*

On a similar note to the service system view, the 'systems of innovation' framework developed by B. A. Lundvall (1985) emphasises that new ideas emerge between, rather than within people and that co-creation practices between actors within a system is the key to ensuring that a system remains innovative and competitive. Consequently, increased attention has been placed on identifying and unlocking new value creation opportunities, and in catalysing new products and experiences based on collaboratively rethinking business ecosystems, distribution channels, markets, and so on. This has gone hand-



in-hand with increased policy emphasis on digitalisation and e-tourism (Cabiddu et al., 2013).

Tekic and Willoughby (2018, p. 15) conducted an extensive systematic review of the innovation literature and defined co-creation as 'a form of *collaborative innovation* initiated by a company, involving individual external contributors or co-creators – not just users and customers, but also field experts, students, or amateur innovation enthusiasts – who may provide valuable input to the company's innovation projects'. This definition represents a paradigm shift in innovation practices, partly influenced by 'open innovation' and 'open source' movements within the information technology community in the 1990s (Coughlan, 2013; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). More recently, the term 'open innovation' has been adopted by the business community and made popular by Chesbrough (2003), whose work focused on unleashing the competitive advantage of individual firms through open innovation. In contrast to 'closed innovation' models, where firms innovate primarily through internal research and development (R&D), open innovation emphasises the leveraging of both internal and external resources (e.g. knowledge, technology, people) as part of an innovation process. Similarly, the 'open source' movement operates on the premise of reciprocal exchange, where the mass co-creation process is often kick-started with a 'gift' or a generous offering to the broader community (Mauß, 1970). Other closely related terms are 'open design', and 'common-based peer production', where, due to a lack of commercial interest or funding, people invest skills, time or other inputs into projects for the common good (Benkler & Nissenbaum, 2006).

In tourism, this innovation co-creation lens has enabled managers to unlock additional and diverse forms of value through interactions between hosts, customers, digital platforms, DMOs, and businesses (de Oliveira & Cortimiglia, 2017). For instance, rapid growth of *multi-sided collaborative platforms* such as home, restaurant, and ride-sharing platforms, illustrate the innovative and disruptive impact of these developments, which are now transforming the tourism sector (Belk, 2010).

### Co-creation – a governance perspective

Just as co-creation was taking off as an exciting development in business management and service studies, in 2008 the Global Financial Crisis raised questions about the continued dominance of the profit and growth mindset. Critical questions started to re-emerge over hyper-capitalism, corporate greed, the corporate sector's lack of moral code, and increasing inequity

between the rich one percent and the remainder of the world's population. Furthermore, these issues were coupled with increasing concerns over climate change, loss of biodiversity, and other environmental problems. This discord created the context for a wave of disruptive thinking, and a flurry of research on collaborative governance and the concept of *Creating Shared Value* (CSV).

Porter and Kramer (2011) have been given credit for popularising the term CSV, which captures the idea that, in order for business to regain trust and legitimacy, they need to pursue values that are shared with society at large. They argue for new ways of framing and pursuing business growth by identifying ways in which societal issues can be addressed while simultaneously pursuing traditional profit-making activities (Crane, Palazzo, Spence, & Matten, 2014). They proposed three main strategies for creating shared value: by re-conceiving products and markets; by redefining productivity in the value chain; and enabling cluster development. In many ways, Porter and Kramer were repackaging old ideas, reiterating ideas about more ethical and sustainable forms of capitalism, reasserting school of thoughts such as corporate philanthropy and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and drawing inspiration from emergent concepts such as impact investing, and blended value (Dodds & Joppe, 2005; Emerson, 2003). Furthermore, the concept of shared value is not unique to the domain of business governance but draws its root and inspiration from a range of established research areas such as of public governance, participatory governance, the pursuit of mutual benefit (e.g. Fischer, 2012).

Despite its increased popularity in the literature, there have been strong criticisms that CSV is capitalism as usual, or that it even gives license to a new and more pervasive phase of capitalism where social and environmental problems are folded into, and silenced under, capitalism's pursuit of growth and profit (Crane et al., 2014). Within the area of public governance, the increased emphasis on privatisation of public assets/services, and for public decisions and actions to be made in alignment with private sector interests, have been criticised as supporting neoliberal ideas about economic value creation, whilst neglecting alternative value that are important for individual and community wellbeing but not necessarily recognised by market logics (e.g. community cohesion, ethics of care) (Bauwens, 2006). In tourism, this may manifest in the co-creation of tourism policies that reinforce the sector's growth agenda instead of challenging the status quo to reduce inequality and other social-environmental issues related to tourism development in local communities.

### *Co-creation – a planning and policy-making perspective*

Although terminology differs from the business and management literature, the intention of building shared collaborative approaches through communicative and consensus building approaches is reminiscent of the more recent 'co-creation' terminology. Collaborative planning emphasises the importance of moving beyond tokenistic consultation with local actors to empower such communities as active agents. Early antecedents can be found in the activist work of Jane Jacobs (1961), the advocacy work of Davidoff (1965), the collaborative planning approach developed by Healey (1981, 1997), communicative relational approaches to policy advocated by Fischer (2012), and the consensus building work by Innes and Booher (2007). Collaborative planning emphasises a shift in the dominant approach to planning, from a rational scientific to a relational approach. The work of these diverse authors frame collaborative planning as inclusive, interactive, democratic, communicative, pluri-vocal, and action-oriented (Healey, 1998), all values that resonate with contemporary ideas of co-creation.

In tourism, these influences flowed through to Jamal and Getz's (1995) seminal work on collaborative tourism, and discussions of networked, collaborative, and participatory governance (e.g. Araujo & Bramwell, 1999; Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Reed, 1997). Participatory/collaborative governance emphasises the deepening of citizens' democratic engagement in the governmental processes, empowering them to undertake various roles (e.g. as co-implementer, co-designer, and initiator of actions) which places them at the centre of grass-root social innovation (Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2013). Most of this work adopts a place-based community approach to co-creating local actions, which is understandable due to the disciplinary links between planning and geography. What is important, however, is the long and well-established links with communicative action, drawing upon Habermas, and Bourdieu's concept of habitus and communities of practice, that has the potential to inform current discussions of co-creation.

### *Co-creation – a development perspective*

In development studies, growing criticism of non-profit and public sector ineffectiveness in addressing many persistent developmental issues (e.g. poverty, marginalisation) has led to the criticism that top down approaches to international aid are ineffective, and that inclusive, bottom up community driven initiatives are needed

(Sharpley, 2009). Advocates of the Bottom of Pyramid (BOP) approach call for context-based solutions to be co-created with people at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Adapting the logics of traditional business management, Prahalad (2005, p. xii) believes that by reframing the billions of people who earn less than two dollars a day as 'active, informed and involved customers', lasting positive changes will result from 'co-creating the market around the needs of the poor'.

One of the most frequently cited examples of this BOP approach is microfinance. Pioneered by Professor Mohamed Yunus and the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh in the 1970s, microfinance is the provision of small-scale financial services such as micro-credit, micro-saving and micro-insurance to address the financial needs of people living in poverty, who would usually be excluded from the formal financial institutions (Schreiner & Colombet, 2001). Through charging sufficient interest rates to cover the operating costs, the global microfinance industry (now worth over 100 billion US dollar) demonstrates that poor people are indeed a very important consumer market (Helms, 2006).

In the context of tourism, the last few decades have witnessed the rapid rise of globalisation and a 'new mobilities paradigm', yet there remain billions of people living in poverty who are socially, politically and economically excluded from travel (Hall, 2010). For this so-called 'immobile' population, the ability to travel for any period of time and for any length of distance (even just from their home village to the nearest city) means much more than a leisure experience. It may open up, among other things, access to proper medical and legal services, education and economic opportunities and new livelihood ideas that are instrumental for a better life. Rogerson (2014) for instance, called for more attention and support to the 'migrant entrepreneurs' or the 'necessity tourists' who travel almost daily across borders in sub-Saharan Africa in order to make a living through subsistent trading.

Arguably, the BOP approaches to co-creating inclusive economic opportunities and affordable travel products and services have potential to deliver significantly more value to people at 'the bottom of the pyramid'. The BOP approach is also supported by the advances of digital technologies, which have fuelled the rise of informal and sharing economy. These may include online sharing platforms that offer more affordable ride-sharing, ride-hailing and accommodation services to people with lower incomes (Dredge & Gyimothy, 2017). Besides platform capitalism (e.g. Airbnb, Uber), tourism non-profit cooperative platforms such as Fairbnb, Authenticity, and VolunteerMatch have

contributed to enable the local citizens with significantly less resources to participate in and gain benefits from the tourism system, in turn creating and distributing value in fairer ways. However such platforms have struggled to establish viable business models to date (see e.g. Bauwens, 2006; Scholz, 2016).

### *Co-creation – a post-human perspective*

Science and technology studies have pushed the boundaries of co-creation in another direction, arguing that, firstly, non-human elements such as ideas, things, artefacts and so on can also have agency (Callon, 1998; Latour, 2005). In tourism contexts, for example, natural environments and urban landscapes provide a backdrop to the perfect Instagram photo, helping to co-create a visitor's identity, contributing to their visitor experience, but also activating the audience to take action. These human and non-human actors co-produce visitor satisfaction through a joint collaborative process that takes place between human and non-human actors.

Second, joint, collaborative and co-creative processes between people, objects, ideas, and other things can create hybrid actors, or what Haraway describes as technology-infused humans or cyborgs (2013). These ideas are challenging for some, and it is not the role of this paper to offer any detailed critique. However, these diverse contributions, including the work of Star and Strauss (1999) and Star (2010) on boundary objects, Callon (e.g. 1998, 2006) on the performativity of economics, and Donna Haraway's (2013) description of shifting coalitions of more-than-human actors suggest that the traditional categories of things are fusing, coalescing, hybridising, and taking on new meaning. Traditional ways of understanding agency as human-centred, and categorising and organising our understanding using a very human perspective are being challenged. So, in the context of mass tourism, it is possible to interpret the notion of swarming crowds as an emergent, but more-than-human actor in its own right. The crowd is an assemblage of people, of images, of sensory cues, of visual and textual artefacts, and of psycho-social reactions and responses that is more than the sum of its human parts. Technology interacts with human visitors shifting and shaping the way the crowd behaves and responds. But there are also invisible and silent components such as environmental damage and declining ecological health caused by mass travel. Together these elements contort and transform the pulsating crowd into something that is both more-than-human and interscalar, with visible and invisible parts. Callon (2006) highlights that the discourses around such actors, in this case, a swarming crowd, are performative

– they produce what they describe. The language of overtourism defines how the crowd is viewed, perceived, understood, and the largely negative value that is created.

Recent thinking by those engaging with the challenges of the Anthropocene and the Rights for Nature movement also suggest that we need to acknowledge the co-created value generated through the interaction between non-human and human actors (Lund, 2013). In other words, sustainability in tourism relies on more inclusive and holistic approaches to value co-creation that extend well beyond the 'business-as-usual' mindset, and that takes into account the contributions of non-human actors as diverse as nature, silence, carbon, and so on.

### *Key concepts and elements of co-creation*

In the above text, we have traced seven threads of scholarship that demonstrate the ideas and values associated with co-creation have diverse historical roots in a range of disciplines and fields of study. There may be more disciplinary threads that we have not identified, or that we are not aware of due to our own knowledge limitations. However, it is clear even among the threads that we have traced, that they employ overlapping ideas, similar concepts, and are interdependent like the image of a DNA sequence that we invoked earlier. For instance, while innovation-centred perspective is represented as a separate theme, both business management and service-centred perspectives have frequently taken innovation into account in their interpretation of co-creation. The work of advancing understanding co-creation and its relevance to tourism, and our aim of excavating novel and fresh approaches, lies in this interdisciplinary enterprise (e.g. see Stember, 1991).

The discussions above illustrate that concept of co-creation draws from the relational turn in sociology, and emphasises a number of common elements including that it is collaborative, communicative, discursive, relational, action-oriented, participatory, democratic, inclusive, and so on. Of course, different disciplinary leanings mean that the different values and motivations of co-creation are highlighted, and the contributions of different ontologies and diverse methodologies are recognised. A synthesis of these different approaches assists in a more complete understanding of the whole. Our departure point from the start was that co-creation, as a fashionable term and metaphor, is an abstraction open to interpretation, and stops short of informing scholars how they might work together. An interdisciplinary meta-narrative analysis helps to identify the overlapping ideas, it transcends boundaries to identify similar

concepts and terms, and it helps to mesh together diverse thinking and helps scholars take back certain ideas and elements back into their own thinking and disciplinary communities.

Stember (1991) suggests that the interdisciplinary enterprise asks that we integrated knowledge and methods from different disciplines and fields of study, acknowledging distinctions and contributions. She identifies three potential lines of enterprise: developing the intellectual domain, exploring the practical implications; and implications for the pedagogical domain. This is a much larger project, and much of it is outside our immediate aims in this paper. However, in what follows, we identify, transcend boundaries, and extend the key concepts and logics of co-creation and make a contribution to a fresh and novel approach to co-creation that cuts across disciplinary divides and points attention towards a more holistic approach to understanding the co-creation of value in tourism.

## Discussion

Our aim in this paper was two-fold: Firstly, we sought to critically examine and extend the notion of collaborative tourism making by undertaking a meta-narrative analysis of co-creation. Secondly, we sought to identify and extend key concepts of co-creation, and in the process build and understanding of co-creation as something broadly relevant to all tourism researchers, not just those working with service-dominant logic, visitor experience and marketing. In addressing these two aims, the intention was not to apply a homogenising filter over the diverse thinking that has gone into co-creation and related concepts, but rather, to acknowledge overlapping and interwoven historical roots, related terms, and thinking. We chose not to define the term at the beginning of the paper, but rather, let the meta-narrative unfold and draw it together here in the discussion. Etymology provides the key to understanding, where co-creation is the act of creating something together. The meta-narrative also provides insights into how co-creation is discussed and interpreted in the diverse literature (Table 2 summarises this diversity), and from this, it is clear that different ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological influences mean that there can be no consensus on an overarching definition for tourism studies. That said, however, we can draw attention to seven key features, which also point to a rich research agenda for the future:

- (1) *Co-creation involves value creation.* Value is a complex concept. Creating value – money, resources, labour, shareholder value and so on – is a traditional

objective of neoclassical economics. However, discussions of co-creation highlight that other forms of social, cultural, political and environmental value can also be produced, and that these are balanced against financial gain when consumers make decisions. Value is also dynamic, slippery, fleeting or permanent, and can be conceived of as an object, an aim, an outcome, or a process. We need to better understand it, from the perspective of visitors, residents, destinations, organisations, and non-human actors like nature, and so on.

- (2) *Co-creation involves two or more actors or actor groups producing something together.* The roles and responsibilities of various actors involved in co-creation in tourism are challenging prevailing ideas about the tourism system, and traditional roles and responsibilities, e.g. consumers and producers. We need to better understand co-creation contributes to new understandings of the tourism ecosystem.
- (3) *Co-creation involves the collaborative exchange of resources such as time, energy, money, expertise, and so on.* Digital technologies are mooted as a way of facilitating these exchanges, but co-creation is more than technology. The broader influences of the techno-anthropological landscape of co-creation need to be better understood.
- (4) *Co-creation unleashes new models of collaboration, sharing, gifting, access, and other kinds of transactions often sidelined in neoclassical economics.* While much celebrated in the literature, there is a dark side to co-creation. Not all co-creation activities are consensual, and non-consenting parties (such as residents in a neighbourhood overtaken by Airbnb) may be excluded or their interests are not considered. Market failures associated with co-creation need to be better understood.
- (5) *Co-creation is political.* The very act of collaboratively creating something is a political act where actors exercise their agency. The planning and governance literature, in particular, drew attention to the inclusive, democratic, outcomes associated with co-creation. But, in the point above, sometimes parties experiencing the impacts are excluded. We need to better understand the 'who wins' and 'who loses' in co-creation.
- (6) *Co-creation has given rise to new/hybrid actors.* The de-centring of humans in processes of collaborative co-creation, has shone a light on how actors can be thought of in fresh ways, helping to rethink traditional approaches and reconceptualize key challenges. We need to incorporate the rights of non-human actors, such as nature, forests, rivers and so on, where such innovative thinking can disrupt



traditional thinking and help reformulate the challenges we face.

- (7) *Co-creation is closely associated with contemporary ideas about innovation.* Innovation in systems of production and consumption, in business ecosystems and supply chains, in processes and practices, have emerged as a result of collaborative ways of working together. Co-creation (sharing, collaboration, gifting, etc.) has redefined how we access resources such as knowledge expertise, capital, labour, and so on. Economic geographers have highlighted that the opposite of co-creation can be lock-in, where innovation is hampered by inability to share collaborate, remove institutional impediments. We need to understand more about how co-creation may enhance innovation through inclusive thinking, or impeded it through exclusive (invitation only) co-creation practices.
- (8) *Co-creation is transforming ideas about who/what owns the value produced, and who has responsibility for its management/stewardship.* The collaborative co-production of something of value may come about as a result of resource pooling, sharing and contributing freely to a common goal. Co-creation raises questions about the collaborative commons and the management of resources that are owned by no one in particular. We need to know more about the potential of the collaborative commons, how to manage it and in whose interests.
- (9) *The relational characteristics of actors involved have an important impact on the co-creation process and outcomes (e.g. ethics, motivations, emotions, power, equality).* Unbalanced and unstable power relations due to privilege, information or resource asymmetries can potentially lead to value co-destruction instead of co-creation (Echeverri & Skålén, 2011). The 'how' of co-creation process, therefore, cannot be separated from the awareness and acknowledgement of the 'what' (i.e. what kind of value is created) and the 'who' (i.e. who participates and who benefits from the created value). We need to better understand the relational work involved in co-creation.

## Conclusions and future research

There is no doubt that co-creation is a fashionable concept. In tourism, co-creation has predominantly been examined and theorised within a business and service context, and its typically human-centred, and focused on value creation that sustains and promotes existing capitalist forms of economic activity. The meta-narrative revealed that co-creation has been reduced

to a utilitarian value-producing concept between categories of actors, (e.g. producers and consumers or hosts and guests). Arguably, this narrow conceptualisation of co-creation in tourism can marginalise broader discussions of collaborative and co-created actions that exist across different strands of literature. Tourism is much more than economic value-producing transactions but can also generate alternative kinds of value, both positive and negative, that influence local wellbeing, livability and flourishing, place attachment, resource protection and conservation, confidence in the future, migration, international relations and macro-economic management. It is precisely this complexity that makes the concept of co-creation an interesting and useful lens for building a multidisciplinary understanding of tourism and how it changes people, places and things.

We recognise in this meta-narrative analysis that co-creation also has deeper roots in notions of civil society and democracy. Our approach to and interpretation of co-creation either provides or hinders access to the structures and processes through which we are governed. Accordingly, co-creation can also be understood as a much older dimension of the cooperative and collaborative human condition. Co-creation, collaboration, shared production, partnering, and co-operation similarly capture the idea that value is produced by working together. It was our ambition in this paper to transcend the ontologies that have created and fed these different streams of research, and to recognise that working together to produce diverse kinds of value, understanding, and collaborative outputs and/or actions for diverse actors is fundamental to addressing the range of challenges that we face. For example, hosts work with visitors, communities work with industry, producers work with consumers, governments work with industry, NGOs work with volunteers, and industry must work with environmental actors, to co-produce diverse outcomes which might be valued in vastly different ways. In doing so, categories of things become blurred and dynamic, where, for example, community members become experts, researchers become learners, problems become opportunities, for example.

In using a meta-narrative approach to unpack co-creation, we have shifted traditional conceptualisations of tourism co-creation by (1) expanding the concept to include diverse forms of social, political, cultural, and environmental value; (2) expanding ideas about who produces and who benefits from that value; (3) exploring the resources that are used or consumed in the creation of that value; and (4) raised questions about who wins and who loses in value creation. The use of a broader interdisciplinary framework of value co-creation provides an analytical lens that directs attention to issues of

participation, inclusion and distribution of costs and benefits of tourism, which contribute to new and fresh appreciation of value co-creation.

These above questions hopefully can provide the basis for a more comprehensive examination of value co-creation in future tourism research. In this way, co-creation can help to unleash tourism's potential as a powerful co-creative social force, as opposed to extractive industry. As Ind and Coates (2013, p. 92) argue, 'co-creation can be a force for participation and democratisation that does create meaning for all, rather than simply an alternative research technique or a way of creating value through co-opting the skills and creativity of individuals'.

In sum, we leave readers with a nine-point research agenda drawn from the above identified characteristics of co-creation and our interdisciplinary meta-narrative review. For those wishing to adopt co-creation practices, the following points of consideration should guide bespoke co-creation future research approaches and implementation:

- (1) Future approaches should consider co-creation from multiple perspectives (also known as personas, avatars, etc.) including visitors, residents, destinations, organisations, and non-human actors like nature, animals, and so on.
- (2) Future co-creation approaches should consider how new and fresh understandings of the tourism ecosystem, including human and non-human components can be unearthed.
- (3) Future co-creation approaches to problem solving should consider broader influences of the techno-anthropological landscape, and the power of technology in co-creating tourism.
- (4) Market failures or any negative impacts associated with co-creation should be considered and steps taken to minimise in the process.
- (5) We should consider who wins and who loses in co-creation practices and define inclusive co-creation principles relevant to the context in which we use co-creation approaches.
- (6) We should consider co-creation from the perspective of non-human actors, such as nature, forests, rivers and so on, where such innovative thinking can disrupt traditional thinking, help reformulate the challenges we face, and manage co-creation so that the interests of those without a human voice are also protected.
- (7) We should consider how co-creation may enhance innovation by being inclusive, or impeded it through exclusive (invitation only) co-creation practices.
- (8) We should consider the potential of the collaborative commons, how to manage the commons, and in whose interests should it be managed.
- (9) We should consider the relational work involved in co-creation, and the costs and benefits of co-creation for different (human and non-human) actors.

Together, these points contribute to the future research agenda and implementation of co-creation practices in tourism. So whether it is a local tourism organisation, a business, or a community group seeking to address a tourism related challenge in a collaborative manner, the points above prompt us to carefully consider, anticipate, and articulate how co-creation might be used as an effective and inclusive approach to joint action.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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