

# 'Moments' and 'Butterflies' in the Geographical Political Economy of Tourism Destinations

Julie Wilson, Salvador Anton Clavé, Cinta Sanz-Ibáñez

American Association of Geographers (AAG)

Washington DC, April 3-7, 2019

*Session: Towards a Geographical Political Economy of Tourism: Critical, Relational and Evolutionary Approaches to Place-based Development*



# Tourism: evolutionary approaches

... the *path metaphor* in tourism evolution



Destinations are **constantly in-the-making** and being **shaped**



Distinctive powerful forms of interpreting **the nuanced, local-specific dynamics** of tourist places over time and in space



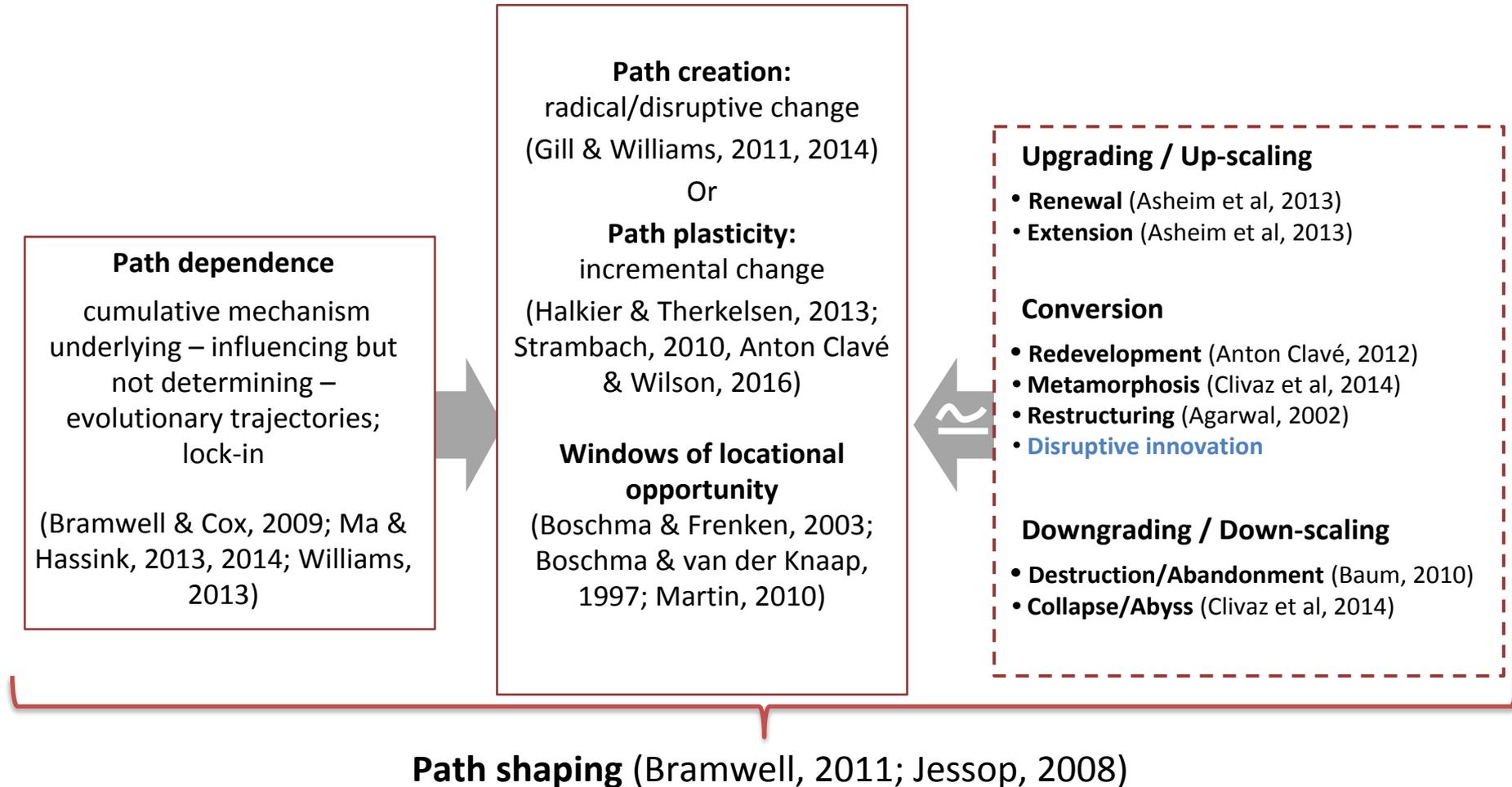
**Agency and selective/spontaneous 'happenings'** can act to unlock tourism places from stagnation, to avoid (or reverse) decline or to send them into the abyss



Tourism Area Lifecycle Model (TALC) / Urban Restructuring approaches - insufficient for analysing today's networked, liquid and ever-shifting destinations

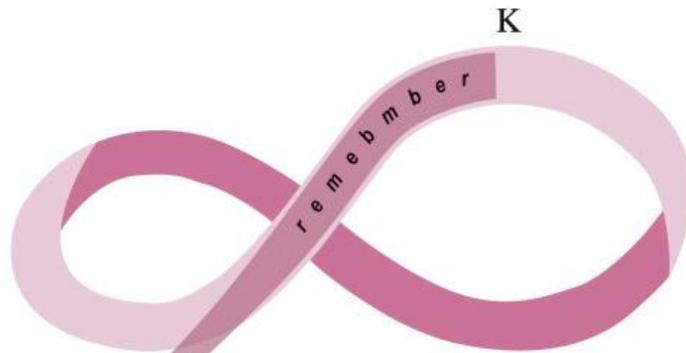
# 'Paths' in the evolution of tourism places...

**New perspectives** aiming to understand the (often unexpected) ways in which destinations can break with their historical legacies and structures and change their paths...

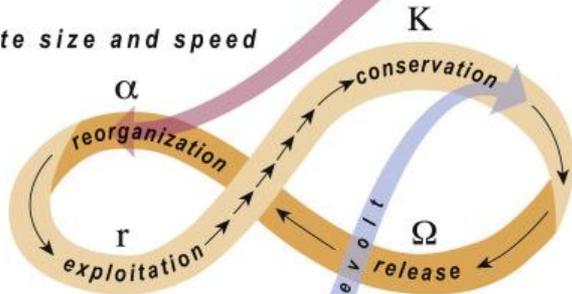


# Path shaping and socioecological resilience

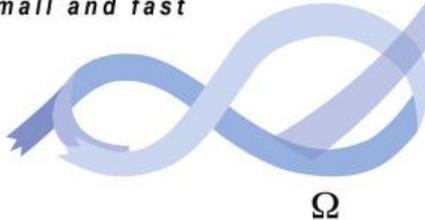
large and slow



intermediate size and speed



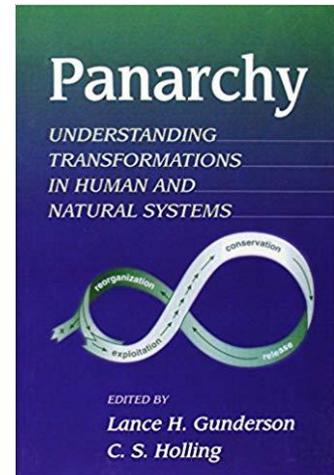
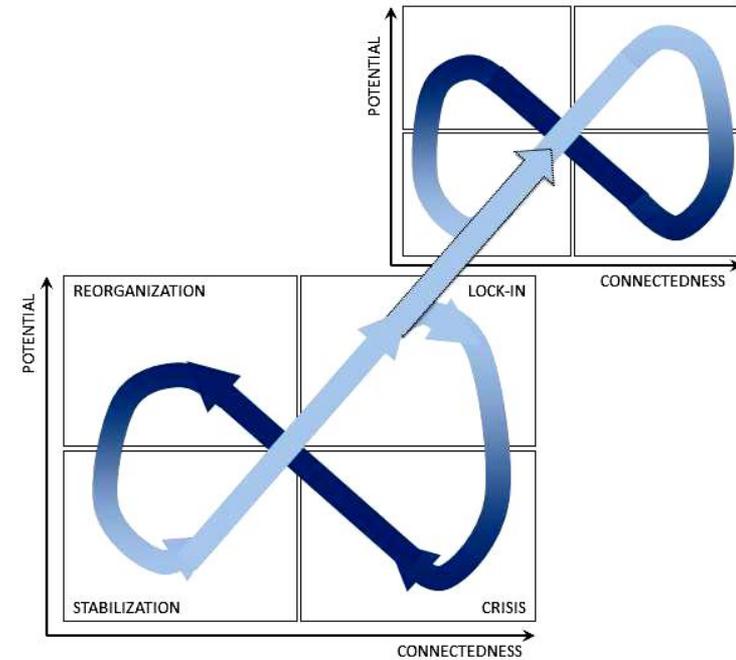
small and fast



→ slow change  
→ rapid change

Fore Loop {  $r$  entrepreneurial exploitation, growth, exponential change  
 $K$  organizational consolidation, growing stasis, less flexibility

Back Loop {  $\Omega$  collapse, creative destruction  
 $\alpha$  re- or de-structuring, novelty, renewal



# Path Shaping and Geographical / Cultural Political Economy

The spatialities of capitalism co-evolve with its economic processes and economic, political, cultural and biophysical processes are co-implicated with one another (multiplicities; subjectivities, assemblages; context of contexts).

**Geographical Political Economy (GPE)** - capitalism's spatialities increase agents' uncertainty and the **likelihood of unintended consequences** (chaos) (Sheppard, 2010).

**Cultural Political Economy (CPE)** - post-disciplinary approach incorporating notions of culture into the study of political economy to enhance its interpretive and explanatory power (Jessop, 2009; Ribera-Fumaz, 2009; Sum and Jessop, 2013).

EEG research framed by GPE/CPE allows a deeper level of engagement with even subtle and incremental path shaping factors; An appreciation of the socio-cultural processes that underpin place / destination evolution is fundamental.

# 'Moments' in path shaping

More attention should be paid to what happens between the path shaping trajectory's start and end points: ***'Join the dots'***

Pertinent to conceptualise ***various*** 'moments' over the course of tourism evolution, in addition to a given evolutionary trajectory

Different 'moments' along an evolutionary path have **different characteristics** and a tourism performance approach is insufficient

Differential calculus: **inflection point...** a point on a curve at which the curvature or concavity changes sign from plus to minus or from minus to plus.



'Moment' as *inflection point* from an evolutionary approach is a **catalyst for change** in the economic /social urban development pathway...

# 'Moments' in the *path metaphor*

## EEG

**Path shaping** - concern of economic geographers, while those in urban social geography have started to engage with the idea in understanding urban change

## SOCIOECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE / PANARCHY

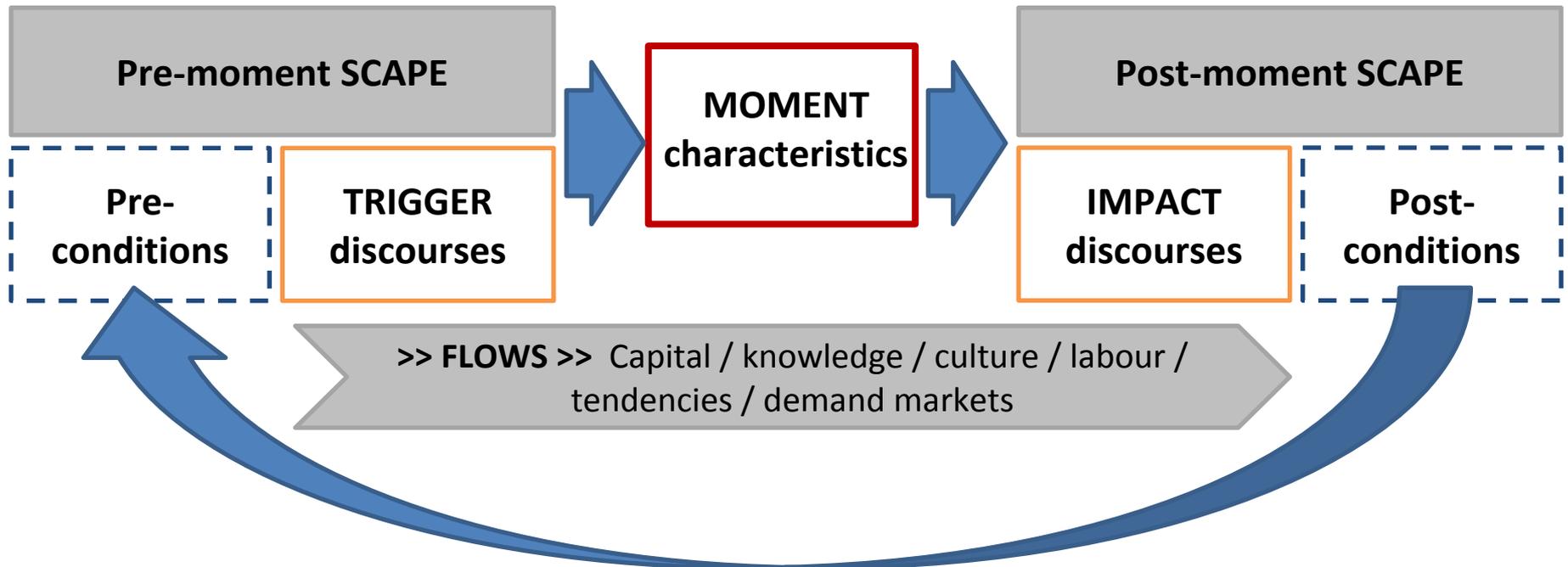
Shocks impact the socio-ecological system of tourism and, depending on resiliency, can cause a system to reorganize or to flip to a different state (Cottrell and Duke, 2016)

## CPE/GPE

Moulaert *et al* (2007) - discursive, selective 'moments' in urban socio-economic change and path dependency [including policies / key agencies]

**But what role do 'moments' play in change?**

# The 'moments' conceptual framework



**POST-MOMENT SCAPE BECOMES A PRE-MOMENT SCAPE OF FUTURE MOMENTS**

# Discourses of the moment: *triggers* and *impacts*

## TRIGGER DISCOURSES >

### Spontaneous:

- Critical shocks (Environmental, economic [fiscal], physical, regulatory)
- External, internal; endogenous / exogenous
- Local / regional / national / international / global scale
- Structural / anthropogenic
- Catalytic / incapacitating (debilitating)

### Selective:

- Structural / anthropogenic
- Interventionist, incidental / unintentional
- Discursive / non-discursive
- Regulatory / fiscal [investment] / resource-driven
- Ad-hoc / strategic
- External, internal
- Endogenous / exogenous
- Impetus: Institutional / individual / community-led
- Local context-bound / globalising
- Consensus-based / imposed

## MOMENT

### Characteristics / Durability, scale and speed of shift:

- Permanent / temporary
- Reversible / irreversible
- Local / regional / national / international / global scale
- Immediate / longer-term
- Rapid / gradual / incipient (ocean liner or light switch)

## > IMPACT DISCOURSES

Effects / Outcomes / Responses / Reactions

### Processes:

- Stabilising / destabilising post-moment effects
- Shaping of single path / multiple paths in parallel
- Windows of (locational) opportunity

### Upgrading / Up-scaling:

- Renewal
- Recuperation (selective) of pre-lock-in elements
- Reinforcement
- Extension
- Reversal
- Metamorphosis/transition

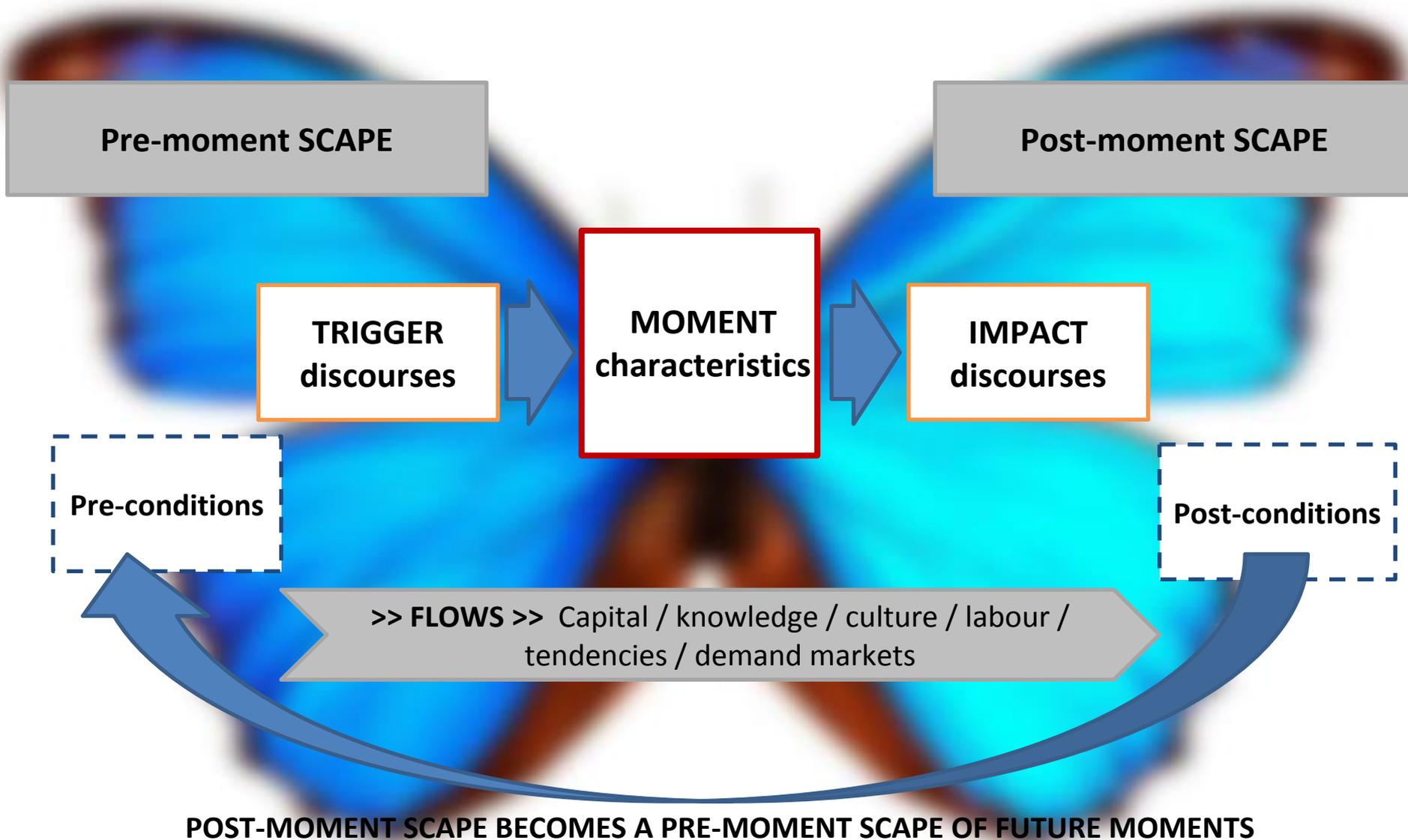
### Conversion:

- Redevelopment
- Metamorphosis
- Restructuring

### Downgrading / downscaling:

- Creative destruction (“slash and burn”, more radical)
- Dissolution (more incremental)
- Abandonment/collapse
- Suspension

# Moments as butterflies...



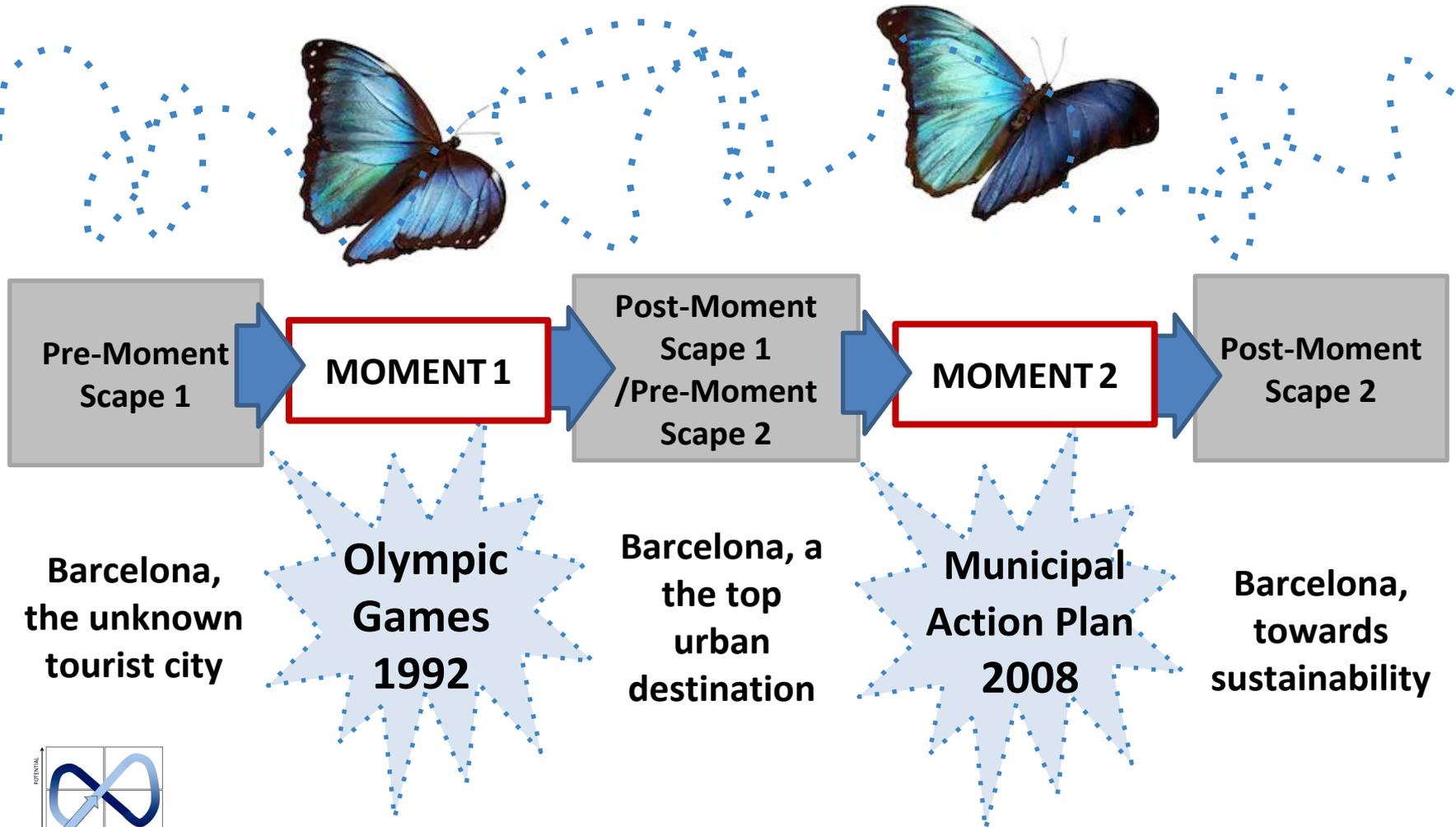
## Moments - utility

An heuristic, holistic device - 'moments' as complex, context-bound processes that include several marked elements therein: pre- and post-scapes, triggers and impacts.

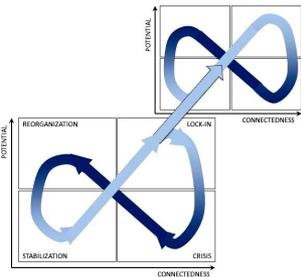
This framework is potentially applicable to any type of place and any industrial sector – flexible, adaptable and with potential as a strategic planning tool.

**What about in well-documented, 'paradigmatic' cases?**

# Discourses of the 'moment': Barcelona (1980s - 2020)



>> FLOWS >> Capital / knowledge / culture / labour / tendencies / demand markets



# Barcelona, the unknown tourist city



Roads/Airport  
Investments  
1986-93:  
**US\$ 2,522  
million**

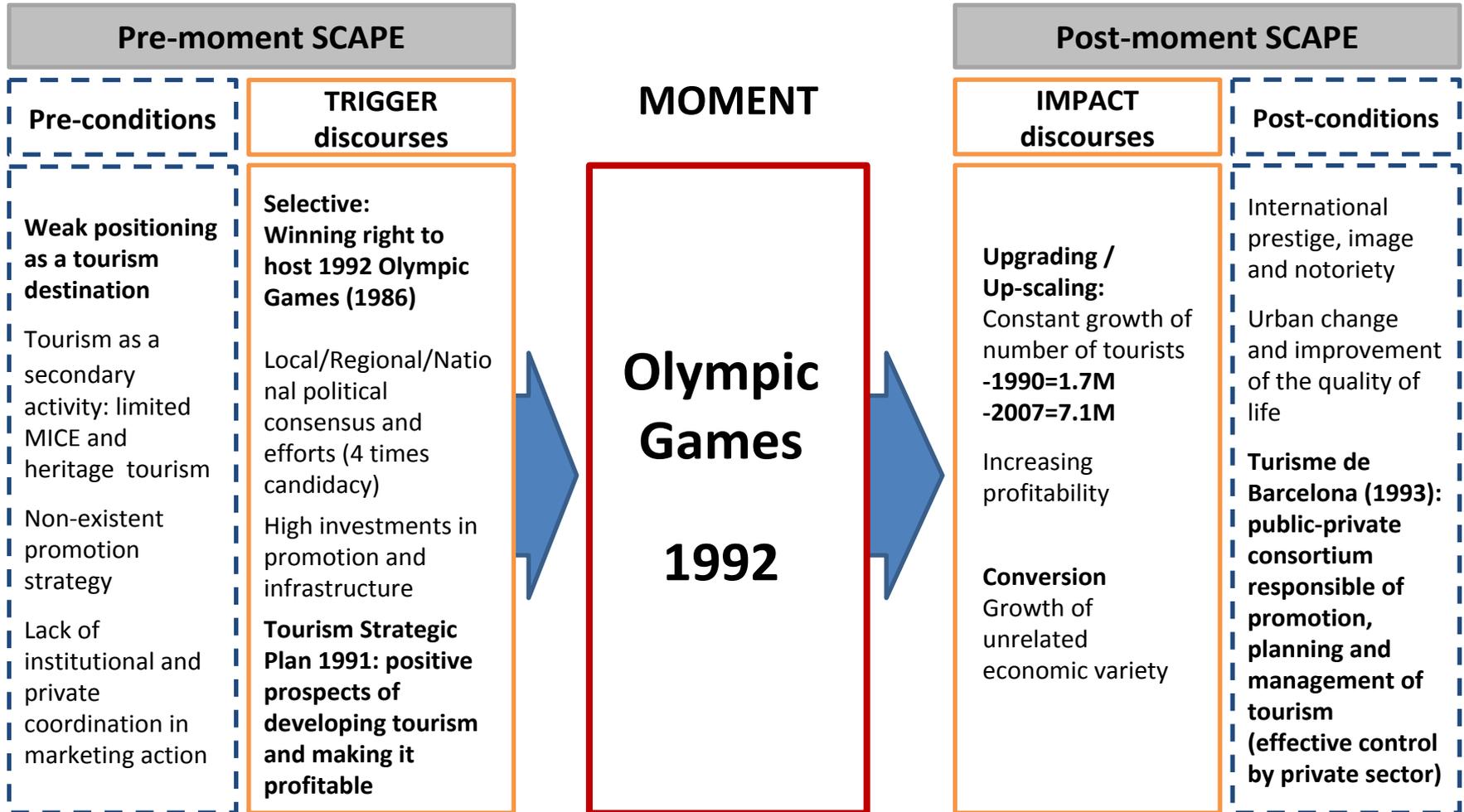


Olympics Organizing  
Committee budget  
**US\$ 1,302 million**

Olympic areas  
Investments  
1986-93:  
**US\$ 2,250  
million**



# Barcelona's Olympic Moment



>> FLOWS >> Capital / knowledge / culture / labour / tendencies / demand markets

# Barcelona Olympics Moment



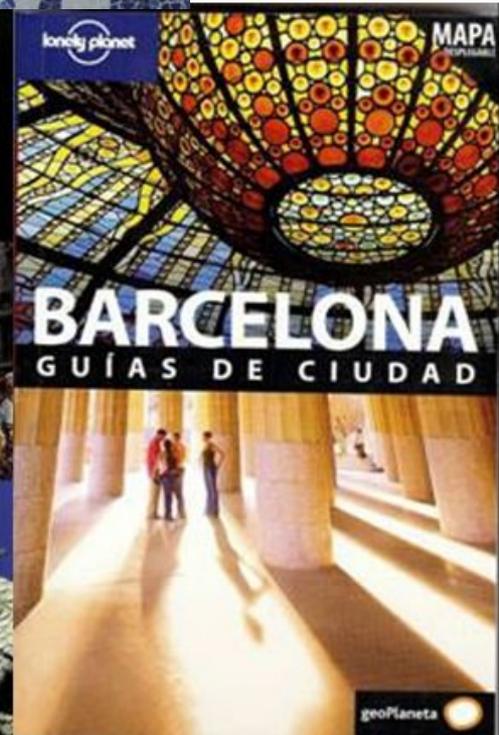
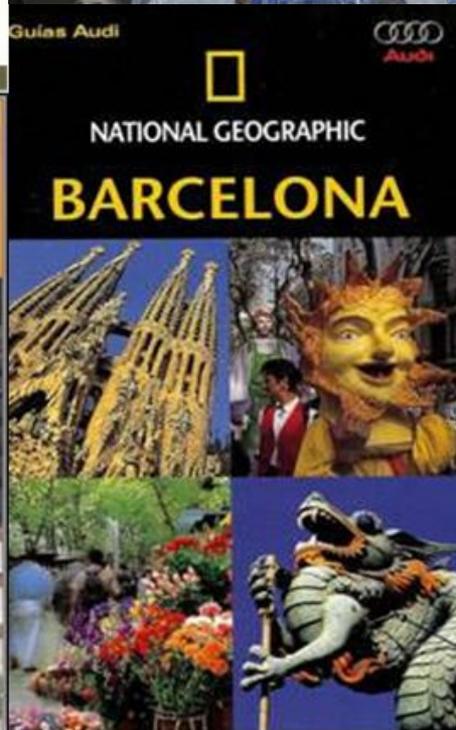
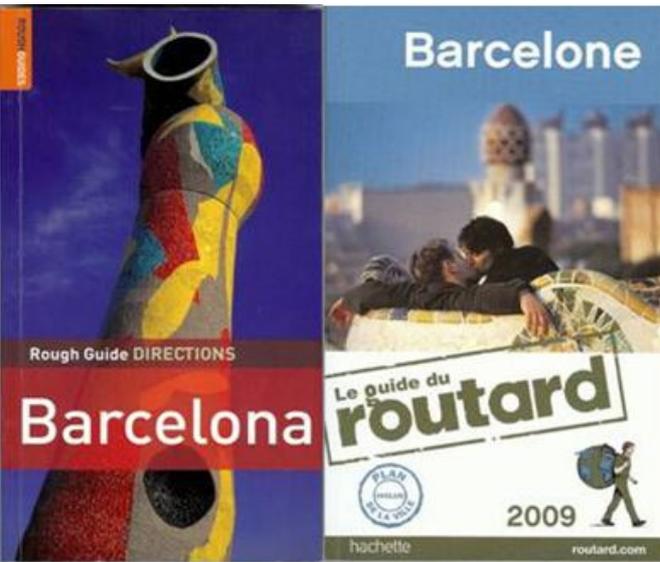
**The Olympic Games acted as ‘a catalyst and provided an excuse to bring about urban change that would improve the quality of life and the attractiveness of Barcelona’ (Brunet, 1993)**



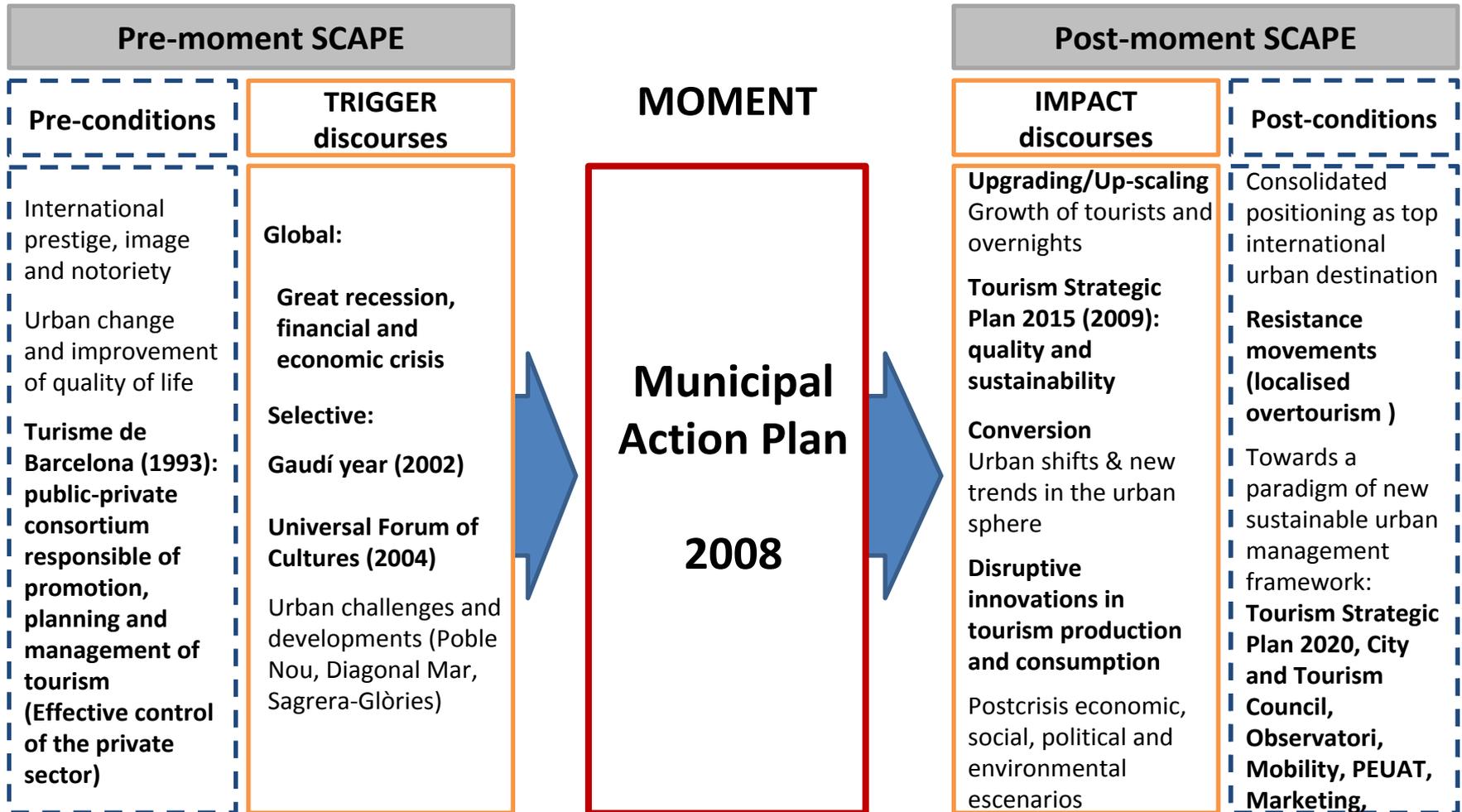
# Barcelona, the top urban destination



A place to visit  
before you die  
since 2002 (BBC)

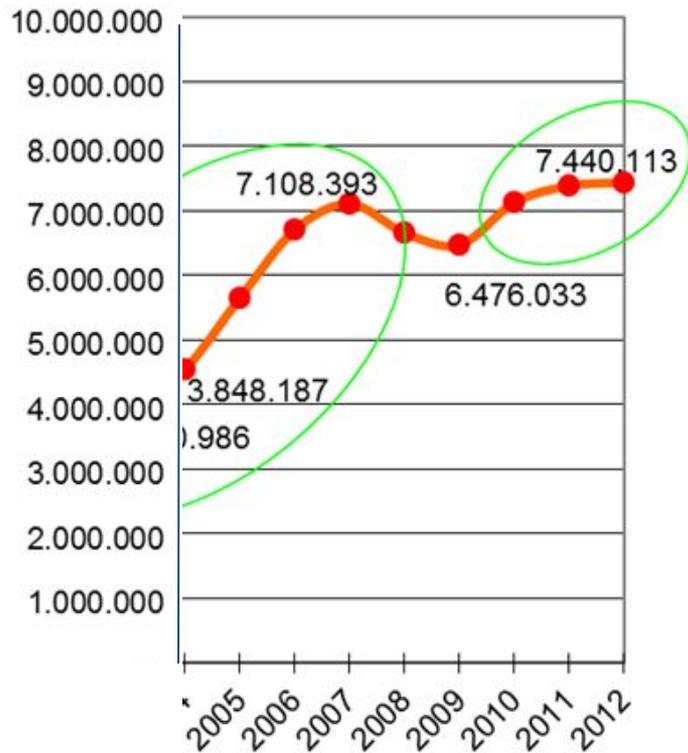


# Barcelona PAM Moment



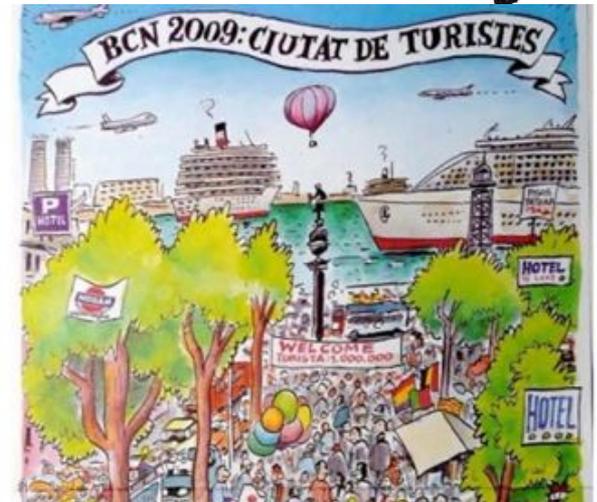
>> FLOWS >> Capital / knowledge / culture / labour / tendencies / demand markets

# Barcelona PAM Moment



**Municipal  
Action Plan  
Barcelona  
(2008-2011)**

**2008**



**Turisme**  **2015  
BCN**

Pla Estratègic de Turisme  
de la Ciutat de Barcelona

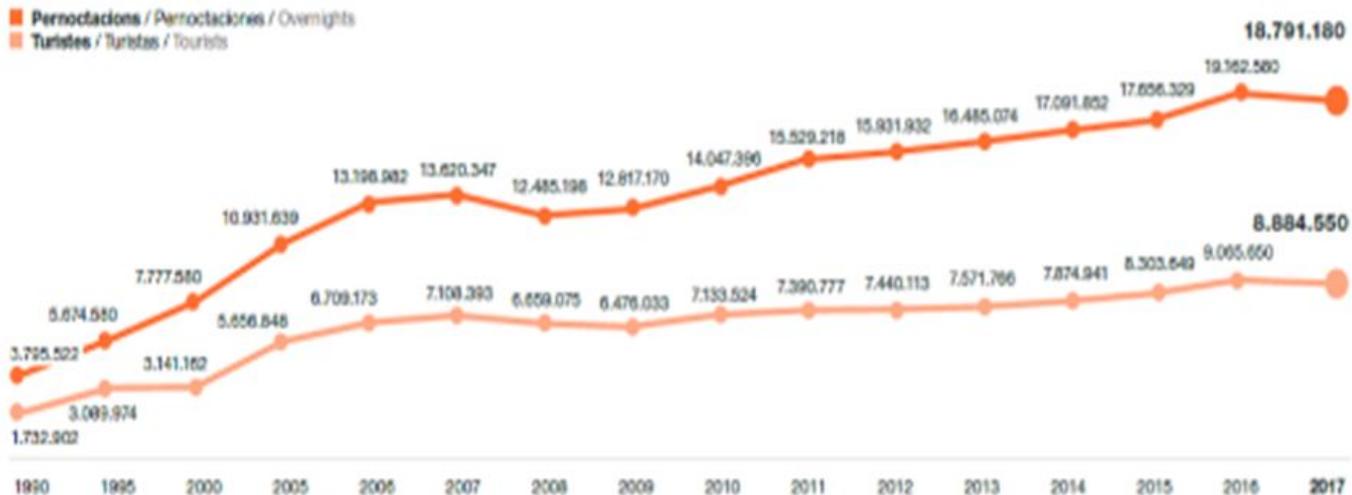
# Barcelona, the city towards sustainability



Turistes i pernотacions en hotels  
 Turistas y pernотaciones en hoteles  
 Tourists and overnights in hotels

Barcelona ciutat / Barcelona ciudad / Barcelona city  
 Destinació Barcelona / Destino Barcelona / Destination Barcelona

	1990	2000	2010	2015	2016	2017	% Var. 17/16
<b>Turistes</b>	1.732.902	3.141.162	7.133.524	8.303.649	9.095.600	8.884.550	-2,0
Turistas	nd	4.634.520	8.789.927	10.109.726	10.953.616	11.298.988	2,8
Tourists							
<b>Pernотacions</b>	3.795.522	7.777.580	14.047.396	17.656.329	19.162.580	18.791.180	-1,9
Pernотaciones	nd	13.938.748	22.527.817	27.374.949	29.181.929	30.160.794	3,4
Overnights							



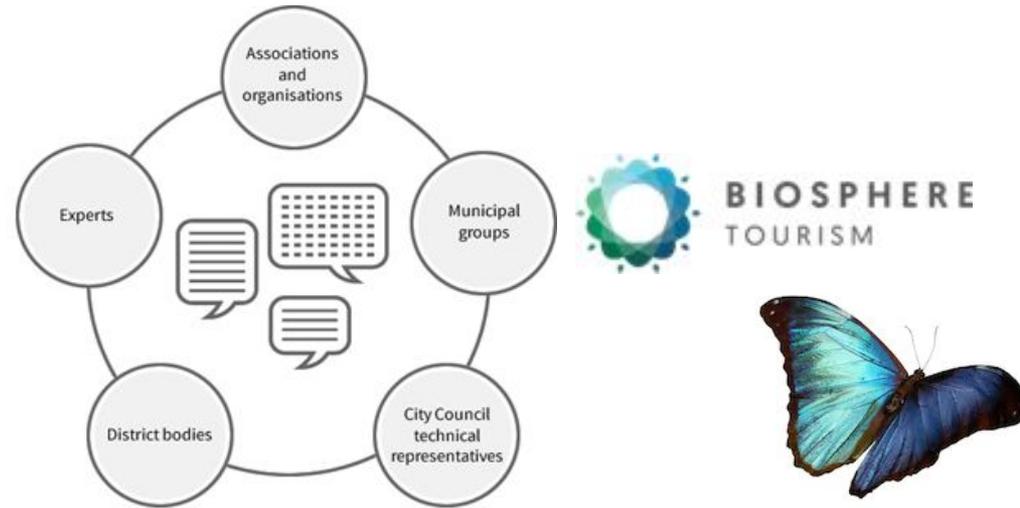
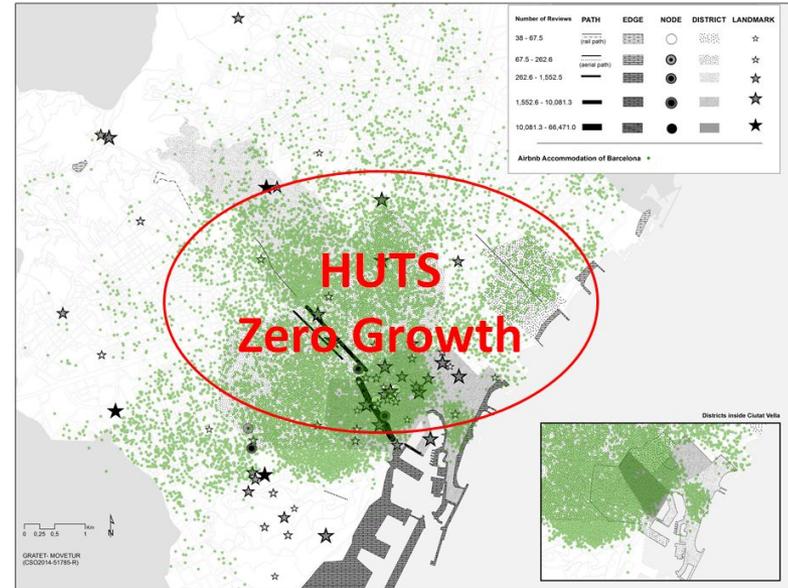
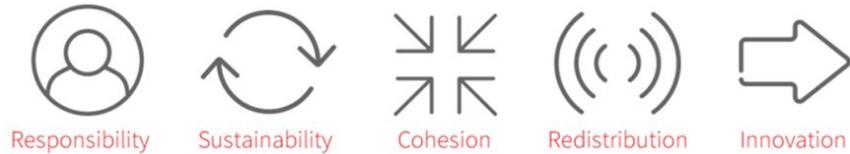
# Barcelona, from tourist city to city with tourism

**Turisme  
2020  
Barcelona**



**5 areas:** Governance, Tourism Management, Territorial Strategy, Jobs and Enterprise, and Promotion and Marketing, covering **80 strategic challenges**.

10 strategic programmes detailing **30 lines of action** and **100 measures** which must respond to strategic challenges



# Conclusions

Understanding *what* might trigger key moments in the evolutionary path shaping of places, as well as the associated *'how, why, who, when and where'* of destination change

Moving beyond deterministic models based on tourism performance indicators - focus on positive path shaping as well as on negative, critical shocks in urban-related paths

Beyond the TALC: focus on analysing the evolving **qualities of places living with tourism** (Équipe MIT, 2002) instead of the analysis of **tourism in places** (e.g. Butler, 1980; Plog, 1973)

Utility in framing moments / EEG analysis within **Cultural Political Economy – CPE** (Ribera Fumaz, 2009; Sum & Jessop, 2013); **Geographical Political Economy - GPE** (Sheppard, 2010; MackKinnon et al, 2019); and **sociological resilience theories** (Cottrell & Duke, 2016).

'Moments' needs to remain a critical interpretative framework (e.g. embedded within assemblage thinking or similar) and not just a descriptive timeline approach!



RESEARCH GROUP ON TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS AND TOURISM STUDIES

# Thanks for your attention!

Julie Wilson  
Salvador Anton Clavé  
Cinta Sanz-Ibáñez

[jwilson2@uoc.edu](mailto:jwilson2@uoc.edu)  
[salvador.anton@urv.cat](mailto:salvador.anton@urv.cat)  
[cinta.sanzi@urv.cat](mailto:cinta.sanzi@urv.cat)

Acknowledgement: The research this paper is based on was financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (POLITUR project. CSO2017-82156-R) and AEI/FEDER,UE and by the Department of Research and Universities of the Catalan Government (2017SGR22).



Unión Europea

Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional  
"Una manera de hacer Europa"