THE EVOLUTION OF DESTINATIONS. AN EVOLUTIONARY AND RELATIONAL ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY APPROACH

Cinta Sanz Ibáñez

UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA i VIRGILI

The Evolution of Destinations

An Evolutionary and Relational Economic Geography Approach

CINTA SANZ-IBÁÑEZ

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Supervised by Prof. Dr. Salvador Anton Clavé

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FAIG CONSTAR que la tesi titulada ***The evolution of destinations. An evolutionary and relational economic geography approach*** que presenta **Cinta Sanz Ibàñez** per a l'obtenció del títol de Doctor ha estat realitzada sota la meva direcció en el marc del programa de Doctorat en Turisme i Oci d'aquesta universitat.

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"Life is like a box of chocolates.

You never know what you're gonna get."

- *Forrest Gump*

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List of acronyms

AKN	Administered Knowledge Networks
cCD	Central Costa Daurada
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPE	Cultural Political Economy
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
EEG	Evolutionary Economic Geography
GPN/GPNs	Global Production Network(s)
KN-FT	Knowledge Network with Formal Transfer
KN-IE	Knowledge Network with Informal Exchange
PCT	Science and Technology Park for Tourism and Leisure of Catalonia
REG	Relational Economic Geography
RevPAR	Revenue Per Available Room
R&D&I	Research and Development and Innovation
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
TALC	Tourism Area Life Cycle
TIC	Technology and Innovation Centre

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to understand how and why destinations change over time, putting attention to the dynamics of place instead of the evolution of tourism activity, one of the prevalent discussions around traditional evolutionary models. To achieve this, it develops an analytical model drawing inspiration on contemporary advances in economic geography – i.e. evolutionary economic geography (EEG) and relational economic geography (REG). From such an approach destination evolution is conceived as a complex ongoing process shaped by the specific characteristics and interplay of multiple forces in terms of human agency, contextuality and path dependence.

By focusing on the analysis of specific catalysts that shaped the evolutionary trajectory of central Costa Daurada (Catalonia) since the 1980s, the exploratory research conducted studies, first, the effects of stakeholders' interaction and knowledge flows on the evolutionary performance of destinations (human agency). Second, the adaptive capacity of destinations in front of dynamics of local and global change (contextuality). And third, the enabling and constraining long-term effects of decisions and events occurred in the past (path dependence). The methodological design of the empirical research comprises a combination of qualitative – interviews and documentary analysis – and quantitative – social network analysis – techniques.

The findings of this thesis help illustrate and extract transferable lessons for increasing understanding on the mechanisms underlying tourism destinations' evolutionary processes. Along these lines, administered knowledge networks with a Technology and Innovation Centre as main hub are found as efficient knowledge management structures that support the dissemination of knowledge and promote the involvement of stakeholders in collective learning, while drawing knowledge-based innovation and development. Besides, strategic coupling between local stakeholders and global actors emerge as a bottom-up private-led initiative that can effectively contribute to increase the innovativeness of local firms and enable the upgrading of destinations. Finally, the moments framework provide insightful lens to uncover the different ways in which destinations evolve according to the occurrence of specific inflection points that shape their economic/social/urban development pathway when facing lock-in situations.

All in all, results obtained go beyond the classic functional models dealing with the evolution of tourism destinations and reinforce the integration of the geographical analysis of tourism into mainstream contemporary thinking in economic geography. In addition to this epistemological contribution, the findings of this thesis provide, as well, valuable information

to guide leading policy and agency strategies aimed to maintain and increase the sustainability and competitiveness of destinations.

Keywords: destination evolution; tourism geography; evolutionary economic geography; relational economic geography; human agency; contextuality; path dependence; tourism area life cycle; knowledge networks; knowledge brokers, localised systems of learning; global production networks; strategic coupling; destination upgrading; path metaphor; moments; evolutionary inflection points.

Resum

L'objectiu d'aquesta tesi és comprendre com i per què les destinacions turístiques es transformen amb el temps, tot posant especial atenció a l'estudi de les dinàmiques del lloc en el seu conjunt en comptes de simplificar l'anàlisi a l'evolució de l'activitat turística, una de les discussions predominants entorn dels models evolutius tradicionals. Amb aquesta finalitat, es desenvolupa un model analític inspirat en avenços contemporanis en el camp de la geografia econòmica, més concretament, en l'àmbit de la geografia econòmica evolutiva (EEG) i la geografia econòmica relacional (REG). Des d'aquest enfocament, l'evolució de les destinacions es concep com un procés complex i en continu canvi que està influenciat per les característiques específiques i la interacció de múltiples forces en termes d'agència (*human agency*), contextualitat (*contextuality*) i dependència de la trajectòria (*path dependence*).

Tot centrant l'anàlisi empíric en els catalitzadors específics que van tenir incidència en la definició de la trajectòria evolutiva de la Costa Daurada centre des de la dècada de 1980, la investigació s'orienta, en primer lloc, a estudiar els efectes de la interacció dels actors i els fluxos de coneixement en el comportament evolutiu de les destinacions (*human agency*). En segon lloc, la capacitat d'adaptació de les destinacions davant les dinàmiques de canvi local i global (*contextuality*). En tercer lloc, els efectes positius i negatius a llarg termini que es deriven de les decisions i esdeveniments ocorreguts en el passat (*path dependence*). El disseny metodològic de la investigació empírica comprèn una combinació de tècniques qualitatives – entrevistes semiestructurades i anàlisi documental – i quantitatives – anàlisi de xarxes socials.

Els resultats de la present tesi doctoral ajuden a il·lustrar i extreure lliçons transferibles per la millora de la comprensió dels mecanismes subjacents als processos evolutius de les destinacions turístiques. En aquest sentit, es mostra com les xarxes administrades liderades i coordinades per un Centre Tecnològic i d'Innovació esdevenen estructures de gestió del coneixement eficients que faciliten la difusió del coneixement i promouen la participació dels actors de la destinació en dinàmiques d'aprenentatge col·lectiu, tot afavorint la innovació i un desenvolupament basats en el coneixement. A més a més, la formalització de relacions (acoblaments estratègics) entre actors locals i actors globals emergeix com una iniciativa des de la base que contribueix efectivament a augmentar la capacitat innovadora de les empreses locals i afavoreix la renovació de les destinacions. Per últim, la noció dels "moments" proporciona un enfocament eficaç per descobrir les diferents maneres en què les destinacions evolucionen segons l'aparició de punts d'inflexió específics que configuren la seva trajectòria de desenvolupament econòmic, social i urbà quan es troben en situacions d'estancament.

En definitiva, els resultats obtinguts superen els models funcionals clàssics d'evolució de les destinacions turístiques i, a la vegada, reforcen la integració de l'anàlisi geogràfica del turisme

en el pensament contemporani en l'àmbit de la geografia econòmica. A banda d'aquesta aportació epistemològica, els resultats d'aquesta tesi també proporcionen informació valuosa per guiar estratègies de política i agència destinades a mantenir i augmentar la sostenibilitat i la competitivitat de les destinacions.

Paraules clau: evolució de les destinacions; geografia del turisme; geografia econòmica evolutiva; geografia econòmica relacional; agència; contextualitat; dependència de la trajectòria; cicle de vida de les destinacions; xarxes de coneixement; intermediaris del coneixement; sistemes localitzats d'aprenentatge; xarxes de producció global; acoblament estratègic; renovació de les destinacions; metàfora de la trajectòria; moments; punts d'inflexió evolutiva.

CHAPTER 1. Introduction

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

This introductory chapter of the dissertation is divided into four main sections. Section 1.1 explains the research background and interest. The following section (1.2) outlines the hypothesis, research questions and objectives guiding this thesis. Section 1.3 presents the research design, focusing on the development of the research process, the selection of methodologies and the study area. To conclude, section 1.4 briefly summarises the content that can be found in the ensuing chapters.

1.1. Research interest

The development of the research project presented in this thesis is grounded in the concurrence of three different circumstances that acted as motivating and facilitating factors.

In the first place, it can be said that the main starting point of the present thesis was a study presented as a final project of the author's master's degree in Tourism Management and Planning at Rovira i Virgili University in September 2010. The master thesis was titled "Analysis of the configuration of Tourism Local Systems in rural destinations: The cases of the Ebro Delta and the Terra Alta regions" and served as an opportunity to become familiar with the literature on destination organisation (i.e. industrial districts, clusters, networks) and to propose a preliminary analytical model capable of contributing to the understanding of the processes and mechanisms that lead to the emergence, development and consolidation of Tourism Local Systems in emerging rural destinations. In this vein, continuing the project as a doctoral thesis, taking as main fields of interest the organisation of stakeholders and evolutionary processes, became a natural next step.

The choice of this field of enquiry was also favoured by the academic context at the Research Group on Territorial Analysis and Tourism Studies (GRATET) at Rovira i Virgili University. This group focuses their activity on the analysis of the incidence of tourism and recreational activities in the transformation of the landscape, the organisation of the territory and the generation of new forms of development at the local and regional levels. In particular, this thesis became fully integrated into the framework of specific research lines developed by the GRATET group under the projects GLOBALTUR 2012–2014 (CSO2011-23004/GEOG) and MOVETUR 2015–2017 (CSO2014-51785-R) financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and whose principal investigator was the director of this thesis (Prof. Salvador Anton Clavé). The aim of the GLOBALTUR project was to study the territorial development

models promoted by tourism dynamics on the Mediterranean coast from the perspective of innovation and territorial competitiveness. The MOVETUR project aimed to study the role of consolidated coastal tourist destinations as spaces for social innovation, territorial competitiveness and the development of globally responsible policies in response to dynamics of global and local change affecting destination evolution and transformation. These programs were established in response to the priorities raised in the Spanish State's Scientific Investigation, Technical and Innovation Plans (2013–2016 and 2013–2020) and contributed, from a tourism analysis perspective, to improving understanding of the reality and quality of public policies and strategies as dictated by economic and social actors.

Additionally, the thesis project was situated firmly at the forefront of contemporary research in tourism geography in a moment in which more complex and non-deterministic conceptual and analytical frameworks for understanding the dynamics of change and the evolutionary trajectory of destinations were called for (Anton Clavé, 2012a; Clivaz, Crevoisier, Kebir, Nahrath, & Stock, 2014; Pavlovich, 2014). The evolutionary and relational interest in tourism geography studies has been developed during recent decades using evolutionary models of tourism destinations—specially, although widely criticised and modified, the Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model—and highlighting the prominent role of stakeholders in tourism development using the cluster approach, first developed by Porter (1990), and the tourism local systems (TLS) approach, from Lazzeretti and Capone (2006), based on the industrial district concept (Becattini, 1990). Nevertheless, both interests developed over time without considering either the hegemonic or the emergent turns in economic geography, reflecting the development of new directions in the economic analysis of spaces or attempting to have any influence on economic geographic thought (Debbage & Ioannides, 2011; Ioannides & Debbage, 1998).

This being said, evolutionary and relational turns providing valuable perspectives for the analysis of productive places began to emerge in economic geography in the 2000s (Bathelt & Glückler, 2011; Boschma & Martin, 2010b) and were gaining momentum at the moment when this thesis project started. By that time, a selected group of tourism scholars became particularly interested in positioning the analysis of tourist destinations at the intersections of these recent advances in mainstream economic geography (Brouder, 2014). Given the great potential of these novel approaches, the thesis was developed under this growing strand, taking an active part in the initiatives of this group, including several sessions organised at international conferences (particularly, at the Annual Meetings of the American Association of Geographers), the Special Issue "New research paradigms in tourism geography" published in *Tourism Geographies* in 2014 (Ioannides, Halkier, & Lew, 2014), and the volume *Tourism Destination Evolution*, co-edited by Patrick Brouder (Brock University, Canada), Salvador Anton Clavé (GRATET—Rovira i Virgili University), Alison Gill (Simon Fraser University, Canada) and Dimitri Ioannides (Mid-Sweden University) and published under Routledge's series New Directions in Tourism Analysis in 2017. The book represents the first volume offering a

comprehensive theoretical overview and empirical examples of the potential synergies of applying EEG concepts to tourism research as a means of leading more effective analysis on the evolution of tourism destinations.

Overall, the research intends to go beyond the study of tourism destination evolution based on exogenous variables (such as the number of visitors, as was assumed in the initial TALC model) and provide tools for better understanding the causes and nature of destination transformations throughout its evolutionary trajectory. This contribution presupposes a valuable input for the definition of policies willing to promote the competitiveness and ensure the sustainability of tourism destinations at a time when the continuity of certain tourism products—such as the sun and beach product—is questioned.

1.2. Research aims

This doctoral thesis is mainly conceived of as a research project that aims to increase understanding on how and why destinations evolve over time. In this sense, the research conducted seeks to help advance extant research in tourism destination evolution and organisation by building bridges between tourism studies and analytical approaches from contemporary paradigms in economic geography.

The basic hypothesis on which the objectives of the research are founded is the following:

Research hypothesis

Tourism destinations are specialised productive places with an intricate and continuously developing nature that are composed by a mosaic of interrelated and mutually-dependent economic and non-economic actors on different scales. As a consequence, the processes of change that transform the configuration of tourism destinations and shape their evolutionary trajectories and performance in the long run respond to diverse catalytic factors—socio-economic, contextual and historical—which cannot be analysed by traditional life-cycle-based models mainly focused on analysing the evolution of tourism in these places while disregarding the increasing economic, urban and residential functions acquired by consolidated tourism destinations.

In this regard, the main research questions to be addressed and explored are as follows:

- Which are the catalytic factors that influence the transformation of tourism destinations over time?
- Why do some destinations experience a sudden growth and others undergo a more progressive path of development?

- Why do some tourism destinations manage to rejuvenate and enhance their competitiveness while others cannot adapt themselves to the constant changes in the global tourism market?
- To what extent does the local and global context affect the evolution of tourism destinations? What can stakeholders do to adapt themselves and their destination to these continuously changing conditions?
- What role do the interaction and action of stakeholders have in enabling and constraining the development of destinations over time?
- How do decisions that have been made and events that have occurred in the past affect the definition of tourism destinations' future development paths?

The hierarchy of objectives of the thesis is detailed below:

General objective

G1. Generate understanding about the mechanisms underlying the changes occurring throughout the evolutionary trajectory of tourism destinations.

Specific objectives

S1. Study the effects of human agency on the evolutionary performance of destinations.

S2. Explore the influence of contextuality and the adaptive capacity of destinations in front of dynamics of local and global change.

S3. Assess the enabling and constraining effects of path dependence in the shaping of tourism destination trajectories.

Operational objectives

O1. Develop a conceptual and analytical framework for contributing to the literature on tourism destination evolution by drawing inspiration on contemporary scholarly debates in economic geography.

O2. Apply the analytical model developed as a framework to examine the processes of reconfiguration and transformation occurred in a specific consolidated coastal destination: central Costa Daurada, Catalonia.

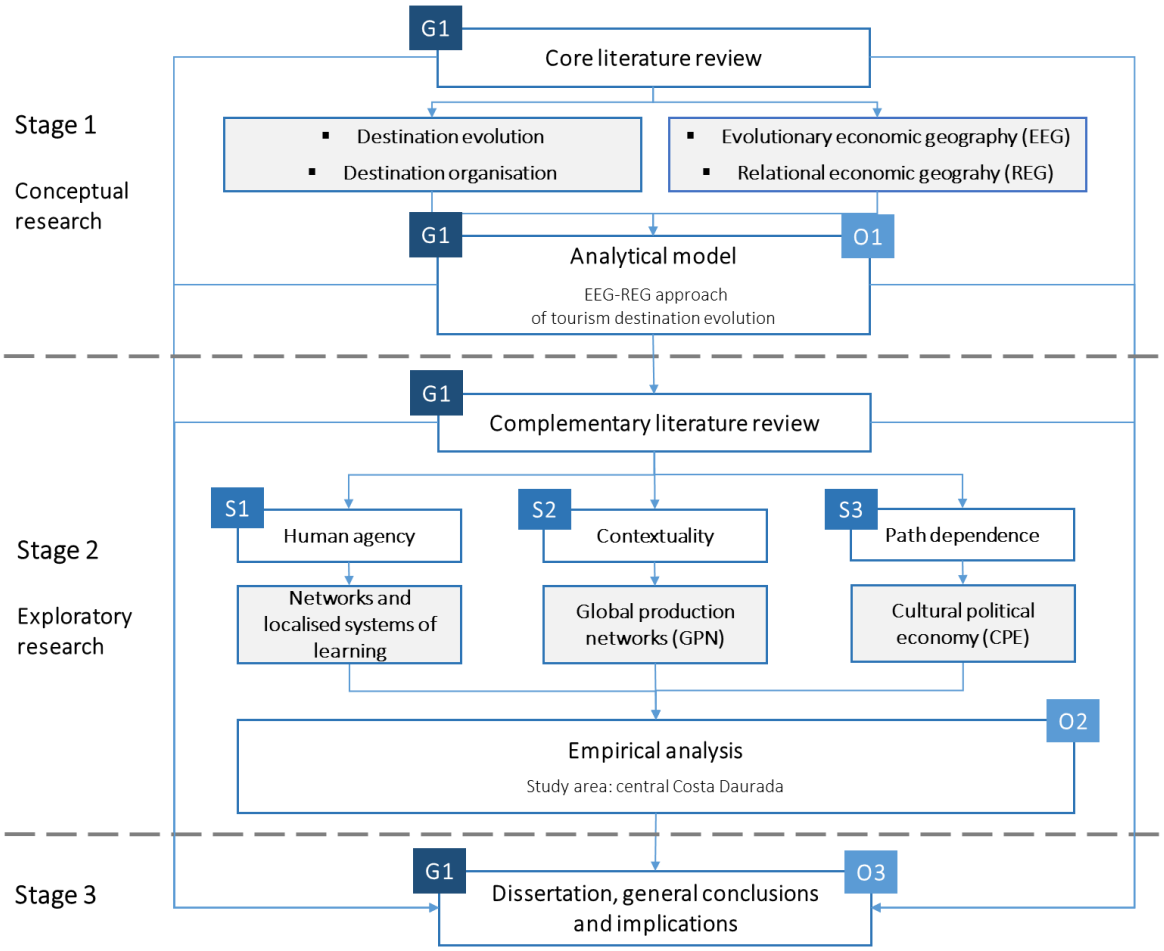
O3. Generate valuable inputs for the planning and management of consolidated tourism destinations.

1.3. Research design

1.3.1. Research process

The research process carried out for the development of the present thesis was performed in three stages. The diagram displayed in Figure 1 below serves as a graphic representation of the process, specifying the tasks undertaken in each stage in relation to the objectives previously outlined.

Figure 1. Research process diagram



Source: Author

The first stage was mainly devoted to the literature review on the main subjects under study in tourism studies and economic geography and the critical reflection on the existing gaps and potential synergies between the fields. This task provided a broad knowledge of the existing

literature in tourism studies dealing with the topics of interest—evolutionary models and the organisation of tourism destinations (networks, clusters and districts). In parallel, the review also facilitated a deep understanding of the contemporary paradigms in economic geography—in particular, evolutionary economic geography (EEG) and relational economic geography (REG), approaches seen as having great potential to help advance extant knowledge in the tourism context. In keeping with the general objective of the thesis (G1) and the first operational objective (O1), the next step involved working on building the core conceptual framework of the thesis that would be later applied in the exploratory research stage as an approach to interpreting the complex mechanisms underpinning the changing dynamics of tourism destinations from an integrated evolutionary and relational perspective. This contribution stands out as the major theoretical contribution of the research.

The work undertaken during the first stage of the thesis (Table 1) was presented and discussed at two international conferences held in Los Angeles (US) and Vila-seca (Catalonia). Likewise, the preliminary ideas and developments were also explained and discussed in research seminars arranged during two research stays at Aalborg University (Denmark) and at the University of Girona. The final outcome of this part of the thesis (Paper 1) was published in *Tourism Geographies* in July 2014 (journal included in the second quartile of the 2014 JCR ranking in the category of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism). It is worth noting that this article was awarded with the I Premio AECIT (Asociación Española de Expertos Científicos en Turismo) as best scientific article in tourism of 2014.

Table 1. Overview of objectives and outputs produced during Stage 1

Objective	Outputs		
G1	**International conferences**	2013	Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers (Los Angeles, US)
		2014	Regional Studies Association Research Network on Tourism and Regional Development International Workshop (Vila-seca, Catalonia)
	Seminars & research stays	2012	ONIT Research Group – University of de Girona (Catalonia)
		2013	Tourism Research unit – Aalborg University (Denmark)
	Publication (Paper 1)	2014	Sanz-Ibáñez, C., & Anton Clavé, S. (2014). The evolution of destinations: towards an evolutionary and relational economic geography approach. *Tourism Geographies*, *16*(4), 563–579.

Source: Author

The catalysts identified in the EEG-REG approach—i.e. human agency, contextuality, and path dependence—provided the general conceptual framework followed in the subsequent exploratory research undertaken in the second stage. This was achieved by conducting an empirical analysis of three specific catalysts identified in the trajectory of central Costa Daurada since the 1980s (operational objective O2)—further information on these catalysts is summarised in section 1.3.3 where the area under study is described. These empirical works

shed light on the three specific objectives of the thesis (S1, S2 and S3) and were aimed to illustrate, reinforce and discuss the applicability of the analytical model being proposed. For the proper development of this empirical research, the theoretical background was enriched with a review of complementary pieces of literature dealing with the specific issues under study (G1), including extant publications on networks and localised systems of learning, global production networks (GPNs) and cultural political economy (CPE).

The ongoing results of the different pieces of research were presented and discussed at several international conferences held in the Nordic countries, the United States, the United Kingdom and Catalonia (Table 2). The final articles were submitted to (Paper 2) *Journal of Travel Research* (journal included in the first decile of the 2016 JCR ranking in the category of category of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism) and published in (Paper 3) *Annals of Tourism Research* (journal included in the first decile of the 2016 JCR ranking in the category of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism) and (Paper 4) in the volume *Tourism Destination Evolution* released under Routledge's Series *New Directions in Tourism Analysis* (published in the first position out of 32 in the field of Geography according to the Scholarly Publishers Indicators in Humanities and Social Sciences 2014).

Table 2. Overview of objectives and outputs produced during Stage 2

Objective	Outputs		
S1	**International conferences**	2015	Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers (Chicago, US) 24th Nordic Symposium on Tourism and Hospitality Research (Reykjavík, Iceland)
		2017	26th Nordic Symposium on Tourism and Hospitality Research (Falun, Sweden)
	Publication (Paper 2)	Submitted 2017	Sanz-Ibáñez, C., Lozano, S., & Anton Clavé, S. (submitted). How do brokers work in tourism knowledge networks? Comparing informal exchange and formal transfer flows. *Journal of Travel Research*.
S2	**International conferences**	2014	Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers (Tampa, US)
		2015	Fourth Global Conference on Economic Geography (Oxford, UK)
	Publication (Paper 3)	2016	Sanz-Ibáñez, C., & Anton Clavé, S. (2016). Strategic coupling evolution and destination upgrading. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *56*, 1–15.

(Continued)

Table 2. *(Continued)*

Objective	Outputs		
S3	**International conferences**	2014	23rd Nordic Symposium on Tourism and Hospitality Research (Copenhaguen, Denmark)
		2015	Fourth Global Conference on Economic Geography (Oxford, UK)
	Publication (Paper 4)	2017	Sanz-Ibáñez, C., Wilson, J., & Anton Clavé, S. (2017). Moments as catalysts for change in the evolutionary paths of tourism destinations. In P. Brouder, S. Anton Clavé, A. M. Gill, & D. Ioannides (Eds.), *Tourism Destination Evolution* (pp. 81–102). Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Source: Author

The concluding stage was dedicated to bringing together the various pieces comprising the research and the preparation of a structured and cohesive dissertation document (Table 3). Particular emphasis was given to critically reflecting on the contributions of the thesis from theoretical, empirical and practical point of views, as well as the opportunities for future research. This process benefitted from useful discussions and the exchange of ideas in closed face-to-face meetings with experts in the field, such as Prof. Rafael Boix (University of Valencia) and Prof. Jaume Guia (University of Girona) invited to the Doctoral Days event organised by the URV Tourism and Leisure PhD Programme at the Faculty of Tourism and Geography.

Table 3. Overview of objectives and outputs produced during Stage 3

Objective	Outputs		
G1	**Seminars & discussions**	2015 and 2016	Internal presentations and discussions in the framework of the Doctoral days – URV Tourism and Leisure PhD Programme (Vila-seca).
	Dissertation	Fall 2017	Submission and defense.

Source: Author

1.3.2. Methodologies

As announced, the exploratory research of the thesis consists of a collection of three empirical works, each tackling a specific catalyst of evolutionary change identified in the developed analytical model. Each study is able to stand alone and contribute to the literature but at the same time are related to each other in the sense that by tackling the phenomena that has occurred in the case of central Costa Daurada since the 1980s, the three illustrate how each catalyst may influence the evolutionary performance of tourism destinations.

The complexity of the subject under study—the evolution of destinations—required that the empirical approach deployed to operationalise the research objectives listed in section 1.2 was composed of multiple forms of data, complementary modes of analysis and epistemological methods (qualitative and quantitative). This enhanced the explanatory power of the research and allowed for the flexibility necessary to adopt the most pertinent method to disentangle the specific objective to be addressed in each study (Elwood, 2010), while helping overcome the fallibility of individual methods for representing complex socio-economic phenomena such as tourism destination evolution processes. This rationale is in line with the call for "critical reflection, openness, dialogue, mutual learning, and commitment to multiple methods and experimentation" in the construction of evolutionary economic geography as a distinctive paradigm (Pike, Cumbers, Dawley, Mackinnon, & Mcmaster, 2015, p. 4). Table 4 gives an overview of the data and methods that serve to deal with each objective.

Table 4. *Overview of empirical chapters, objectives, subject of analysis, data and methods*

	Research objectives	Subject of analysis	Data	Main method
Chapter 3	Study the effects of human agency on the evolutionary performance of destinations	Stakeholders' interaction and knowledge flows	**Primary source:** - Documentary records **Complementary sources:** - Syllabus of seminars and courses - Official reports	**Quantitative analysis**: Social network analysis (two-mode networks approach)
Chapter 4	Explore the influence of contextuality and the adaptive capacity of destinations in front of dynamics of local and global change	Adaptation of stakeholders to changing demand markets and effects at the destination	**Primary source:** - Interviews with key stakeholders **Complementary sources:** - Statistics - Official reports - Media articles	**Qualitative analysis**: Semi-structured interviews
Chapter 5	Assess the enabling and constraining effects of path dependence in the shaping of tourism destination trajectories	Nature and impact of decisions made and events occurred in the past	**Primary sources:** - Policy plans and official reports - Media articles **Complementary sources:** - Existing previous research - Interviews with key stakeholders	**Qualitative analysis**: Document analysis

Source: Author

The reasons behind the selection of each method are explained below. Further details regarding the implementation of the methods employed in each empirical inquiry can be found in the corresponding chapters.

Social network analysis methods (Chapter 3)

Chapter 3 studies the effects of human agency on the evolutionary performance of destinations (S1). In particular, it examines the structure of the knowledge network in central Costa Daurada in the period 2013 and 2014, as well as the importance and roles of actors therein. In this study, particular attention is given to exploring the ways in which the Science and Technology Park for Tourism and Leisure of Catalonia (PCT), as main hub in the system of knowledge generation, innovation and research, has had an impact on the configuration, governance and leadership of a localised system of learning at the destination.

In this case a quantitative social network analysis approach was deemed the most appropriate to deal with the object of inquiry. Social network analysis tools have been extensively acknowledged in economic geography and tourism studies as valuable to further contributing to the analysis of the organisation of productive spaces and the impact of these structures for disseminating knowledge and enhancing innovation (Aarstad, Ness, & Haugland, 2015; Baggio, Scott, & Cooper, 2010; Ter Wal & Boschma, 2009).

Certainly, the interest in analysing the nature and evolution of destination networks and knowledge dissemination was present from the beginning of this thesis project. With this aim, a quite extensive review of publications applying social network analysis methods was undertaken (including, for instance, the work of Baggio, 2008a; Baggio & Cooper, 2010; Baggio et al., 2010; Balland, 2012; Castilla, Hwang, Granovetter, & Granovetter, 2000; Giuliani, 2007; Merinero Rodríguez & Pulido Fernández, 2009; Scott, Cooper, & Baggio, 2008; Solé Pla, 2012; Vicente, Balland, & Brossard, 2011), as well as a discussion with experienced researchers during the first short research stay at the University of Girona. This preliminary exploration served to identify the type of data and techniques more frequently used in these studies, as well as to evidence the difficulties that might arise when trying to gather relational data corresponding to a period of the past. Taking into consideration that data obtained from archival sources is one of the most commonly used techniques to avoid the lack of accuracy of self-reported data when it comes to reconstructing ties that existed in the past (Wasserman & Faust, 1994), a possible solution to finally be able to conduct the study was found.

The development of specialised courses and seminars constitutes one of the forms of education that promote the circulation of knowledge among actors and increases the technical abilities and functionalities of employees and firms operating in specialised regions (Boschma & Lambooy, 2002; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008). In this vein, this thesis argues that one approach that may be useful for the purpose of the study is to focus on the analysis of relations that emerge from the participation of actors in specialised courses and seminars organised in the area under study. Hence, relational data was extracted from available documentary records including seminars and courses organised in central Costa Daurada and the respective lists of participants in each educational activity.

From a network analysis point of view, this type of informative structure is labelled as a 'bipartite', 'two-mode' or 'affiliation' network. This methodology has been widely used in other fields of research such as sociology and anthropology to assess the participation of actors in a set of activities during a certain period of time—see, for instance the seminal study of southern women of Davis, Gardner, and Gardner (1941) and other studies analysing scientific collaboration networks (Newman, 2001), interlocking directorates (Davis & Greve, 1997) or investment networks of firms (Badia Miró, Blasco, Lozano, & Soler, 2010).

In the context of economic geography, this approach has been acknowledged as a useful tool for analysing the evolution of collaborative networks among organisations (firms or institutions) participating in joint projects (Balland, 2012; Crespo, Suire, & Vicente, 2016; Vicente et al., 2011) or studying the capacity of cities to produce complex technological knowledge (Balland & Rigby, 2015). When it comes to the analysis of networks in the tourism context, one can hardly find empirical studies applying the two-mode network approach, with the exception of the work of Erkuş-Öztürk and Eraydın (2010) who analysed the interrelationships of tourism actors in Antalya as a result of their commitment to environmental issues.

Semi-structured interviews (Chapter 4)

The empirical analysis presented in Chapter 4 aims to explore the influence of contextuality and the adaptive capacity of destinations as a priority to the dynamics of local and global change (S2). In particular, attention is given to the nature and evolution of the critical strategic alliances between local actors and global intermediaries working in the Russian market that were forged between 1994 and 2013 in central Costa Daurada, the period when this market grew exponentially in the area. The upgrading effects derived from the complex global production network created are also assessed.

The main concern in this specific piece of research was gaining understanding about strategic coupling and their upgrading outcomes by juxtaposing the individual views, experiences, and feelings of the different stakeholders involved in such processes—i.e. local hotel owners, representatives of incoming travel agencies, global tour operators, and public-sector administrators. Accordingly, taking on a qualitative approach, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used as the basis for collecting the data. Interviewing is one of the oldest and most widely used methods of conducting primary research. In this specific case, adopting an inductive approach (Mason, 2014), the method proved to be effective in building up theory comparable with research related to the topic but mainly dealing with manufacturing or high-tech industries.

Although acknowledging the fact that interviews may be open to bias and result in difficulties in generalising the findings obtained (Veal, 2011), the fact is that this technique was the best

suited to meeting the desired result of obtaining information-rich answers and comprehensive understanding of the longitudinal processes under study. As Miller and Glassner (2016) put it, interviews provide 'evidence of the nature of the phenomena under investigation, including the contexts and situations in which they emerge, as well as insights into the cultural frames people use to make sense of these experiences and their social worlds' (p. 63). These complex and meaningful findings could not have been made apparent through quantitative analysis of survey data (Elwood, 2010), and neither would it have been possible to build more personal contact with the interviewees, a key factor in promoting a trustworthy environment and promoting stakeholders' willingness to cooperate during the research process.

Document analysis (Chapter 5)

Chapter 5 assesses the enabling and constraining effects of path dependence (S3). Particularly, it develops and applies a conceptual framework—the moments idea—as a powerful tool to help interpret the chronology of events and the key role of the PortAventura theme park in the renewed evolutionary trajectory of central Costa Daurada as a tourism destination.

The objective of this piece of work was to reconstruct the sequence of events and decisions before, during and after PortAventura became a reality at the destination. Because doing so takes a mainly qualitative focus, document analysis was chosen as the most adequate method to gain understanding and to produce the rich descriptions of the history of events and context the research was seeking (Ritchie, 2003). As Bowen (2009) put it:

> Bearing witness to past events, documents provide background information as well as historical insight. Such information and insight can help researchers understand the historical roots of specific issues and can indicate the conditions that impinge upon the phenomena currently under investigation. (p.29-30)

This method, in fact, is considered to be 'the most effective means of gathering data when events can no longer be observed or when informants have forgotten the details' (Bowen, 2009, p.31). Indeed, documents favoured the compilation of exact data—names, references, and details of events—covering the long span of time under study. These comprehensive outcomes could not possibly have been achieved with other qualitative methods such as interviews.

Relying on the systematic revision and evaluation of documents to produce empirical knowledge as a stand-alone method may generate potential limitations to the study. In order to avoid these limitations, the research sought convergence and corroboration by drawing upon diverse sources of evidence (Bowen, 2009). Along these lines, empirical materials, including local and regional planning documents, media articles and academic publications, were carefully evaluated to select those providing substantive content related to the issues being explored in light of the conceptual framework of the study. A significant attempt was

also made to ensure and balance objectivity and sensitivity during the process so that the results would be valid (Bowen, 2009).

Overall, the multiple-methods approach used has proved to be useful and appropriate for gaining a comprehensive appreciation of the transformation and reconfiguration of central Costa Daurada during recent decades, which in turn provides significant contributions to the literature on tourism destination evolution. Indeed, the adoption of different methodological procedures allowed to obtain results and extract conclusions beyond the scope of traditional evolutionary models, which are often considered excessively simplified.

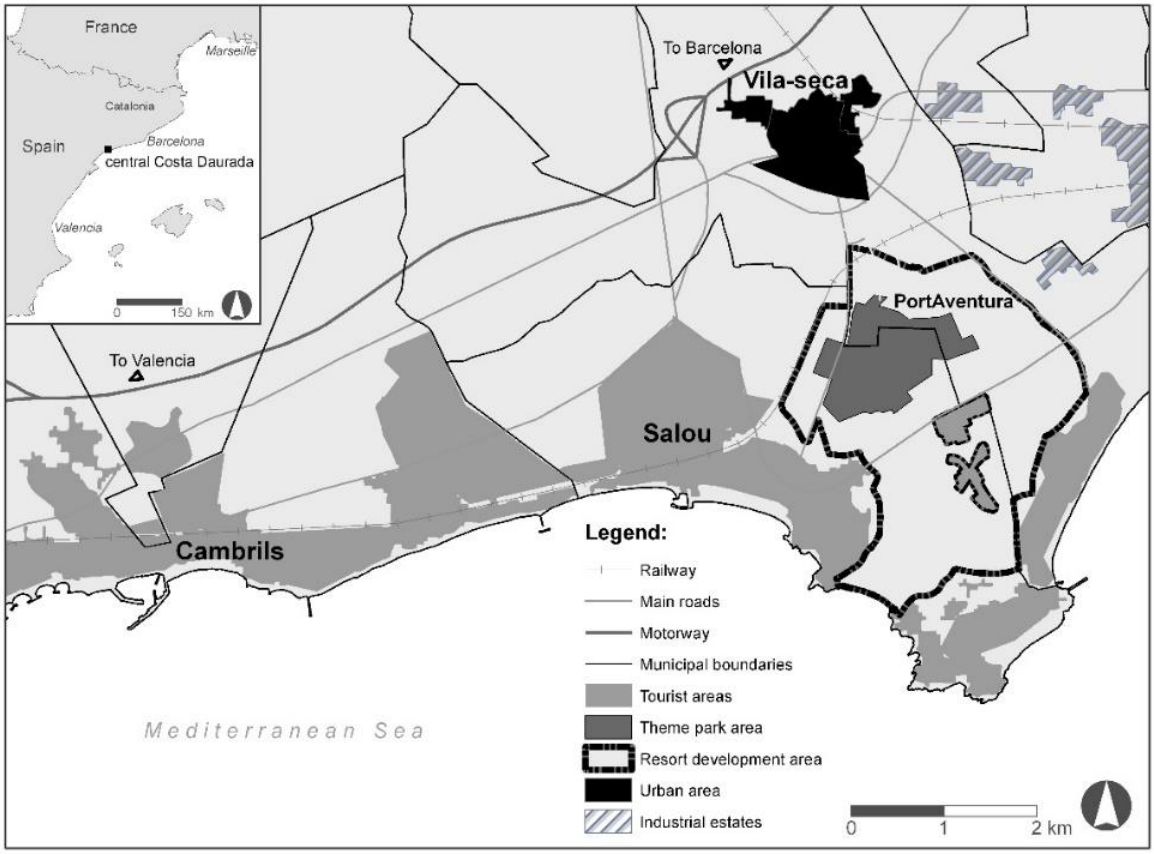
1.3.3. Study area

Characterisation

As previously mentioned, this research is based on central Costa Daurada, a consolidated destination located on the south Catalan coast (see Figure 2). The area comprises three municipalities: Salou, Cambrils, and Vila-seca, which were home to 81,706 inhabitants in 2015 according to the last census; however, although the estimated total population reaches 121,858 inhabitants. These municipalities are located within an area of more than 315,000 permanent inhabitants—the urban area of Tarragona, which is the second most dynamic economic region in Catalonia after the metropolitan area of Barcelona.

With a 22.4 km coastal strip—14.1 km of beaches, tourism is the most prominent economic sector. This can be illustrated by the gross added value of the service sector, including tourism, in 2014, which represented 1,286.4 million euros for the whole area (86.4%). Besides, the area also has a prominent food industry and port operation companies and, particularly, an adjacent consolidated petrochemical industry, including many of the world's leading chemical companies. Central Costa Daurada is well connected by road thanks to the infrastructure of two motorways that serve as the main routes for the arrival of national and international tourists. The nearest airport receiving charter and low-cost flights is located in Reus—another municipality in the urban area of Tarragona—but the proximity of Barcelona—only 100 kilometres—makes the airport of the Catalan capital another hub for international arrivals at the destination.

Figure 2. *Location of central Costa Daurada.*



Source: Cartography and GIS Laboratory, Rovira i Virgili University.

Central Costa Daurada is now a major Mediterranean coastal destination that has made a name for itself on the national and international tourism market. As shown in Table 5, the supply of hotels, camping sites/resorts and registered tourist apartments in the whole area is abundant (47,270 beds) and generated 10.6 million overnight stays in 2015. The production structure of the tourism sector in the area is characterised by a mixture of a large population of small- and medium-sized firms combined with a few big companies (for example, 6 local hotel chains represent 45 % of the total hotel bed spaces in the area). The majority of overnight stays (56.5 %) correspond to international tourists—including the United Kingdom, France and Russia as the main demand markets. Second homes were estimated in 2011 at 122,180 units in the whole Costa Daurada destination area. The mean annual accommodation occupancy rate in 2015—including hotels, camping sites/resorts and apartments—was 56.6 %, while the mean number of nights per trip was 4.4 nights for the same year.

Table 5. *Tourism statistics for central Costa Daurada*

General data	Surface area		71.4 sq km
	Coastal length		22.4 km
	Beach length		14.1 km
	Population (census)	2015	81,706 inhabitants
	Population (actual)	2015	121,858 inhabitants (estimated)
Supply of tourism	Hotel beds	2015	28,091 beds
	Camping places	2015	10,281 places
	Registered apartment beds	2015	8,898 beds
	Second homes units	2011	122,180 units
Tourist demand (excluding second homes)	Arrivals	2015	2.5 million
	Nights	2015	10.6 million
	% of international tourists	2015	56.5%
	Annual mean occupancy rates		
	Hotels	2015	69.1%
	Camping sites/resorts	2015	49.7%
	Registered apartments	2015	51.0%
	Number of nights per trip		
	Hotels	2015	4.0 nights
	Camping sites/resorts	2015	4.8 nights
	Registered apartments	2015	4.4 nights
Macro magnitudes	GDP service sector	2014	1,612.1 million euros (provisional)
	GVA service sector	2014	1,286.4 million euros (provisional)
	GVA service sector (%)	2014	86.4% (provisional)

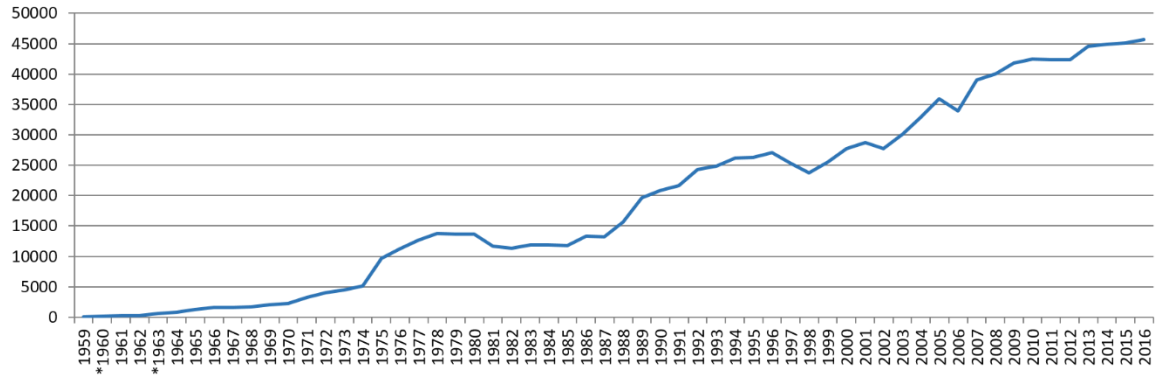
Source: Observatory of the Science and Technology Park for Tourism and Leisure of Catalonia and IDESCAT

The seminal urban development actions linked to tourism in the area—at that moment, only a few middle-class villas constructed for locals from the neighbouring municipalities or Barcelona—date back to the first decades of the twentieth century. The orientation to mass tourism took place in the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s in parallel to the development of tourism in Spain. At this point, central Costa Daurada became a renowned beach holiday destination, and local small- to medium-sized firms were the main actors behind rapid (and poorly planned) urban development, essentially based on the construction of medium-level hotels and apartment buildings (mostly used as second homes).

Years later, in the 1980s, new trends and motivations caused the area's tourist industry to lose demand and economic viability (Anton Clavé, 1997a). In a context where younger, high-quality competing destinations emerged—such as Croatia, Turkey or the Caribbean, central Costa Daurada, as a traditional beach holiday destination with a middle-low quality accommodation and high seasonality, became outdated and less unique. In addition to these problems contingent on global circumstances, the municipality of Salou suffered a 'typhoid scare' in 1989. This situation had important impacts on the competitive position of the area, causing a number of international tourism operators—mainly working in the British market—to stop

their activity in the area and avoid including Salou in their packages and brochures. Salou and central Costa Daurada's image and competitiveness had deteriorated to such a degree that there was an inevitable decline in prices, causing the tourism sector in the area to suffer greatly. This stagnation period can be clearly identified in Figure 3, which shows the growth of hotel accommodation in the area from 1959 to 2016.

Figure 3. *Growth in hotel accommodation in cCD (1959 – 2016)*

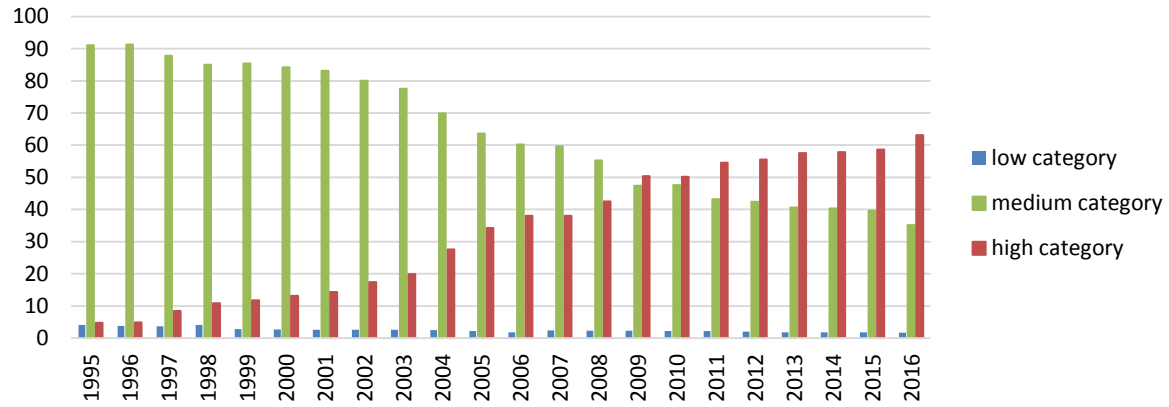


**Estimated values*

Source: Data 1959 – 2006 based on Beas (2009) and data 2007 – 2016 based on IDESCAT

Since the 1990s several restructuring actions and strategies were implemented in order to improve the competitiveness of the destination, trying to combine the 'sea and sand' product with other alternatives and sustainable management practices (Anton Clavé, 2010). As a result of these interventions, there was a new stage of considerable expansion and improvement of the tourism activity in the area. In fact, statistics show that hotel bed spaces increased 118.41 % from 1990 to 2016, going from offering 20,906 bed spaces to 45,660. Beyond this fact, there is the evidence that throughout this period, the private sector made a considerable investment in improving the quality of hotel accommodations. Some obsolete hotels were closed, others improved their quality, and new high-class hotels were built. As displayed in Figure 4, while in the mid-1990s, 91.2 % of hotel beds were middle-class (2 and 3 stars); in 2016, the predominant type of hotel beds were those included in the highest categories (4 and 5 stars) (63.1 %). This amelioration of accommodation facilities created new opportunities for the destination to increase the attractiveness of the area for new demand segments with higher purchasing power.

Figure 4. *Percentage of hotel beds in cCD, broken down by category*

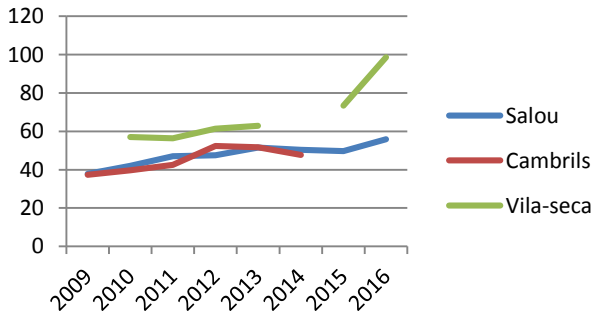


Source: Data 1995 – 2006 based on Beas (2009) and data 2007 – 2016 based on IDESCAT

This improvement can be also observed with regards to the Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR per year) of hotels located in the municipalities comprising central Costa Daurada. This indicator was situated below the 40€ mark in 2009, while the scenario was substantially different in 2016, especially in the case of Vila-seca, a municipality that reached the 98.5€ mark while the mean for the 8 coastal destinations included in this statistic in Catalonia was only 59.28€ for the same year. As regards Salou and Cambrils, the figures steadily improved but placed the RevPAR of these municipalities at around 50€. As can be seen in Figure 5, these results placed Vila-seca and Salou in the first and fourth positions of the ranking as compared to the average RevPAR of beach destinations in Catalonia in 2016 and Cambrils in the third position in the same rankings for 2014.

Figure 5. *RevPAR in central Costa Daurada*

Evolution of RevPAR (€)



RevPAR (€) compared to the average of sun & beach destinations in Catalonia

	cCD			Catalonia
	Salou (2016)	Cambrils (2014)	Vila-seca (2016)	
RevPar (€)				
	55.8	47.4	98.5	45.73 (2014) 59.28 (2016)
Ranking				
	4	3	1	N=8

**Data not available: Vila-seca (2014) and Cambrils (2015 and 2016)*

Source: Barometer of Profitability and Employment of Spanish Tourist Destinations, Exceltur.

Suitability and relevance

This thesis maintains that carrying out the investigation in central Costa Daurada provides meaningful insights in relation to the purposes of the study explained in section 1.2. The selection is based on considering that, despite acknowledging the effects of other interventions—such as urban rearrangements and investments in public infrastructure –, three specific catalysts distil the essence of the transformations that have occurred in central Costa Daurada since the 1980s. These are knowledge transfer management and collaboration, demand changes and product reorganisation and can be linked to the categories of catalyst that this research aims to uncover—i.e. human agency, contextuality and path dependence. The sections below summarise the nature and context of these three categories of transformations, which will be empirically analysed later on in Chapters 3 to 5.

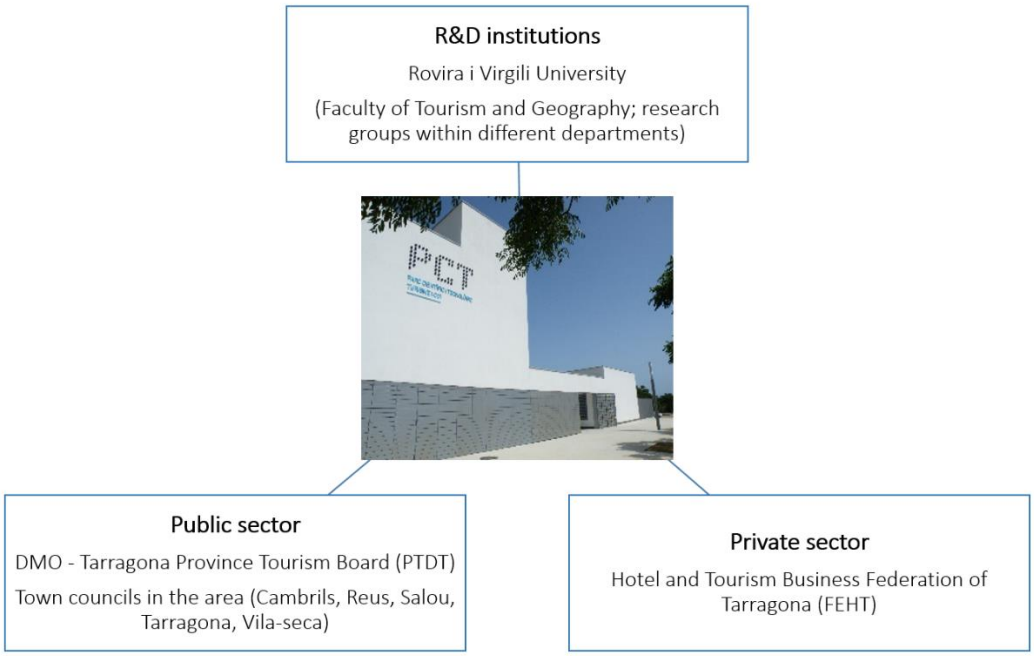
- Knowledge transfer management and collaboration

One of the strategies promoted in central Costa Daurada, with the aim of enhancing the competitiveness of the destination, has to do with a decisive commitment in laying the foundations for a tourism innovation system with the cooperation of all stakeholders.

Early steps in this direction can be identified since the 1990s with the creation of the Costa Daurada Tourist Studies Foundation (FETCD) in 1999, the start of the activity of the first Tourism Observatory in Catalonia (2001), and the opening of the School of Tourism and Leisure (EUTO) in 2002, which offered the first official study course in tourism by the Rovira i Virgili University (Russo, 2012). Nevertheless, the fundamental milestone in the envisaged knowledge-based development of tourism in the area was the creation of a Technology and Innovation Centre (TIC) in 2006—i.e. the Science and Technology Park for Tourism and Leisure of Catalonia (PCT).

The genesis of the PCT was the result of a 'long process of synchronisation and refinement in the strategy of collaboration between the "triple helix" actors' (Russo, 2012) (see Figure 6) and was materialised after the an agreement between the Rovira i Virgili University, the Hotel and Tourism Business Federation of Tarragona (FEHT), and the Vila-seca Town Council took place. The actual start of the PCT activity as an innovative *knowledge-economy* hub for the tourism and leisure sector in the area can be seen in 2010, after the inauguration of a new building in Vila-seca—next to the EUTO—with an investment of 2.8 million euros financed through public funding from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

Figure 6. *The Science and Technology Park for Tourism and Leisure as a triple-helix organisation*



Source: Author

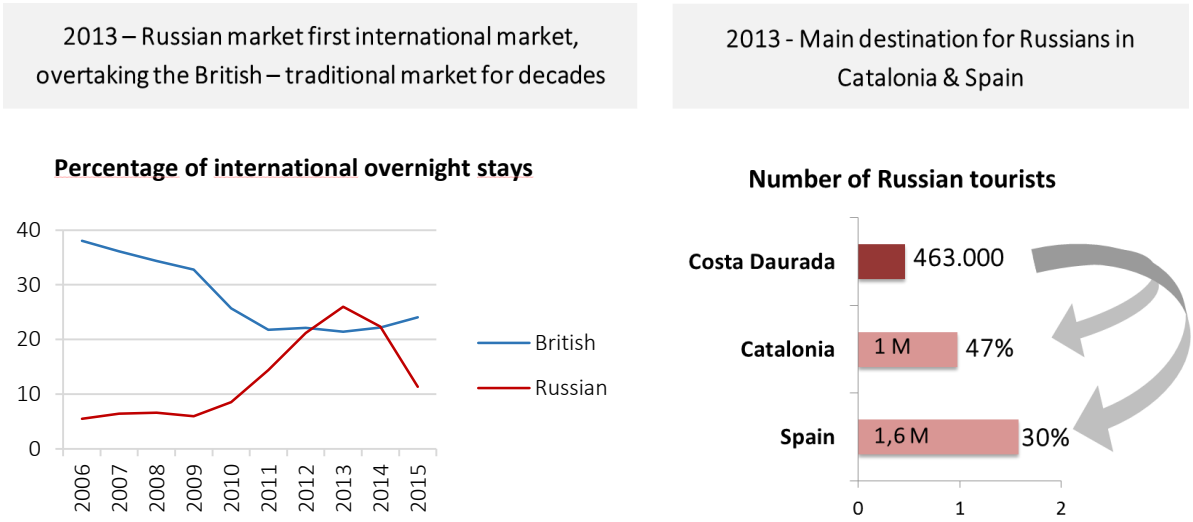
The PCT has become a key player in promoting the sustainability, competitiveness and excellence at the destination as a consequence of an active and efficient role in two main areas: first, as a facilitator of collaboration synergies among private and public organisations involved in the tourism and leisure sector in the area and second, as a provider of value-added knowledge, innovative initiatives and useful technological tools responding to destination stakeholders' needs thanks to the establishment of agreements on scientific management and technical consulting with URV research groups and the recruitment of qualified technical staff. In addition to this, it is worthy to note that the facilities of the PCT also host the central offices of the major associations representing tourism's private sector and performs a leading role in organising (or collaborating in the organisation of) a range of specialised seminars, courses and educational activities for the sector to be updated on the latest trends and R&D&I advancements.

- Demand changes

In a context of lost demand for traditional international markets, the search for new emergent markets became a prominent strategy among private and public agents aiming to enable the (re)development of central Costa Daurada since the 1990s. As for many other Mediterranean coastal destinations, the Russian market—one of the most desirable markets after the break-up of the Soviet Union—became a priority for the tourist industry in the area.

In the area, the Russian market represented only an estimated total of 30,000 tourists in 1994—1 % of the 2.6 million Russians travelling abroad that year. This represented such an irrelevant percentage of total international tourists that it was not accounted for in local official statistics. Almost twenty years later, in 2013—the peak attendance year of Russian tourists in central Costa Daurada (see Figure 7), the destination received 463,000 Russian tourists, achieving 2.3 million overnight stays of Russian tourists. These numbers positioned this market as the leading international market in the area (26 % of total international overnights). At that moment, the number of Russian tourist arrivals represented a 47 % and 30 % of the 1 million and 1.6 million Russians travelling to Catalonia and Spain in 2013 respectively and 7 % of total Russian outbound tourism.

Figure 7. *Main figures about the Russian market in cCD in the peak attendance year, 2013*



Souce: INE and Observatory of the Science and Technology Park for Tourism and Leisure of Catalonia.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, this new situation was essentially driven by a strategy developed by an originally small group of local stakeholders, including some leading hoteliers, CEO's of incoming agencies and representatives of local DMO's. Furthermore, in 1994 only four Russian operators (at that moment, relatively small outbound travel agencies), three incoming agencies, three hotels and one DMO gave birth to the Russian orientation of the area. However, in 2014 it is a complex network that includes the major Russian tour operators, almost all the mid- and high-category hotels in the area—which in turn are predominant in the total supply of the destination –, and each and every local DMO devoted to the promotion of the area. Research presented in chapter 4 presents an in-depth analysis of the origins and development of this global production network.

As can be seen in Figure 7, right after the completion of the study, central Costa Daurada struggled as a consequence of a short period of political and economic instability in Russia—mostly due to the devaluation of the rouble and the crisis occurring in Ukraine. Actually, the area went from registering the highest number of overnight stays of Russian tourists in 2013 to a reduction of 20 % in 2014—1.84 million overnight stays—and 50 % in 2015 with only slightly more than 862,000 overnight stays. This scenario pushed local firms to consider opening up to new markets—for instance, the Nordic countries—or to try regain a lost market such as the German. This being said, however, considering the strong efforts made in the past and the solid relationships with Russian intermediaries, the destination continued targeting this market. Fortunately, after this short period of crisis, the improvement of the economic situation in Russia favoured a change of tendency in 2016, which is expected to consolidate in 2017 to the point of reaching levels of arrivals/overnights similar to the best seasons of 2012 or 2013.

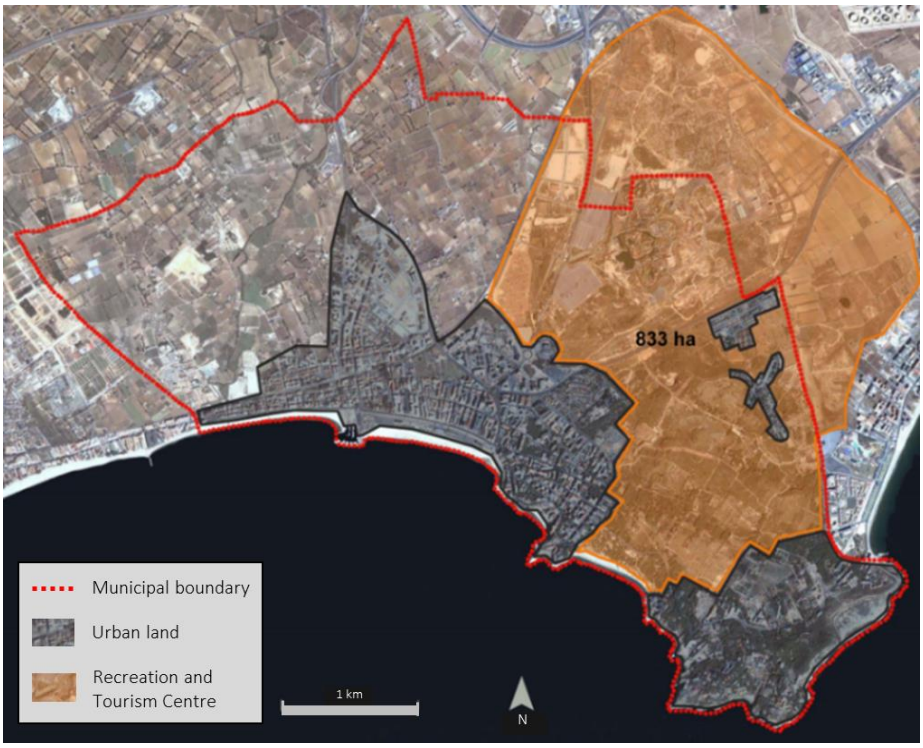
- Product reorganisation

Last but not least, besides consolidating collaboration and knowledge dissemination synergies and attracting new markets, other planning development strategies were implemented with the aim of maintaining central Costa Daurada's competitiveness through the addition of new quality elements to diversify the tourist product. The development of the PortAventura theme park, opened in 1995, was the most important initiative in this regard.

The project, planned in the 1980s, was framed under a strategic vision for the regeneration of the urban and tourist policy of the destination and its development was largely facilitated by an atmosphere of close collaboration and political and entrepreneurial consensus among local and regional public agents (Anton Clavé, 2010). This political goodwill led to the establishment of a novel legal framework and the concession of available land—833 ha—remaining open to expansion (see Figure 8).

Despite passing through several changes in the shareholding of the project, PortAventura has maintained a dominant position in the Spanish and European market during its 20-year history, going from being a classic leisure park to becoming a whole entertainment complex aspiring to leverage its strategic position as a global destination in the long term. Today, the resort receives around 4 million visitors per year—reaching a total of 65 million visitors since its opening, earns approximately 600 million euros a year and employs 1,200 people.

Figure 8. *Location of land used for the development of the PortAventura project*



Source: Cartography and GIS Laboratory, Rovira i Virgili University.

Overall, PortAventura is more than a recreation and leisure facility generating positive economic impacts and diversifying central Costa Daurada's tourist product. Rather, it is a true catalyst transforming and reorganising the tourism business in the destination (Anton Clavé, 2010). Since its opening, the park not only helped lengthen the season and revitalise the off-peak season but also played a key role in motivating local stakeholders to implement a strategy aimed at singularising the tourism product in the area (González-Reverté, 2012). These renovation dynamics favoured the promotion of a new image for the destination as a coastal, sunny destination specialising in family entertainment. Furthermore, the project had a great impact in witnessing public and private investments in the area that increased the attractiveness of the destination, boosting improvements in the provision of public services and local infrastructure and a significant expansion of hotel supply in the highest categories (González-Reverté, 2012).

1.4. Dissertation structure

This dissertation consists of six chapters and is organised as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the research interest, aims and hypothesis, as well as the research process, methodological design

and study area. Chapters 2 to 4 present the content of the four articles in which the research was structured, incorporating not only the final text published (or submitted) but also additional content that could not be included in the articles because of the need to adjust length for editorial requirements or updates derived from the continuous development of the fields under study.

The content of chapter 2 is structured in three main sections that present the epistemological approaches taken as a reference in this thesis. The first section outlines the origins, aims and scope of evolutionary economic geography (EEG) and relational economic geography (REG) as well as their main points of convergence. The second section reviews the literature on the topic of the evolution and organisation of tourism destinations, identifying both its main contributions and weaknesses. In the third section, the analytical model developed by adopting an integrated EEG-REG approach—as well as contemporary advances in tourism research—is explained in detail.

Chapters 3 to 5 comprise the three empirical analysis outputs of the thesis. These chapters comprise five main sections. First, the introduction consists of an initial approach to the subject of study and a summary of the research presented in the chapter. In the second section, further development of the specific theoretical framework concerning the catalyst under analysis is provided. The next section explains the methods used for the empirical analysis. The obtained results are displayed in the fourth section. The last part consists of the discussion for concluding the chapter.

Chapter 3 tackles the first specific objective, formulated under the human agency catalyst. In this case, quantitative social network analysis methods—specifically, a two-mode network approach—are utilised to investigate administered knowledge networks in tourism by looking into the stakeholders acting as brokers in informal exchange and formal transfer flows occurring in the context of specialised courses and seminars organised in central Costa Daurada. The research puts special emphasis on the role of Technology and Innovation Centres (TICs) as hubs or bridging organisations promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange within actors belonging to the different spheres in the triple helix.

Chapter 4 addresses the second specific objective, connected to the contextuality catalyst. It describes a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews supplemented with secondary data in which is elucidated how global-local strategic coupling in new emergent demand markets effectively contributes to increasing the innovativeness of local firms while enabling the upgrading of destinations. The analysis is focused on the examination of the emergence and development of the Russian global production network in central Costa Daurada parallel to the growth of this international market demand in the area.

Chapter 5 plunges into the third specific objective, constructed under the path dependence catalyst. By taking the case of central Costa Daurada as the object of analysis, this chapter

explores the 'moments' conceptual framework as a means of understanding how destinations evolve in accordance with specific inflection points that might force destination development paths to change in direction. Drawing upon documentary analysis of longitudinal research on the effects derived from the opening of the PortAventura theme park in central Costa Daurada, the scope and potential of the framework proposed is illustrated.

Finally, chapter 6 presents the general conclusions of the thesis, including a holistic overview of the main contributions of the thesis from the theoretical, empirical and practical implications points of view. This final chapter also lists some questions and considerations that might be taken into account in future research. The complete list of bibliographical references used in the research can be found at the end of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2. Theoretical framework

UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI
THE EVOLUTION OF DESTINATIONS. AN EVOLUTIONARY AND RELATIONAL ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY APPROACH.
Cinta Sanz Ibáñez

CHAPTER 2. Theoretical framework

The content of this chapter is mainly based on the following article:

Sanz-Ibáñez, C., & Anton Clavé, S. (2014). The evolution of destinations: Towards an evolutionary and relational economic geography approach. *Tourism Geographies*, *16*(4), 563–579. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2014.925965

2.1. Introduction

During the last decade, research in economic geography has revealed new perspectives for analysing the evolution and organisation of productive places in industrial contexts, particularly in terms of evolutionary economic geography (EEG) (Boschma & Frenken, 2006; Boschma & Martin, 2010b; Kogler, 2015), and relational economic geography (REG) (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003; Jones, 2013). Bearing in mind that a number of studies explicitly state the weaknesses of conventional models in tourism geography as explanatory tools to interpret the evolutionary and relational performance of destinations (Brouder, Anton Clavé, Gill, & Ioannides, 2017a), this thesis proposes the integration of the geographical analysis of tourism destination evolution and organisation into the economic geography mainstream, by exploring in which ways EEG and REG add value to tourism studies.

This brings valuable insights for understanding how – and particularly, why – local tourism destinations change over time, while shedding light on questions such as why some destinations experience a sudden growth and others undergo a more progressive path of development? Or why some tourist places manage to rejuvenate and enhance their competitiveness while others cannot adapt themselves to the constant changes of the global tourism market? Besides, closer theoretical connections between the two fields would contribute to minimising the peripheral position of tourism geography within economic geography (Agarwal, Ball, Shaw, & Williams, 2000; Britton, 1991; Ioannides, 1995; Ioannides et al., 2014).

This chapter provides an overview of the epistemological approaches taken as a reference in this thesis. It does so by providing a literature review organised in two different sections. Section 2.2 summarises the origins, aims and scope of EEG and REG, as well as their main

points of convergence. Section 2.3 briefly reviews the main contributions and weaknesses of the previous literature addressing destination evolution and organisation in tourism studies. The following section (2.4) discusses and deepens extant explicit links between evolutionary and relational bodies of work in economic geography and tourism geography and proposes an alternative analytical model for tackling local tourism destinations from an EEG-REG integrated perspective.

2.2. Contemporary paradigms in economic geography

Since the 1980s, but especially in recent years, many economic geographers have claimed the need to renew and consolidate the epistemological and methodological foundations of economic geography in order to respond to the new realities induced by contemporary capitalism and globalisation (Benner et al., 2011). Additionally, there has been a controversial debate about whether economic geography should be more interdisciplinary and take ideas from social, political and cultural studies (Amin & Thrift, 2000) or lean more towards conventional neoclassical models of economics (Krugman, 1991).

As Grabher (2009) noted, this readjustment has been characterised by short-lived proposals and, therefore, the field is fragmented more than ever before, subscribing to a wide variety of approaches and positions. In this context, a trend towards the development of two paradigms concerned about the evolutionary and relational performance of places has gained increasing influence during the last decade: EEG (Boschma & Frenken, 2006; Boschma & Martin, 2007) and REG (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003).

2.2.1. Evolutionary economic geography

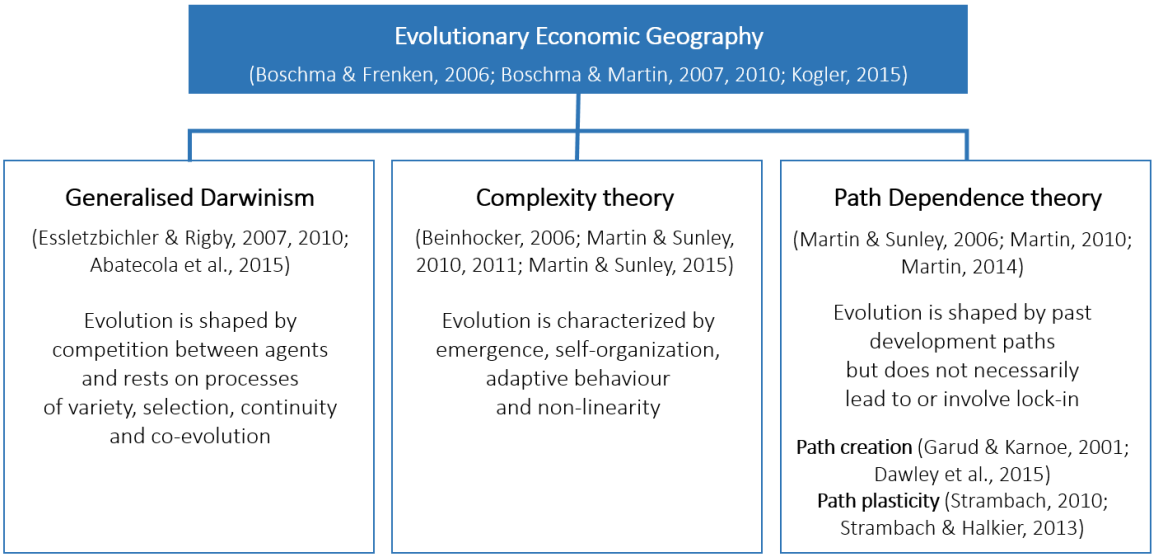
As part of the reconceptualisation of economic geography, in the early 2000s some European scholars identified a coverage gap in economic geography: the analysis of economic landscapes from a historical perspective (Boschma & Frenken, 2006). These authors – profoundly influenced by Nelson and Winter's (1982) theory of the firm – explored the adoption of ideas from the 'evolutionary turn' in economics, as well as evolutionary ideas in a more global sense, and began to build EEG as a potential-distinctive agenda.

EEG's basic concern is to help analyse, interpret and explain how 'the economic landscape – the spatial organisation of economic production, circulation, exchange, distribution and consumption – is transformed from within over time' (Boschma & Martin, 2010a, p.6). In other words, EEG aims to improve the understanding of the forces behind economic change, adaptation and novelty in the spatial organisation of economic production, distribution and

consumption, and the effects of the spatial structures themselves on the forces driving economic evolution (Boschma & Martin, 2007).

Thus, EEG scholars, in contrast to previous work, see economic spaces as socially constructed and influenced by path and place-dependent processes, which implies that their evolution is the outcome of a process highly influenced by the specific characteristics of the firm, sector, network or region and their actual evolutionary performance (Boschma & Frenken, 2006). As Kogler (2015) noted, this body of literature departs from the assumption that 'experiences and competencies acquired over time by individuals and entities in particular localities to a large degree determine present configurations as well as future regional trajectories' (p.705). The cumulative creation, dissemination and utilisation of knowledge throughout firms and within regions, hence, is seen as a key factor in drawing new development paths in the long run. Essentially, the four key themes discussed in EEG have been: the life cycles of firms, industries and regions; the localised nature of innovation; and the role of institutions and the socio-economic culture in evolutionary processes (Essletzbichler & Rigby, 2007). As Boschma and Martin (2007, 2010a) outline, there are three major approaches – with some overlaps and hybridisations – that are contributing in building up EEG's theoretical base: generalised Darwinism, complexity theory and path dependence theory (Figure 9).

Figure 9. *Approaches within evolutionary economic geography (EEG)*



Source: Updated from Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé (2014)

The first frequently invoked contribution is grounded on the adoption of ideas from modern evolutionary biology. Generalised Darwinism argues that the evolution of regions – conceptualised as selection environments – is shaped by competition between agents – on

inter- and intra-regional levels – and rests on the core principles of evolution, that is, variety, novelty, selection and continuity (Boschma & Martin, 2010a). In this sense, as Essletzbichler and Rigby (2010, p.45) emphasise, this approach 'demands understanding what [these key concepts] might represent in the economy, how those concepts are put into motion, or embedded within a dynamic system of economic competition, and how they are influenced by other mechanisms specific to that system'. A salient concept in works using a generalised Darwinism approach is variety and, more specifically, the discussion about the opportunities and difficulties arising in regions having related or unrelated variety (Frenken, Van Oort, & Verburg, 2007). Related variety implies that a region presents 'a wide range of related industries that provide potentials for inter-industry learning and new recombinations' (Boschma, 2015, p.737) and is seen as a driver of regional innovation, growth and resilience. Another focus on the rise within this research agenda are co-evolution processes within regions or between sectors (Abatecola, Belussi, Breslin, & Filatotchev, 2016). This framework helps understand the multilevel mechanisms in motion in regions, industries or organisations in which different paths may emerge and develop independently but at the same time interacting with each other in complex environments. This being said, some authors doubt the applicability of these analogies to socio-economic contexts due to, among other considerations, the relegation of institutions, social agency and power relations (MacKinnon, Cumbers, Pike, Birch, & McMaster, 2009). Others such as Hodgson (2009) admit that some of the Darwinian analogies could require additional explanations but demonstrate that Darwinism 'implies, rather than denies, institutions' (p. 170), so it constitutes an approach worthy of exploration.

Turning to complexity theory, first developed in non-equilibrium thermodynamics and years later applied in economics, this approach has received less attention compared to the others, but researchers are increasingly taking it as a reference point (see, for instance, Martin & Sunley, 2010, 2011). Complexity thinking considers that the economic landscape has common features with complex adaptive systems in which a number of small or micro-elements are interconnected and determine a macro-level performance that cannot be explained just by analysing the sum of their constituent micro-elements – e.g. workers, firms, clusters, industries, production networks or supply chains (Martin & Sunley, 2015b; Reggiani & Nijkamp, 2009). In other words, as explained by Martin and Sunley (2015, p.10) 'local and regional economies are complex, multi-layered systems, both connected to and in part also constitutive of their (competitive) environments, and that to understand fully their evolutionary development over time requires analysis of their multi-scalar and interdependent character'. The evolution of the economic landscape, hence, is seen from a complexity perspective as far-from-equilibrium and explained by processes of emergence, self-organisation and adaptation activated by 'key factors that impact on regional development or urban development in different ways and with different growth paces (Reggiani & Nijkamp, 2009, p.2). Among these factors, these authors mention the search for

new forms of industrial organisation and leadership, emerging innovations and creativity strategies, and the adoption of new technologies, subjects of much interest to evolutionary economic geographers adopting complexity lens. Nowadays this approach is considered to be a valuable contribution to philosophical conceptualisations of EEG but scholars claim the need to continue working for developing solid conceptual foundations (Abatecola et al., 2016) and some reservations have been expressed over the tendency to use mathematical modelling (Boschma & Martin, 2010a).

Finally, the third approach takes the notion of path dependence introduced by David (1985) and Arthur (1988) when referring to technological evolution. These canonical models of path dependence stated that 'history matters' and random events or historical incidents can have long-run effects, especially those occurring early on the path (Martin & Sunley, 2006). For these authors, these accidents inevitably lead to path dependence and lock-in as a result of the reproduction of self-reinforcing mechanisms and could only be disrupted by (hardly common) external shocks. In this sense, one of the most prominent discussions in economic geography about these seminal contributions has been their focus on continuity and (negative) lock-in rather than ongoing change and adaptability (Martin, 2010, 2014).

Evolutionary economic geographers take path dependence – associated with place-dependence, underlining the also crucial role of geography – as a principle of central importance in explaining regional economic evolution. As Martin (2014, p.610-611) explained, EEG scholars admit that 'the economic landscape we observe at any point in time has been shaped by the historical adjustment path taken to it: it reflects its past development' but they argue that path dependence does not necessarily lead to or involve functional, cognitive of political lock-ins (Hassink, 2005). Rather, path dependence can have both positive – enabling – and negative – constraining – effects (see, for instance, the alternative model of path dependence proposed by Martin, 2010). Related to this debate, many authors have suggested and analysed concepts such as path creation (Dawley, MacKinnon, Cumbers, & Pike, 2015; Garud & Karnøe, 2001) and path plasticity (Strambach, 2010; Strambach & Halkier, 2013) to stress ongoing change – radical and incremental, respectively – and highlighting the role of human agency in deliberately promoting a breakthrough or recombining existing configurations as resources for the adaptation of the economic landscape. Despite being one of the most widely used conceptualisations in EEG (Martin & Sunley, 2006), the adoption of this approach also arises some problems regarding to the difficulty of defining which are the aspects that generate path dependence, at which level and in what ways they are manifested (Boschma & Martin, 2010a).

Given the stage of development of this pluralist potential paradigm and the body of literature that supports it, there is much debate on the conceptual and empirical challenges that engender the translation of evolutionary notions into the analysis of economic landscapes (see, for instance, Grabher, 2009, for an overview of the initial debates or Hassink, Klaerding,

and Marques, 2014, claiming the need for an engaged pluralism for the construction of EEG). More recently, discussions raised in international conferences or critical articles also suggest the need to go beyond applying EEG notions and theories for the study of manufacturing or high-tech knowledge-intensive industries and expand the focus to other economic sectors, including service industries (Hassink et al., 2014; Jones, 2016) as well as to pay more attention to the role of human agency in shaping the long-term development of clusters and regions (Trippl, Grillitsch, Isaksen, & Sinozic, 2015). This being said, however, research carried out to date shows evidence that an evolutionary perspective could offer relevant insights to explain the emergence of agglomerations and regional growth differences. Therefore, it is worth evaluating the contributions and limitations of the different theoretical frameworks, the due care of appropriate ontological transfers (Essletzbichler, 2009) and the emergent links with notions such as resilience (Boschma, 2015; Gong & Hassink, 2016; Martin & Sunley, 2015a) or theoretical strands as the political economy approach (MacKinnon et al., 2009; Pike et al., 2016) in articulating such a promising field.

2.2.2. Relational economic geography

Research that aims to understand the role of social interaction between economic actors in shaping the geographies of production has increased in recent decades (Boggs & Rantisi, 2003; Trippl & Bergman, 2014). This has been in parallel to the growth in evolutionary thinking and also coincides with organisational changes of economic activity in late capitalism – characterised by the restructuring, outsourcing and globalisation of productive processes and the consequent emergence of new forms of coordination among increasingly specialised firms.

Contributions to this relational thinking in economic geography come from different but related bodies of research within economic geography, such as the relational construction of spatial identity (Amin & Thrift, 2000), the works of the Californian school in relation to the 'windows of locational opportunity' and 'untraded interdependencies' (Scott, 1988; Storper & Walker, 1989). Further contributions have come from economic sociology, such as the notions of embeddedness and trust-based relations (Granovetter, 1985). All of these contributions have in common a strong opposition to conventional neoclassical economics, the aim of including the 'social' in economic analysis, plus a critique of the conception of space as a real actor – which neglects the real actors – with an explanatory role in location decisions and the excessive focus to conduct analysis on meso-/macro-perspectives instead of microlevel reasoning (Bathelt & Li, 2014; Boggs & Rantisi, 2003).

Although these contributions could be interpreted as a relational turn in economic geography, Bathelt and Glückler (2003) considered that a well-defined theoretical framework was not established yet so, taking Storper's (1997) work on the 'holy trinity' as a point of departure,

they lead the attempt to build up a coherent epistemological paradigm – away from traditional perspectives of regional science – enabling a complex understanding of economic action and its localised consequences. As noted by Hassink et al. (2014), this perspective is put forward as a means 'to provide better concepts for comprehensively theorising institutions, power, social agency and particularly the interrelatedness between scales' (p.1302), as well as the influences derived from the embeddedness of individual actors in multiple networks (Boggs & Rantisi, 2003; Yeung, 2005)

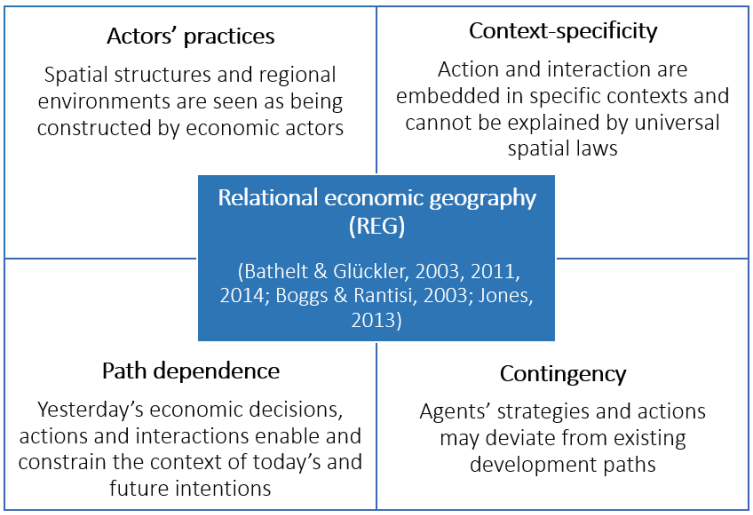
REG's goal is to analyse how production systems are organised and why does this organisation vary in different locations (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003). More specifically, REG is concerned about the social and spatial division and integration of labour (organisation); the positive and negative impact of historical structures, processes and events on today's decisions (evolution); processes of knowledge creation and dissemination and the effects of technological change (innovation); and, last but not least, the interactions between economic agents and the formal and informal institutions that stimulate and restrict them (interaction) (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003, 2011).

The relational approach views space as perspective, that is, as a new way of asking questions about economic phenomena – and of evaluating the four –ions –i.e. organisation, evolution, innovation and interaction – from an actor-centred, contextual, path-dependent and contingent perspective (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003) (see Figure 10). First, it considers space a socially constructed entity – rather than a container – and, as such, the intentions, strategies, practices and patterns of behaviour of economic actors and ensembles of actors produce their own environments. Second, this framework claims the context specificity of human action; thus, context is viewed as both creator and constrainer of opportunities for economic action and interaction. Along the same lines as those of the scholars in EEG, REG also regards past decisions, actions and interactions – i.e. path dependence – as explanatory variables for understanding the present and future characteristics of economic landscapes. Finally, REG introduces the concept of contingency into its epistemological foundations, so it recognises that economic decisions are neither predetermined nor predictable, as 'identical preconditions for human action do not necessarily have the same consequences at any time and place' (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003, p. 127).

From this conceptualisation, knowledge is the key asset that the economic landscape and networks of actors therein need to create competitiveness, prosperity and wealth. Therefore, as introduced earlier, exploring the influence of geography in knowledge creation, dissemination and localised learning processes is of central of interest of geographers working on this relational literature (Glückler, Lazega, & Hammer, 2017). A number of studies have discussed and analysed industrial districts, clusters, networks and innovative regions in a range of locations – with a special focus in technological and knowledge-intensive industries. These works evidence, first, that geographical proximity and trust-based collaboration favour the

creation and circulation of knowledge, practices and expertise – sometimes of tacit and 'sticky' nature – among actors who often may even acquire these inputs in a nearly unconscious way, simply by 'being there' (Becattini, 2004; Malmberg & Maskell, 2006). Second, this research also comes to the conclusion if clusters and regions aim to remain competitive in the global economy, localised learning processes need the existence of external connections that help acquire new and valuable state-of-the-art knowledge (Bathelt, Malmberg, & Maskell, 2004). An important contribution in this regard is the knowledge-based buzz-and-pipeline model, which suggests that 'the growth of a cluster depends on systematic linkages between its internal networks, conceptualised as "local buzz", and its external knowledge and market environment, referred to as "global pipelines" […] While local buzz supports internal coherence, a cluster's competitive success and growth strongly depends on its external linkages' (Li & Bathelt, 2011, p.6). Likewise, more recent developments go beyond the study of knowledge flows within territorial industry settings and explore the role of international events such as trade fairs – understood as temporary clusters – that facilitate the establishment of trans-local inter-firm linkages and global pipelines for learning (Bathelt & Gibson, 2015).

Figure 10. *Pillars of relational economic geography (REG)*



Source: Updated from Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé (2014)

All in all, the aim to constitute REG as a genuine prospect for future research in economic geography has been subject to scrutiny (Jones, 2013). Some authors consider it as the result of a reworking of previous literature that dealt with relationalism but in a non-explicit way (Yeung, 2005). In particular, some critiques are: the lack of specificity and extreme abstraction (Sunley, 2008); the under-theorisation of power relations (Yeung, 2005); the focus on firms rather than individuals in micro-level analysis (Ettlinger, 2003); and, finally, the lesser

emphasis on non-local relations and flows (Yeung, 2005). Moreover, although REG research has covered the study of a broader range of economic sectors in comparison to EEG (including less researched fields such as media clusters, Bathelt & Boggs, 2005), there is still need of further research that applies the core concepts of this epistemological paradigm in the service sector. Nevertheless, advances towards a more practice-oriented research (Jones & Murphy, 2011) show that REG is a powerful perspective for understanding how local and global interactions among economic and non-economic actors (Bathelt & Glückler, 2011), the knowledge creation and dissemination process in which they participate and their 'economic action unfolds in a spatial perspective and leads to wider spatial patterns that can differ from place to place' (Bathelt & Li, 2014, p.592).

2.2.3. EEG and REG as complementary approaches

The academic interest on analysing the structure of industrial agglomerations – industrial districts, clusters, or regional innovation systems – and their evolutionary trajectories has been at the core of economic geography analysis during the last decades. The thing is, however, that these strands have developed relatively unconnected in the literature. This is an important shortcoming because, as Bathelt and Li (2014) maintain:

> Without changes in networks and conventions, regional renaissance would barely be a 'flash in the pan', induced by temporary increases in demand. Signs of recovery would not lead to a succession of the evolutionary path or life cycle of a cluster. Without an evolutionary perspective, regional success would be determined by the existing local manufacturing culture, which would also provide a partial understanding (p.594)

For this reason, these authors claim the need to explore the linkages between relational and evolutionary perspectives as a means to develop theoretical conceptualisations and empirical analysis that overcome the shortcomings of these approaches if used in isolation (Bathelt & Li, 2014; Li & Bathelt, 2011). In this vein, some authors have compared EEG and REG in order to determine whether these approaches could be considered as competing or complementary and mutually formative shifts (see, for instance, the arguments presented by Hassink & Klaerding, 2009; and Hassink et al., 2014).

From this comparison emerges that some points of divergence as regards how scholars in each paradigm conduct their research can be identified (Table 6). These differences include the primary object of research, which in EEG is generally focused on studying firm routines and structural change while in REG centre the analysis on relationships among actors. In terms of the scale and unit of analysis, EEG studies cover from micro- (firm) to macro-analysis (economic system) while REG, in turn, is rather focused on the micro-level (actors) in the frame of a global context. Besides, the role of formal and informal institutions in enabling or

constraining actors' decisions is seen as more decisive on behalf of REG scholars than EEG scholars. This being said, however, the fact is that both approaches highlight the influence of path (and place) dependence in shaping the long-term dynamics of economic landscapes. Furthermore, these approaches share the conception of knowledge as a source of competitive advantage and of space as essentially socially constructed.

Table 6. *Key commonalities and differences between EEG and REG*

Key issues	EEG	REG
Object of research	Firm routines Structural change	Relations
Space	Socially-constructed	
Economic action	Contextual (micro)	Contextual (micro and macro)
Institutions	Formal and informal (conditioners)	Formal and informal (decisive)
Competitive advantage	Knowledge-driven Variety	
Time	Explicit dynamic perspective	More static perspective
Evolution	Path-dependent Place-dependent Contingent	
Scale and unit of analysis	Multi-level focus: micro-level (firm); meso-level (sector and network); macro-level (spatial system)	Micro-level focus (actors) in global context
Methodology	Mixed-method (quantitative techniques more important)	Mixed-method (qualitative techniques more important)

Source: Author's extended version of Hassink and Klaerding (2009).

This raises arguments to affirm that, in response to Jones and Murphy's (2011) encouragement for developing 'mid-range theories' within the discipline of economic geography, a fruitful exchange between these two theoretical perspectives can help gain understanding on the network structure of clusters and regions and their dynamic changes (Bathelt & Li, 2014). The relational-evolutionary perspective of cluster dynamics applied by Li and Bathelt (2011) and Li, Bathelt, and Wang (2012) – which "conceptualises cluster through systematic interrelationships and ongoing feedbacks between context, network and action" (Bathelt & Li, 2014, p.605) – is a good example of the positive synergies emerging from combining relational and evolutionary constructs.

The initial attempts to develop theoretically and empirically such an integrated perspective illustrate that while EEG approaches could serve as a good point of departure to identify and analyse the processes of change that have positive and negative effects in economic landscapes' evolution (e.g. survival, variety, institutions, adaptation or path dependence, among others), the added value of REG approaches could be inherent in emphasising the role

of social relations and actors' practices, power and multi-scalar impacts (Trippl et al., 2015) as drivers of distinctive evolutionary paths among regions with the same initial conditions. Integrating both approaches, hence, could help advance economic geography in order to provide strong explanations of important phenomena related to the evolution of actor-network relations, including knowledge transfer, production networks, and supply chains (Hassink et al., 2014).

2.3. Evolutionary and relational thinking in tourism geography

Tourism is an essentially geographic activity and as such, geographers are among those who have made major contributions in analysing tourism places (Wilson & Anton Clavé, 2013). From a geographical perspective, tourism has been increasingly seen as an activity that, despite being thoroughly imbricated with its setting and environmental conditions, creates socially constructed productive spaces, which evolve over time (Saarinen, 2004).

In this vein, many scholars have analysed destinations from an evolutionary perspective, while others have stressed the role of networks and agglomeration economies as drivers of local tourism production systems. However, evolutionary and relational approaches tend to be unconnected in the literature and, as a consequence, there is still room to gain comprehensive understanding on tourism destination evolution, configuration and performance.

2.3.1. Theorising destination dynamics: the evolutionary models

There is a long tradition of researchers having attempted to explain the changes resulting from the development of tourism in a destination, both from theoretical and empirical perspectives (see the review presented in Table 7). The so-called evolutionary models seek to generalise the behaviour and the transformations of destinations while identifying and explaining the stages of the process of change and establishing a framework for comparison and forecasting.

The first models were mainly focused on analysing tourism development from a spatial perspective - and the role of demand as the main driver of destination transformations (Christaller, 1964; Gilbert, 1939; Wolfe, 1952) and even decline (Plog, 1973). Some models noted the lack of adaptation to the changing preferences and habits of visitors as the primary cause of declining paths, so they considered rejuvenation possible – as long as the destination emphasised its unique locational advantages (Cohen, 1979; Doxey, 1975; Miossec, 1977; Stansfield, 1978). Overall, these studies analyse the development of tourism in specific case studies – caused by the growth in the number of tourists and by changes in the provision of services, facilities and infrastructure for tourists – without considering the relationship of

tourism with other sectors of the economy as well as the whole condition of each destination as a residential and productive place.

In 1980, Butler published his seminal concept of the tourism area life cycle (TALC) drawing inspiration from previous literature on destination development (especially Christaller, 1964) and the concept of the product life cycle (Cox, 1967; Vernon, 1966). The model makes the assumption that tourism areas, similarly to other products, evolve through a six-stage pattern – i.e. exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and then a range of possibilities from rejuvenation to decline – as a consequence of the increase of tourists (Butler, 2011). Since then, a considerable amount of work has been done to validate or refute the model as a descriptive tool for analysing tourism development in a myriad of destination cases (see Lagiewski, 2006, for an exhaustive review of major tourism life cycle studies) and even to make it operational for planning (Cooper, 1992; Getz, 1992). In parallel, as a result of thorough conceptual and empirical debates about the assumptions of the model regarding the later stages of evolution, some scholars have made important contributions to modify and extend the TALC (Agarwal, 1994; Baum, 1998; Haywood, 1986; Hovinen, 1981; Ioannides, 1992; Priestley & Mundet, 1998).

Although the TALC has generated the most relevant destination evolution research stream (Gordon & Goodall, 1992), other longitudinal models have also been proposed since the 1980s. For example, Chadefaud (1987) built a diachronic model exploring the relationship between the dominant and dominated classes' mental representations as driver of tourism products evolution. The spatio-temporal model of Gormsen (1997) identified common factors in the stages of the spatial development of tourism in seaside resorts, including the availability of specific tourist services, the source of capital for development, the origin of supplies, the effects of tourist traffic, and the environmental stress imposed upon the coastal area. Additionally, Smith's (1992) work conceived tourism development in contemporary beach resorts as a process of urbanisation that could be clearly defined in terms of physical expansion, functional diversification and environmental impacts.

Table 7. *Major approaches to destination evolution in tourism studies*

Author/s	Main contribution	Year
Gilbert	Changes and growth of the built-up area in seaside health resorts acting as residential population attractors with a spatial development perspective.	1939
Wolfe	Interest on the processes of change of tourism destinations and its potential effects with special interest in second homes areas.	1952
Christaller	Tourist flows and patterns explaining the spatial distribution of tourist places. Demand perspective.	1964
Plog	Changes in the tourist market are related to subsequent changes in the destinations visited. Destination decline is predictable and inevitable.	1973
Doxey	Model suggesting that communities pass through a sequence of reactions as the impacts of tourism in a destination become more pronounced.	1975
Miossec	Destination evolution is driven by the continuous adjustment of demand and supply. Evolution is described in 5 phases form a pioneering stage to a congestion stage. Success or failure of tourism destinations is explained by destination stakeholders' capability of adaptation.	1977
Stansfield	Seminal case study about rejuvenation of tourism destinations. Rejuvenation is possible if destination emphasises its (unique) locational advantages.	1978
Cohen	Discussion of the need to conceive multi-lineal models of tourism development illustrated by an elaboration of MacCannell's fundamental concepts.	1979
Butler	Seminal model –Tourism Area Life Cycle- starting a long trend of research about the evolution of tourist areas. Model based in the evolution of tourism demand. Define a pattern and stages in the tourist area evolution.	1980
Gormsen	Spatio-temporal model explaining common factors in the development of destinations over increasingly peripheral zones of the world.	1981, 1997
Chadefaud	The "collective myth" -the mental representations of the demand- as the driver of tourism product's evolution.	1987
Smith	Focus on development from a spatial perspective. Tourism development linked to urbanisation process Comparative spatial evolutionary model for contemporary beach resorts.	1992
Agarwal	Exploration of the theoretical relationship between Butler's TALC and the restructuring thesis.	2002
Equipe MIT	Distinction between types of spaces created by tourism and types of spaces transformed by tourism and exploration of links between them.	2002
Papatheodorou	Theoretical model of tourism evolutionary patterns from an economic geography perspective illustrating the interaction of market and spatial forces in destination evolution and development	2004
Prideaux	Multidimensional model –Resort Development Spectrum- based on the long term evolution of demand in a destination.	2004
Andriotis	Identification of the principal characteristics determining morphological change of coastal resorts in a predictable sequence of stages.	2006
Agarwal	Relevance of relational spatiality for spatial planning in coastal resort restructuring.	2012

(Continued)

Table 7. *(Continued)*

Author/s	Main contribution	Year
Anton Clavé	Categorisation of different types of mature Mediterranean mass coastal destinations according with the (re) development strategies implemented by decision-makers.	2012
Pavlovich	Critique of the linear models of destination evolution based upon the concept of networks as *rhizomic*. Change as antihierarchical, self-organised and locally-inspired.	2013
Clivaz et al.	Development of the concept of "touristic capital" of resorts in other to analyse their specific trajectories over time.	2014
Ioannides et al.	Introductory paper summarising the promising avenues of research and theory building that incorporating EEG represent to gain understanding of tourism destination evolution.	2014

Source: Based on Brouder et al. (2017)

Tourism scholars have put forward further perspectives since the 2000s with the purpose to continue discussing the utility and limitations of the widespread TALC model. Among these contributions, specific mention can be made to the work of Agarwal (2002) who introduced the concept of restructuring, or the multidimensional model proposed by Prideaux (2004) with the purpose to increase understanding of the demand-side response to the market operating in a given resort by focusing on the case of the Gold Coast. Further explorations linking markets and spatial evolution were provided by Papatheodorou (2004) and Andriotis (2006), who defined the development stages of Mediterranean coastal resorts following the vein of previous literature focusing on geomorphological changes. Parallel to this, Équipe MIT (2002) built a comprehensive theory of tourism development that highlighted the capacity of tourism to create places with their own systems of actors and social and urban practices. More recently, the approaches proposed emphasised the crucial role of human agency – i.e. network collaboration and redevelopment policies – in enabling destination evolution and conversion into complex urban places (Agarwal, 2012; Anton Clavé, 2012a; Clivaz et al., 2014; Pavlovich, 2014). These contributions – as the more recent incorporation of EEG concepts and theories (Ioannides et al., 2014) that will be further explained in section 2.4 – started to focus the analysis of destinations as places, rather than studying the evolution of tourism in places (Brouder, Anton Clavé, Gill, & Ioannides, 2017b).

A critical reflection about the contributions and shortcomings of the evolutionary models and approaches outlined above help to bring out several key issues which are worthy of further discussion. To begin with, one of the major interests of the evolutionary models is how to define, manage and overcome the stagnation phase, if possible. In fact, one of the most recurrent criticisms of the TALC – and other historical evolutionary model – is their determinism and its aim to be used as a tool for predicting destination evolution (Bianchi, 1994; Choy, 1992). Although Butler's conception of decline stage was not as radical as it was

conceived by Plog (1973), this author argued that if the carrying capacity of the destination is exceeded, decline in attractiveness, investment and competitiveness would be almost certain unless appropriate interventions were undertaken (Butler, 2011).

Authors such as Agarwal (1994), adopting the restructuring thesis, defend the idea that total decline is unlikely to occur, because stakeholders will do anything to maintain tourism activity, while emphasizing that efforts to revive and renew the destination are generally constant and gradual and do not necessarily involve radical transformations. Indeed, there are well-known cases of mature destinations that have been able to rejuvenate and avoid the consolidation of declining paths. The analysis of the Australian Gold Coast by Faulkner (2002), to give an example, suggests that a shifting from a destination marketing approach to a destination management perspective, including the implementation of a sustainable development framework, the community participation and the development of collaborative relationships, as well as the building of a shared vision for the destination are key issues to avoid the consolidation of declining paths. Likewise, lessons from central Costa Daurada (Anton Clavé, 2012b; Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017) show that success in the rejuvenation processes is essentially based on the existence of a shared strategic vision and the deep involvement of key stakeholders in the construction of an atmosphere of political, entrepreneurial and social consensus and enthusiasm. According to Verbole (2003), tourism development can be seen as a dynamic process that involves many actors "who continuously reshape and transform it to fit it to their perceptions, needs, values and agendas" (p.152). In consequence, as some historical models noted but did not analyse in depth (Miossec, 1977; Stansfield, 1978), research on destination evolution has to pay more attention to the impact of stakeholders' adaptability in response to either external or internal influences (Cooper & Jackson, 1989; Erkuş-Öztürk & Eraydın, 2010; Gibson, Lynch, & Morrison, 2005; Haywood, 1986, 2006a; Ioannides, 1992).

Next, contemporary analysis of destination dynamics may also require further development regarding the local and global contextual forces inducing change at the destination level (Agarwal, 2005). The role of social, economic and political context in enabling and constraining the process of destination development is underestimated or under explained by major conventional evolutionary models. In this sense, authors such as Haywood (2006a) and even Butler (2004) suggest that, if researchers want to fully appreciate the causes and effects of tourism destination evolution, the analysis needs to be improved by introducing context specificities of the destination. In addition, Agarwal (2005) points out that resort changes have to be examined in a global context, linking resort development with theories of global change, local governance and collective action. In this sense, for instance, Dodds' (2007) research based on Calvià, in the Balearic Islands – one of the Mediterranean´s most popular sun, sea and sand tourist resorts –, highlights the role of an integrated and collaborative approach to implement a sustainable tourism policy to face a significant economic, social and environmental decline of the destination. Besides, demand flows are one of the primary

(global) forces with which destinations have to deal with if they aim to remain attractive and competitive and as such, the transformations driven by the changing evolution of markets deserve a more in-depth analysis (Ivars, Rodríguez Sánchez, & Vera Rebollo, 2013).

Some conventional evolutionary models – including the TALC – give a secondary role to space, considering it a support instead of an active participating agent in the dynamics of tourism development, and only examining the evolution of tourism activity. In this regard, new perspectives should consider the development of destinations as complex places with other residential, productive and social functions and activities that also change in parallel to the evolution of tourism (Equipe MIT, 2002). Otherwise, misunderstandings could emerge when drawing conclusions on evolution, change and future viability of tourism destinations – as is the case of the non-confirmed pessimistic post-stagnation scenario predicted for most second generation Mediterranean mass market resorts in Knowles and Curtis (1999). Since the early 2010s, a growing body of work drawing inspiration in economic geography contemporary debates under the umbrella of EEG maintains that this framework provides useful theoretical insights to deepen and strengthen the understanding of tourism destination's uneven evolutionary trajectories (Brouder, 2014; Ioannides et al., 2014) – see section 2.4.

2.3.2. Explaining destination organisation: clusters, districts and networks

Tourism destinations, by nature, are the result of the union of a series of attractions, activities and services offered by various actors which must be coordinated to provide a coherent supply. In this sense, tourism is a sector that promotes and at the same time needs collaboration between the agents involved and favours the emergence of partnerships and networks in order to bring together synergies, optimise resources and create an attractive product, able to be positioned in the tourism market and remain competitive. Bearing this into consideration, parallel to the analyses of the evolution of destinations, several scholars have used different but related territorial models of industrial economics (Trippl & Bergman, 2014) as a point of departure to analyse agglomerations of actors specialised in tourism activities. Clusters (Porter, 1990), districts (based on Marshall, 1920, and popularised by Becattini, 1979) and networks – from a more general perspective – have been the most commonly conceptualisations used in this regard (see a selection of articles applying these approaches in Table 8).

Since Porter (1998) stated the conceptual foundations of the cluster theory by using the California wine cluster – closely related to the tourism sector – as a good example of macro-regional clustering, a stream of research aiming to analyse the clustering phenomenon in tourism was started. These works emphasise the opportunities arising from developing clusters in tourism in terms of knowledge transfer, innovation and competitiveness – see, for instance, the analysis of specific case studies in the UK conducted by Novelli, Schmitz, and

Spencer (2006) and Weidenfeld, Williams, and Butler (2010)– while highlighting the complexity of involving and assuring the persistence of strong collaboration among the traditionally highly fragmented tourism sector. Likewise, studies such as the ones published by Michael (2007) and Jackson and Murphy (2006), considered tourism micro-clustering an effective policy tool for regional growth in peripheral areas and identified the internal division of local industry, the absence of leadership and the difficulty to define cluster boundaries as the main barriers to cluster development in regional areas. Jackson (2006) found similar results when exploring the possibilities to create tourism regional clusters in emerging market economies such as China. The critical analysis conducted by Rodríguez Sánchez, Williams, and Hall (2014) also reveals difficulties in the definition and implementation of innovation policies in Spain based on the promotion of collaboration synergies through the creation of clusters, including the need to actively engage political and industrial stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation to assure the success – in terms of innovation outcomes – and sustainability of these clusters even after the funding period of these initiatives.

In parallel to this strand of research, Hjalager (2000) presented an initial theoretical attempt to apply the industrial district theory in the tourism field. This author identified some features that courage the comparison between industrial districts and tourism destinations. The SME-based economy, the specialisation in one sector, the inclusion in a global market, the extended vertical interdependence, the existence of numerical and functional flexibility and the tendencies towards the establishment of supportive public and semi-public policies and institutions were the most relevant (Hjalager, 2000, p.11). Oppositely, factors such as the non-supportive governance structures, the dependency of multinationals, the firms' free-riding behaviour and the lack of stabilised collaborative structures were considered barriers to direct comparison in some cases (Hjalager, 2000, p.12).

Apart from this eminently theoretical discussion, some researchers translated the model to the empirical analysis of tourism districts (see the review of Capone, 2006). Linking the industrial district background to the French model of 'milieu' as regional innovative systems (Aydalot, 1986), authors such as Lazzeretti and Capone (2006) and Maulet (2006) featured in the volume edited by Lazzeretti & Petrillo (2006) suggest different but related models for identifying and interpreting destinations – naming them indistinctly tourism local systems (TLS) or local tourism systems (LTS) – as systems of economic, noneconomic and institutional actors located in a given area that cooperate in order to enhance local resources through the commercialisation of an integrated tourism product. To sum up, Capone (2006) determines that a TLS is a place where social and economic community co-exist, so the main productive process is localised within the district and developed by local people; where there is a stable and durable specialised industry of autonomous population of small and medium firms that cooperate and compete for developing wealth and generating local activities; and, finally, where exists a shared homogeneous system of values and a kind of "industrial atmosphere" that favours the creation of a systemic consciousness and profound sense of belonging. As a

result, this model goes beyond the quantitative and competitive-focused perspectives of the cluster approach, even though quantitative approaches to tourism districts can also be found in the literature – see, for example, the work of Marco-Lajara, Claver-Cortés, Úbeda-García, and Zaragoza-Sáez (2016) analysing the effects of business agglomeration in the economic performance of hotels located in Spanish coastal destinations.

Many other approaches take as a reference the notion of networks, in a more general sense, to describe the structure and organisation of tourism destinations. Among this body of works, some studies use social network analysis methods to study the structural properties of local destination networks to understand their organisation and performance. This is the case of the analysis of Scott, Cooper, and Baggio (2008) of four Australian destinations and also, even though it is not conceptually related to the cluster theory but to the destination life cycle approach, the analysis of the commercial-community systems and tensions that arise in a local destination network in the case of the port area of the city of Edinburgh (Gibson et al., 2005). Others underline the importance of links between local and global networks in order to attain and maintain the competitiveness and sustainability of destinations (this has been studied, for instance, for the case of Antalya tourism region by Erkuş-Öztürk, 2009; Erkuş-Öztürk & Eraydın, 2010). Finally, a range of studies view and analyse destinations as networks in which knowledge generation and dissemination processes take place, while opening new avenues for innovation (Baggio & Cooper, 2010; Del Chiappa & Baggio, 2015; Guia, Prats, & Comas, 2006; McLeod & Vaughan, 2015; Novelli et al., 2006).

If one focuses on the two mainstream approaches in economic geography – i.e. industrial districts and clusters – differences exist and there is a division in the literature between supporters of cluster theory and those who defend the adequacy of industrial district theory to analyse tourism destinations. The fact is, however, that both see destinations as the result of a specialisation process of a local community in the production and commercialisation of a specific product and give relevance to the interrelations between the productive sector and the local community (Jackson & Murphy, 2006). Some scholars identify difficulties in applying these models to the tourism context and argue that there is a need to adapt traditional notions of ‘cluster’ and ‘district’ (Baggio, 2008a; Jackson & Murphy, 2006; Judd, 1995), as well as a need to specify how to translate clustering and districtualisation from theory to practice.

Table 8. *Selected publications analysing tourism clusters, districts and networks*

Approach	Author/s	Main contribution	Year
Cluster	Porter	Conceptual foundations of Cluster Theory (including an example from the tourism sector).	1998
	Michael	Tourism micro-clustering as a policy tool for regional growth in peripheral areas.	2003, 2007
	Jackson	Barriers to cluster development in an emerging market economy.	2006
	Jackson & Murphy	Barriers to cluster development in regional areas.	2006
	Novelli, et al.	Clustering as a source of innovation and renewal of tourism destinations.	2006
	Weidenfeld et al.	Role of spatial proximity and product similarity in knowledge transfer and innovation in tourism attractions.	2009
	Rodriguez et al.	Analysis of Spanish tourism innovation policies based on the fostering of collaboration synergies through the creation of clusters.	2014
	Capone	Volume reviewing the main theoretical and empirical contributions on tourism clusters, competitiveness and destination management and analysing several case studies in Italy, UK and the US.	2016
Districts	Hjalager	Conceptual discussion about similarities and differences between tourism destinations and industrial districts.	2000
	Lazzeretti & Petrillo	Volume including theoretical discussions on the Tourism Local System concept, empirical analysis of case studies in tourism and cultural contexts.	2006
	Capone	Proposal of the Tourism Local System concept drawing inspiration on industrial district theory.	2006
	Lazzeretti & Capone	Preliminary guide to empirically identify Tourism Local Systems.	2006
	Maulet	Analytical framework to study the cooperative culture in tourism districts.	2006
	Baggio	Analysis of the structure and evolution of a destination as district.	2008a
	Marco-Lajara et al.	Impact of the degree of business agglomeration in the profit of the hotel industry located in coastal destinations.	2014
Networks	Gibson et al.	Analysis of the commercial-community systems and tensions that arise in local destination networks.	2005
	Guia et al.	Conceptualisation of local system of innovation and applicability to the case of tourist destinations.	2006
	Scott et al.	Analysis of the structural properties of inter-organisational networks within destinations.	2008
	Erkus-Öztürk	Contribution of local and global networking in tourism firms' creativeness and local development.	2009
	Baggio & Cooper	Utility of network analysis to study knowledge transfer processes in tourism destinations.	2010
	Erkus-Öztürk & Eraydin	Role of local-global collaborative networks for promoting governance strategies towards sustainable tourism development.	2010

(Continued)

Table 8. *(Continued)*

Approach	Author/s	Main contribution	Year
Networks	Solé Pla	Evolution of entrepreneurs' relations in cross-border tourism products using social network analysis techniques.	2012
	Del Chiappa & Baggio	Utility of network analysis to study knowledge transfer processes in smart tourism destinations.	2015
	Van der Zee & Vanneste	Extensive review of state-of-the-art research into network collaboration in tourism.	2015
	McLeod & Vaughan	Volume compiling contemporary theoretical and empirical approaches to study knowledge networks in tourism.	2015

Source: Author's review

In any case, the state of research into collaboration dynamics in tourism destinations – using either cluster, district or network lens – is fragmented in different sub-fields of research and present discontinuous and heterogeneous methodological approaches, which necessarily need to be improved to provide valuable empirical evidences of the real network outcomes (Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015). Moreover, these approaches do not explicitly recognise the complex adaptive nature of tourism systems, as few but steadily growing and promising strand of literature advocate since the late 1990s (Baggio & Sainaghi, 2011; Faulkner & Russell, 1997; McDonald, 2009; Russell & Faulkner, 2004). Therefore, they analyse tourism destinations from a linear, simplified and deterministic approach which does not take into account the distributed nature, limited decomposability, non-linearity, openness, adaptive capability, emergence, self-organisation and self-similarity of destinations as complex systems (Baggio & Sainaghi, 2011) (Baggio & Sainaghi, 2011).

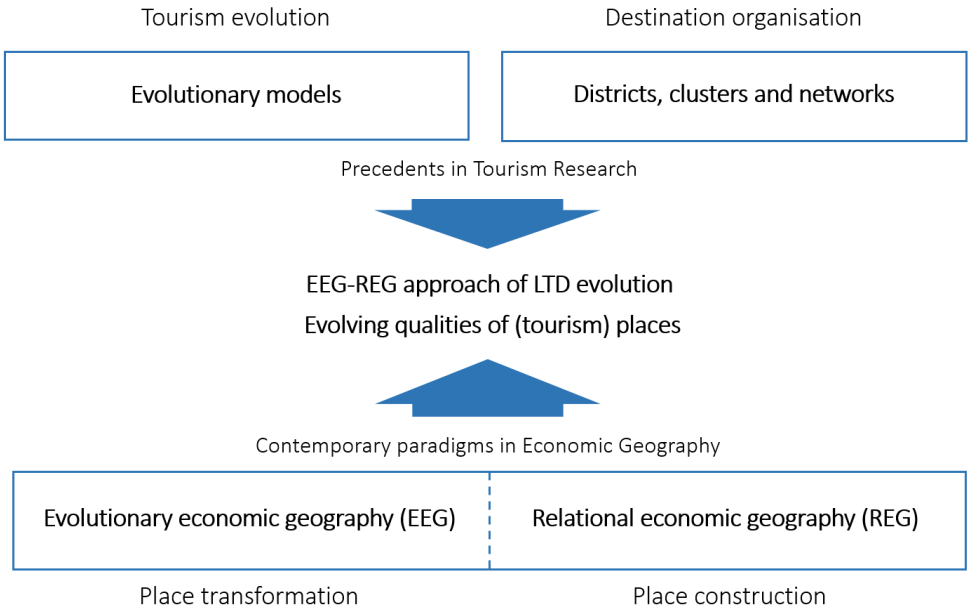
Furthermore, although some authors have started to explore the evolution of tourism clusters, districts and networks (Baggio, 2008a; Solé Pla, 2012), most relational studies have dealt with destinations from a static approach. This has occurred even though a number of studies analysed the evolution of industrial clusters (Fornahl, Hassink, & Menzel, 2015; Martin & Sunley, 2011; Menzel & Fornahl, 2009; Trippl et al., 2015), districts (Becattini, 2003; Belussi & Sedita, 2009; Hoffmann, Belussi, Martínez-fernández, & Reyes, 2017) and networks (Balland, 2012; Balland, Belso-Martínez, & Morrison, 2016; Balland, de Vaan, & Boschma, 2012; Ter Wal & Boschma, 2011) in the economic geography discipline, as illustrated in section 2.2.

2.4. EEG-REG foundation of the dissertation analysis

2.4.1. The growing interest for EEG and REG perspectives in tourism geography

The literature review presented in the previous sections evidences that there is room for an integrated perspective that could elucidate the mechanisms underpinning destination dynamics. First, there is a need to search for valuable perspectives that contribute to fill in the gaps identified in the extant models of tourism destination evolution and organisation. Second, a link between evolutionary and relational perspectives is of crucial importance to better understand the long-term performance of tourism destinations, especially at the local level. This thesis argues that a comprehensive framework for theoretical and empirical research can be achieved by exploring and integrating EEG and REG approaches (Figure 11).

Figure 11. *Rationale for the proposal of an EEG-REG approach of destination evolution*



Source: Author

Regarding REG, despite the potential of applying this approach "given the complex tourism commodity chain, the variegated institutional structures and the multiplicity of individual interactions shaping the tourism experience" (Debbage & Ioannides, 2011, p.152), few tourism geographers have directed their attention to its building blocks explicitly, even though some EEG based analysis include implicitly REG principles (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017; Bramwell & Cox, 2009; Brouder & Eriksson, 2013a; Chen & Bao, 2014; Gill & Williams, 2011, 2014) and others explicitly link both perspectives (Chim-Miki, Domareski-Ruiz, & Batista-

Canino, 2016; Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014, 2016). Therefore, testing the utility of this approach to cover the weaknesses identified in the conventional relational models used in tourism studies can benefit from further research.

In the case of EEG, linking evolutionary ideas – in a more global sense – in the field of tourism goes back several years ago when some authors defended the similarity between tourism development and Darwinian theories (Haywood, 1986); the basic principles of Complexity theory (Mckercher, 1999; Russell & Faulkner, 2004); and also the notion of path-dependence dynamics (Papatheodorou, 2004). Even Butler himself acknowledged having been inspired by wildlife evolution when designing the TALC model. Nevertheless, as shown in Table 9, since the 2010s a fledging but promising strand of research has started to use EEG approaches in tourism. These pioneering contributions include seminal theoretical reflections (Brouder, 2014, 2017; Brouder & Eriksson, 2013b; Brouder & Ioannides, 2014; García-Cabrera & Durán-Herrera, 2014; Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014; Williams, 2013) and empirical case study research applied to a range of destinations in Europe (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017; Bramwell & Cox, 2009; Brouder & Eriksson, 2013a; Halkier & Therkelsen, 2013; Larsson & Lindström, 2014; Meekes, Buda, & De Roo, 2017; Randelli, Romei, & Tortora, 2014; Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2016; Soares, Ivars Baidal, & Gândara, 2015), North America (Brouder & Fullerton, 2015; Gill & Williams, 2011, 2014), South America (Chim-Miki et al., 2016; Soares et al., 2015), Asia (Erkuş-Öztürk & Terhorst, 2015; Ma & Hassink, 2014) and Oceania (Ma & Hassink, 2013). These works evidence that the translation of EEG approaches – hitherto used in manufacturing and knowledge-intensive production sectors – to tourism can facilitate understanding of "how places change and, perhaps as or even more importantly, why they change" as it was claimed by Butler (2011, p.32).

Table 9. *Tourism Geography research on destination evolution using EEG and REG perspectives.*

Authors	Description	Publication	Published
Bramwell & Cox	Case study of path dependence of a national park tourism partnership	*Journal of Sustainable Tourism*	2009
Gill & Williams	Case study of path dependence in Whistler Resort, Canada	*Journal of Sustainable Tourism*	2011
Ma & Hassink	Case study of path dependence and co-evolution in Gold Coast, Australia	*Annals of Tourism Research*	2012
Brouder & Eriksson	Regional branching towards tourism in north Sweden's resource-based region	*Tourism Geographies*	2013
Halkier & Therkelsen	Path dependence and path plasticity in Denmark's coastal tourism regions	*Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie*	2013
Larsson & Lindström	Co-evolution of new tourism with traditional boat-building in Sweden	*European Planning Studies*	2013

(Continued)

Table 9. *(Continued)*

Authors	Description	Publication	Published
Brouder & Eriksson	Conceptual overview of the nexus of EEG and tourism studies	*Annals of Tourism Research*	2013
Williams	Understanding of tourism mobilities as path-depending or path-creating	*Journal of Sustainable Tourism*	2013
Randelli et al.	Path creation and regional lock-in within rural tourism in Italy	*Land Use Policy*	2014
Brouder	Review of 'EEG and Tourism' sessions at AAG Meeting 2013	*Tourism Geographies*	2014
Garcia-Cabrera & Duran-Herrera	Co-evolution of tourism firms and institutional change in a crisis context	*Annals of Tourism Research*	2014
Chen & Bao	Path dependence in the evolution of resort governance models in China	*Tourism Geographies*	2014
Brouder	Review of EEG and tourism papers to date and list of future research paths	*Tourism Geographies*	2014
Gill & Williams	Path creation through 'mindful deviation' of stakeholders in Whistler	*Tourism Geographies*	2014
Ma & Hassink	Path dependence and regional lock-in within tourism in Guilin, China	*Tourism Geographies*	2014
Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton-Clavé	Conceptual paper linking tourism destination evolution to agglomerations and relational economic geography	*Tourism Geographies*	2014
Brouder & Ioannides	Urban tourism through an EEG lens	*Urban Forum*	2014
Brouder & Fullerton	Co-evolution of multiple tourism paths across the Niagara Region, Canada	*Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*	2015
Erkuş-Öztürk & Terhorst	Path dependence, lock-in and economic diversification in Antalya	*Current Issues in Tourism*	2015
Soares et al.	Evolution of consolidated coastal destinations in Brazil and Spain	*Anales de Geografía*	2015
Domareski-Ruiz et al.	Adoption of EEG-REG approach to explore Brazilian tourism destinations' competitiveness	*Rosa dos Ventos*	2016
Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé	Analysis on the effects of local-global coupling for destination upgrading in central Costa Daurada	*Annals of Tourism Research*	2016
Anton Clavé & Wilson	Path plasticity on tourism urbanisation in coastal tourism destinations applied to the case of central Costa Daurada	*Journal of Sustainable Tourism*	2017
Brouder	Critical reflection on EEG in tourism geographies from a sustainable development perspective	*Tourism Geographies*	2017
Meekes et al.	Leisure development processes in Fryslân explained from a complexity lens	*Tourism Geographies*	2017

Source: Updated from Brouder et al. (2017)

Besides these scientific articles, the volume *Tourism Destination Evolution* co-edited by Patrick Brouder (Brock University, Canada), Salvador Anton Clavé (GRATET – Rovira i Virgili University), Alison Gill (Simon Fraser University, Canada) and Dimitri Ioannides (Mid-Sweden University) was released in 2017 under Routledge's Series New Directions in Tourism Analysis. This book contains 10 chapters from 18 tourism and economic geography researchers offering a theoretical overview and empirical examples of the potential synergies of applying evolutionary economic geography (EEG) concepts in tourism research. The volume, hence, represents an effort for advancing theory and leading to more effective empirical research on tourism destination evolution under the umbrella of mainstream economic geography discussions around evolution of places and regions.

2.4.2. The EEG-REG analytical model proposed in the dissertation

The analytical model proposed in this thesis departs from the assumption that tourism destinations – at a local scale – should be understood as complex, socially-constructed and dynamic systems (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. *Basic assumptions of the EEG-REG approach of destination evolution*

Source: Author

Firstly, destinations are complex, because they share many commonalities with complex systems such as self-organisation, openness, non-linear interactions among a large number of interrelated elements (Baggio, 2008b) and, more specially, an extremely adaptive capacity to respond to local and global changes in order to survive and remain attractive (Agarwal, 1994). As such, to understand destination evolution it is crucial to strive to do so from a holistic perspective, rather than focusing on its constituent parts separately.

Secondly, tourism destinations are socially-constructed, because they are built through the establishment of complex social and economic long-term relationships between a specialised industry – mainly formed by an autonomous population of small and medium-sized firms – that compete and at the same time cooperate in the market to offer a satisfactory experience to tourists (Lazzeretti & Capone, 2006), and a local community – including local institutions, which play an important role in supporting local culture and productive activity – also formed by resident population and firms from other productive activities. As a result, there is some kind of systemic consciousness and an atmosphere that enhances the consolidation of a system of values and the transmission, learning and exchange of information, knowledge, and innovation in a nearly unconscious way (Maulet, 2006). These synergies become region-specific assets for destinations and form the basis for further specialisation in the tourism activity (Maskell & Malmberg, 1999).

Finally, tourism destinations are dynamic in nature because they are the result of the activation of different elementary processes which generate a global and continuously evolving behaviour (Becattini, 2003). A number of triggering factors – internal or external – can challenge the existing structural and characteristics of the place and can "move it along new dynamic paths, and possibly to a new order, which is not permanent" (Baggio & Sainaghi, 2011, p.840-841).

Going a step forward, the EEG-REG approach proposed here identifies three fundamental pillars as forces that influence and, at the same time, singularise the evolutionary performance of tourism destinations (see Figure 13). These are: human agency, contextuality, and path dependence. The explanation of each trigger, as well as the potential synergies of the analytical model in helping advance extant research on tourism destination evolution are discussed and illustrated below.

Human agency

Tourism destinations are essentially socially constructed systems (Lazzeretti & Capone, 2006). As such, agency – as the mechanism that creates, reproduces and/or restructures economic space in intended and even unintended ways – has a great impact on the contingent and unpredictable nature of destinations' evolution (Jones & Murphy, 2011). The work of Bramwell and Cox's (2009) in evaluating a partnership in a British National Park is a good

example to show how stakeholders that are involved in governance structures based on long-term trust and strong social and economic relations can not only reinforce the competitiveness of the sector, but also deliberately and mindfully shift away evolutionary paths from their inertia (Li & Bathelt, 2011). For this reason, the analysis of destination evolution requires the identification of the main actors involved directly or indirectly in tourism development over time; their perceptions and objectives, the roles they play, as well as the dynamics of cooperation and competition within the formal and informal networks that emerge – both spontaneous and planned.

Stakeholder action, which is sometimes formalised through planning and strategic policies at local, regional and/or national level, drives tourism development in a specific area over time. Short-term interests and geographic localism may affect stakeholders' decisions and actions negatively (Halkier, 2014), but strategic political intervention in fact might be the key to the success in renewing mature destinations (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017). This might also be the reason why some destinations – even those influenced by homogeneous contextual environments – evolve in different directions. For these reasons, the analysis of destination evolutionary triggers requires the identification of policies –at the local, regional or national level- that have direct or indirect impact on the development of tourism in a specific area.

Above all, the effectiveness of both public policies and private innovation-oriented initiatives in enabling destinations' adaptability and long-run competitiveness is greatly determined by the tacit and explicit knowledge available over time (Becattini, 2003). Thus, it is essential to identify the public and private organisations that contribute to the generation and dissemination of knowledge, as well as the level of expertise of local stakeholders and the local forms of production and innovation resulting from actors' experience (Bathelt & Glückler, 2011). These are key issues in enabling tourism firms and destination survival, in response to the power imposed by institutional structures and forces of change emergent in a local and global context (Brouder & Eriksson, 2013a; Dulupçu, Demirel, & Sungur, 2010).

Contextuality

Social, economic and political structures – institutions – operating at different levels are embedded in minds, places and times and as such, they shape the ability of stakeholders to innovate (Farole, Rodríguez-Pose, & Storper, 2011). However, this does not mean that institutions affect stakeholder behaviour in a deterministic way. Instead, they act as elements that enable or constrain the strategic choices made by stakeholders in a given situation (Bathelt & Glückler, 2014; Li & Bathelt, 2011). In this vein, for instance, empirical studies in the tourism literature show that the ability to generate new development paths in some destinations has been favoured by the presence of a systemic consciousness, shared values and sense of belonging (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017; Maulet, 2006), in line with the 'industrial atmosphere' studied by Becattini (1979), the presence of a local productive culture based on

entrepreneurship (Brouder & Eriksson, 2013a), or the presence of a variety of related or unrelated resources to be enhanced and promoted through tourism activity (Aarstad, Kvitastein, & Jakobsen, 2016). By contrast, the persistence of inefficient institutions such as political regulations, as highlighted by Halkier (2013), could act as a barrier for local stakeholders' ability to promote improvements to the visitor economy. Institutions, however, simultaneously shape and are shaped by ways of doing and interacting (Bathelt & Glückler, 2014), so the adoption of novelties in stakeholder practices can enable institutional change (Boschma & Frenken, 2009). This is the case in North Jutland, where stakeholders have been able to reconfigure existing institutions and create new opportunities for stagnating coastal destinations (Halkier & Therkelsen, 2013).

Besides the local context, global political regulations and external environment factors – for instance, economic recessions or political conflicts (Ma & Hassink, 2013) – can also have a great impact on the evolutionary performance of destinations. Moreover, in slight contrast to what happens in industrial sectors, global markets play a decisive role in explaining destination dynamics. First, because demand is at the same time a consumer and 'co-producer' of tourism places (Debbage & Ioannides, 2011). Second, because the continuously changing nature of demand flows affects the attractiveness of places in an increasingly globalised and competitive world. Traditional conceptions tend to consider demand markets as a controversial and exogenous factor – beyond the control of the destination and which can be dealt by destinations afterwards– and also as a negative factor – changes in demand preferences cause problems (including decline) in those destinations that do no adapt their offer to the new trends. That is the case of Ma and Hassink (2013) and Halkier and Therkelsen (2013) empirical case studies, where changes in demand tastes and preferences were identified as one of the main causes of the Gold Coast and North Jutland stagnation. Nevertheless, as Li and Bathelt (2011) stated in their study of industrial clusters, actors themselves can build their own environments, and experiences from mature destionations (Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2016) show that the attraction of new markets can be also regarded as a proactive survival action of local stakeholders – strategically coupled with global intermediaries – aiming to avoid stagnation and lock-in.

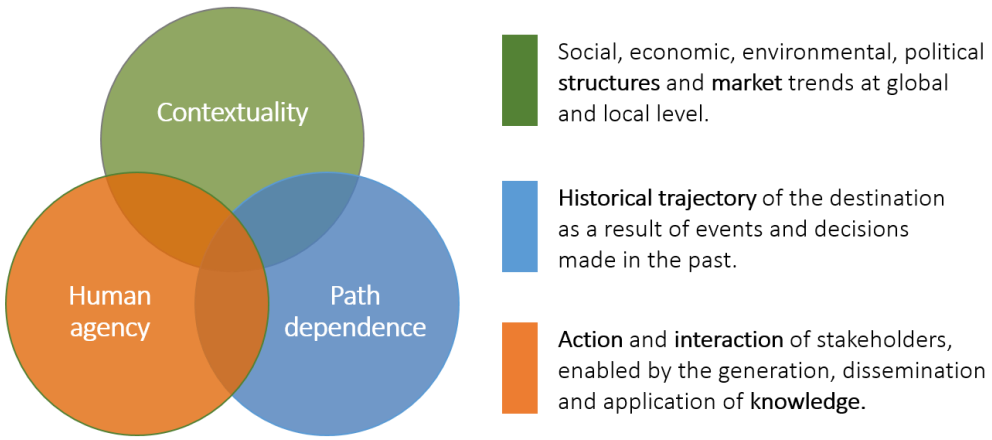
Path dependence

From an overall perspective, all events, circumstances and decisions made in the past – even the most random and unintended – can have long-term consequences (Martin, 2014; Martin & Sunley, 2006) on tourism destination evolution. Therefore, the analysis of the historical trajectory of destionations could give useful explanations to understand why destinations are today as they are and, why not, as well as giving some clues about their future as living communities. Ma and Hassink (2013) and Ma (2013), for instance, noted that the emergence and consolidation of tourism in the Australian Gold Coast and in Guilin, China, was either

stimulated by pre-existing conditions (cultural and natural resources and basic infrastructure) and by the initiatives of entrepreneurs and the strategies of local governments, respectively. On the contrary, institutional rigidity (related to product obsolescence) was found to be one of the main causes of negative lock-in (Hassink, 2005) in both destinations. Indeed, (Anton Clavé, 2012b) shows how product diversification and upgrading – among other strategies – can contribute to renew mature destinations.

Therefore, the evolutionary paths of destinations have to be seen as essentially contingent – i.e. as open-ended and non-deterministic (Li & Bathelt, 2011). What is more, destinations' trajectories are emergent and continually transforming (Martin & Sunley, 2011; Meekes et al., 2017) because stakeholders try to renew and reposition themselves (Agarwal, 2012). This phenomenon is illustrated by Gill and Williams (2011, 2014), who affirm that in the case of Whistler, British Columbia, lock-out was achieved by adopting a radical global environmental strategy aimed at increasing the resort's sustainability. It must be noted, however, that radical or sudden changes are extremely rare in the context of tourism destinations and gradual accumulation of small changes is more likely to occur (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017). Along these lines, Halkier and Therkelsen (2013) conclude that the adoption of incremental shifts enabled the readjustment of coastal destinations in North Jutland to cope with a stagnating demand and the global economic crisis. In any case, both path creation (Garud & Karnøe, 2001) and path plasticity (Strambach & Halkier, 2013) are powerful explanations for the survival ability of mature destinations.

Figure 13. *Triggers of destination evolution from an integrated EEG-REG approach*



Source: Updated from Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé (2014)

All in all, the approach presented takes the notions of human agency, contextuality and path dependence as triggers of change, and conceptualises destination evolution as a complex,

path- and place-dependent process that is determined by the action and interaction of stakeholders and their ability to adapt or create new paths, as well as to survive in response to local and global changes. Thus, in contrast to previous evolutionary research in the tourism field, destination evolution is not regarded as a linear trajectory from a *less developed* to a *more consolidated* state – leading to stagnation and even decline –, but as an ongoing process shaped by multiple forces. This process is seen, in turn, as producing distinctive evolutionary pathways as a result of the peculiarities of each destination and the specific interplay between these forces in terms of human agency, contextuality and path dependence, which are conceptualised as triggers of evolutionary change.

As announced in the introduction section, the following chapters display the empirical research undertaken to examine how these triggers have played a role in the evolutionary trajectory of central Costa Daurada since the 1980s. Each chapter corresponds to one of the three publications that conform the research project and includes, besides the explanation of methods used and findings obtained, further details on the analytical foundation of the trigger that represents the main focus of interest in the chapter, as well as a discussion of the results in relation to the literature.

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CHAPTER 3. Networks and localised systems of learning

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CHAPTER 3. Networks and localised systems of learning

The content of this chapter is mainly based on the following article:

Sanz-Ibáñez, C., Lozano, S., & Anton Clavé, S. (submitted). How do brokers work in tourism knowledge networks? Comparing informal exchange and formal transfer flows. *Journal of Travel Research*.

3.1. Introduction

Successful specialised regions in a globalised knowledge-based economy have come to be seen as those where actors embedded in collaborative networks are truly engaged in knowledge exchange processes (Brenner, Cantner, & Graf, 2013; Li & Bathelt, 2011). These synergies create networks of knowledge flows that facilitate the sharing and acquisition of knowledge and expertise in the domain which constitutes the core of the region's economic activity, either through the building of formal relations or through informal contacts (Balland et al., 2016; Østergaard, 2009).

When studying processes of localised learning and innovation, mainstream economic geography has mainly focused on manufacturing or high-tech industries, while neglecting service industries and, in particular tourism related activities, despite its huge impact and spatial extent (Ioannides & Debbage, 2014; Niewiadomski, 2014). This circumstance seems to be changing, as can be illustrated by discussions raised in several international conferences (David Rigby and Bjorn Asheim at the 2015 and 2017 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers, or Ron Boschma during the Fourth Global Conference on Economic Geography 2015), and in economic geography articles (Jones, 2016). Nonetheless, as stated by Dieter F. Kogler in the forewords of the volume *Tourism Destination Evolution* (Brouder et al., 2017b), more research efforts are needed to advance the incorporation of evolutionary approaches to the study of the economic trajectory of places in which tourism is the main engine for regional development.

Following this vein, the attempt of this chapter is to explore the promising avenues that

studying knowledge networks and dissemination processes in tourism destinations can give to economic geography in general, to evolutionary economic geography in particular, and to the understanding of tourism districts (Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014). By taking a tourism destination as the object of analysis, this chapter provides valuable insights to the question of who are the actors that create, capture, negotiate, and control knowledge, as well as the ways in which these actors support the circulation of knowledge either through formal or informal channels (Østergaard, 2009).

From the methodological perspective, a two-mode network approach is proposed as a powerful tool to analyse which actors act as brokers in knowledge networks resulting from interactions taking place at specialised seminars and courses organised in central Costa Daurada. The analysis distinguishes between informal exchange flows – produced through casual or spontaneous conversation– and formal transfer flows – resulting from the transmission of knowledge from speakers or lecturers to attendees. Results provide evidences about the role of Technology and Innovation Centres (TICs) as bridging organisations promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange within the different spheres in the triple helix (Goddard, Robertson, & Vallance, 2012).

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 3.2 provides a review of the literature dealing with the issues under study in the context of evolutionary and relational economic geography approaches, as well as the specificities of tourism specialised regions and the advancements achieved so far in tourism studies. Section 3.3 explains the research design and methodologies applied. Section 3.4 presents the empirical evidences obtained. Section 3.5 discusses the results in relation to the literature.

3.2. Analytical foundation

Specialised regions are networked regional economies in which geographical proximity – as well as other forms of cognitive, organisational, social and institutional proximity (Balland, 2012; Boschma, 2005) – and frequent contacts facilitate the transfer of the specific and embedded knowledge and expertise that is 'in the air' (Bathelt & Glückler, 2011; Boschma & Lambooy, 2002). The path to learning and innovation in these productive spaces is supported by interactions and knowledge flows between co-located firms and non-economic actors who work in close collaboration and are involved in "a learning system producing localised knowledge, strongly based on the local culture and the capabilities of local actors" (Belussi & Sedita, 2009, p.508).

Research on networking and knowledge dissemination take as a point of departure the assumption that interconnections between individuals or organisations taking place in –

formal and informal – social and economic networks act as channels through which knowledge resources can potentially flow (Baggio & Cooper, 2010; Balland et al., 2012; Østergaard, 2009). From such a perspective, the existence of a well-structured network with a high degree of cohesion "has proved to be an important determinant when explaining the mechanisms by which ideas, information and knowledge 'travel' from one element of the system to another" (Baggio, Scott, & Cooper, 2010, p.3). Structural and social embeddedness, as the work of Balland, Belso-Martínez, and Morrison (2016) shows, have much to do with the formation of cohesive networks.

The innovativeness and adaptability of networks can be also achieved in less cohesive networks, when specific agents bridge 'structural holes' and provide new information to unconnected nodes (Burt, 2004). Indeed, in knowledge networks - the systems including interconnections made via the intended effort by organisations and/or individuals to share and obtain knowledge resources to the benefit of network participants (McLeod & Vaughan, 2015; Vicente et al., 2011) - generally only a small number of actors are the most central and have a strategic positioning, whereas the rest of actors tend to play more marginal roles in disseminating knowledge (Giuliani, 2007). These hub organisations, sometimes referred in the literature as brokers of knowledge or gatekeepers, support the dissemination of knowledge among local stakeholders and at the same time connect the local network with external knowledge resources that may benefit the local innovation system (Drew, Ritchie, & King, 2014; Kauffeld-Monz & Fritsch, 2011). This last function is particularly crucial for highly specialised places due to the need of external knowledge inputs to avoid negative path dependence effects (Martin, 2010).

3.2.1. Brokers in knowledge networks of specialised productive places

Knowledge brokers can be firms. Entrepreneurs, indeed, "recognise opportunity, mobilise resources, and create value, and are key to the creation of institutions and the building of capacity that will sustain regional economic development" (Feldman, 2014, p.1). Factors such as size, organisation, or business strategy make knowledge needs differ from firm to firm, and at the same time have a direct effect on the ways in which firms acquire and exchange knowledge for fostering innovation (Hjalager, 2010). The biggest firms in the system are generally the ones with a stronger knowledge base, higher absorptive capacity (Giuliani, 2007) and more economic and technical resources for knowledge promotion among their employees. Small firms, in turn, tend to play a less significant and passive role in knowledge dissemination and base their strategy in tacit experiential knowledge and in following the leaders in the industry.

Public authorities and private (trade) associations have been also identified as relevant stakeholders whose policies can enhance the generation of knowledge – either by providing funds for public research organisations or for facilitating training opportunities for workers in

specific sectors (Hjalager, 2010; Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015). There is a growing consensus, moreover, that universities also can hold an outstanding central position in knowledge networks and, hence, perform a pivotal role as drivers of knowledge dissemination in regional economic development. In the context of a knowledge-based economy, the mission of universities goes beyond their traditional fields of action – namely, basic research and teaching – for embracing a third mission: the transfer of knowledge to industry and society (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Srinivas & Viljamaa, 2008). This mission is particularly important in the case of regions or economic sectors constituted with a lack of large and globally connected firms (Kauffeld-Monz & Fritsch, 2011). Nonetheless, university-industry-government relationships may not be straightforward.

In this sense, Technology and Innovation Centres (TICs) are seen as bridging organisations that serve to and proactively enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange between actors from the different spheres of the triple helix that might not arise spontaneously (Goddard et al., 2012). The point is, however, that despite there is a growing policy trend creating TICs for promoting regional development, there is still missing further theoretical discussions and empirical research about the specific functions TICs should perform to activate innovation in different territorial settings and economic sectors (Goddard et al., 2012). In addition to this, a need of tailoring TICs characteristics and functions to its innovation environment is claimed (Miller, 2014).

3.2.2. Knowledge networks in the tourism sector

Knowledge dissemination in regions specialised in industrial sectors or high-tech industries can take place through different vehicles and can vary from place to place (Menzel & Fornahl, 2009). Some works have identified spin-off processes and labour mobility (Ter Wal & Boschma, 2009); client-supplier linkages and socio-institutional relationships (Giuliani, 2007); or university-industry contacts, by means of formal cooperation, mobility of graduates or informal social networks (Østergaard, 2009) as critical elements for knowledge exchange. These processes can also take place in service-oriented regions but, certainly, further research is needed to tackle the specificities of the mechanisms through which knowledge is shared and transferred in regions specialised in economic sectors such as tourism (McLeod & Vaughan, 2015).

These issues have been only partially addressed in the tourism literature. A number of works have explored the role of agglomeration economies and the positive effects of collaboration among actors in the tourism production system (as reviewed in Chapter 2), including upgrading synergies facilitated by global-local strategic coupling relations (Niewiadomski, 2017; Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2016) and knowledge dissemination (Baggio & Cooper, 2010; McLeod & Vaughan, 2015) but the fact is that the understanding of the workings of knowledge in tourism is still a challenge.

To begin with, according to Cooper (2015), knowledge in tourism is mostly tacit, which makes it "sticky and difficult to turn into explicit, communicable information" (p.64). Hence, it is "highly personal and hard to formalise, making it difficult to communicate or share with others" (Xiao, 2006, p.147) Second, knowledge has to be continuously adapted to the constantly changing conditions of the global market, so it evolves and changes. Third, knowledge "is generally context specific, created in communities of practice, which are formed by actors belonging to the same (or similar) sector of activity – e.g. accommodation, research or public organisations, among others" (Cooper, 2015, p.64).

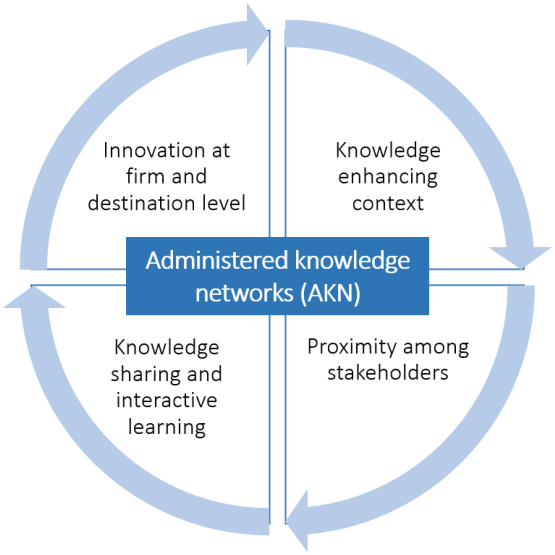
These considerations, together with the "lack of gearing between the research community and the tourism industry itself" (Cooper, 2015, p.72), cause that knowledge generation, dissemination and acquisition in tourism occur in a more complex, informal and sometimes not well-planned manner than in other industries (Hjalager, 2010). For this reason, besides the positive effects of network structure in the transfer of knowledge (Baggio & Cooper, 2010), networks created by knowledge transfer processes are also important. In fact, a strong, positive environment which is conducive to interactive learning and knowledge transfer favours knowledgeable agents with improved capability to innovate and create new knowledge (McLeod & Vaughan, 2015). According to Shaw & Williams (2009), "the central ideas behind this reasoning are that tacit knowledge is the key competitive advantage, and that proximity is essential to developing strong levels of trust and common values which are critical for effective knowledge sharing" (p.329).

For the purposes of this chapter, although acknowledging that there are many more ways in which knowledge can be disseminated, the research is focused on knowledge networks and flows which emerge from the interaction and participation of actors in seminars and courses – referred as indirect conduits by Shaw and Williams (2009). These sort of activities still represent one of the most efficient channels for promoting interactive learning in sectors such as tourism, highly fragmented and in which economic actors hardly interact (Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015). Besides, as Bathelt and Glückler (2011) maintained in the case of international trade fairs, seminars and courses in tourism provide unique opportunities for multiple encounters and external social relationships, which not only facilitate the access to new information but also the transfer of these information from one type of relationship to another (business partnerships, community membership, neighbouring, etc.).

In this sense, seminars and courses are seen as knowledge-enhancing arenas or meeting places for actors from different institutional contexts to interact that help construct 'administered knowledge networks' (Haugland, Ness, Grønseth, & Aarstad, 2011), which can be defined as systems purposely developed to enhance bottom-up localised learning (Malmberg & Maskell, 2006) (Figure 14). These are formal governance structures that link economic and non-economic actors and focus on "identifying relevant knowledge and

capturing it, transferring and sharing it, and ensuring that organisations are engineered to optimise flows and to manage them effectively" (Cooper, 2006, p.48).

Figure 14. *The concept of administered knowledge networks*



Source: Author's design, inspired by Ness (2014)

Knowledge Formal Transfer (FT) in seminars and courses is defined here as the process referring to the transmission of knowledge that occurs as a result of the formal interaction between speakers or lecturers and attendees. Hence, it refers to the traditional conception of the way in which actors attending seminars and courses can benefit from acquiring external knowledge from experts either for their academic background or for their professional expertise – e.g. consultants, policy makers, scientists, teachers, entrepreneurs. This being said, actors participating in seminars and courses can not only learn by listening to experts. Instead, new information, know-how and know-who can be obtained by knowledge Informal Exchange (IE) processes. Indeed, educational events are a perfect platform for creating meeting places for actors – e.g. firms, trade associations, consultancies, public agencies and governments at different levels, to refer to the most relevant – to interact and learn from each other (Ness, 2014). These synergies may emerge through informally-based exchanges of ideas, knowledge, and even sometimes work-related gossip (Shaw & Williams, 2009).

The co-presence and face-to-face contacts produced during these activities – sometimes even at coffee breaks or lunches – facilitate the socialisation of actors and lead to the formation, development and consolidation of informal social networks through which the knowledge – mostly tacit – that each individual and organisation possesses is shared easily by building on informal norms of trust and reciprocity. As Bathelt and Glückler (2011) put it, "this buzz

consists of specific and continuously updated information (…) the application of shared interpretative schemes, common understandings of new knowledge and technologies, as well as shared cultural traditions" (p.132).

All in all, fruitful discussions have emerged but empirical advances made so far in economic geography – and even more so when it comes to tourism studies (McLeod & Vaughan, 2015) – have not yet clarified how knowledge networks resulting from courses and seminars are structured, as well as which role the different actors involved in this specific sector play in favouring knowledge dissemination. These are the main issues this chapter aims to address.

3.3. Methods

This chapter tackles knowledge exchange and transfer in central Costa Daurada during 2013 and 2014. The objective of the research is twofold: first, it aims to explore the structural characteristics of the central Costa Daurada knowledge network; and second, it aims to disentangle the brokerage roles played by the different actors involved in this network. In particular, this study applies social network analysis methods and analyses networks of interactions emerging from the participation of actors in courses and seminars as a way to assess the knowledge network of the area under study and possible brokerage roles played by local actors. The sections below provide a detailed explanation of the steps undertaken, first to collect and process the data, and then, to construct and analyse the networks obtained.

3.3.1. Data collection and relational database

As displayed in Figure 15, the data needed to implement the social network analysis method was centred on three main issues: the list of educational activities (seminars and courses) organised in the area; the records of participants attending each activity; and, finally, the list of speakers who intervened.

Figure 15. *Data collection to apply the two-mode network approach*

Source: Author

The data was obtained from archival resources of the most active and prominent actors organising such educational activities in the destination, namely three business associations (which bring together the majority of firms belonging to the accommodation sector), a public administration (the destination management organisation), and the TIC (the Science and Technology Park of Tourism and Leisure, closely linked to the university, public organisations and productive sectors in the area) – see a list of the participant organisations in Table 10.

Table 10. *Main organisers of seminars and courses in central Costa Daurada*

Sector	Name of organisation
Apartments	Associació d'Apartaments Turístics de la Costa Daurada i les Terres de l'Ebre (AAT)
Camping resorts	Associació de Càmpings de la Costa Daurada i Terres de l'Ebre (ACCDTTE)
Hotels	Associació Hotelera Salou-Cambrils-La Pineda (AHSCLP)
Public administration	Patronat de Turisme de la Diputació de Tarragona (PTDT)
R+D+i	Science and Technology Park for Tourism and Leisure of Catalonia (PCT)

Source: Author

Prior to obtain the data, meetings with the responsible (or contact) persons in each organisation were arranged with the purpose to present the objectives and needs of the study. Such an initial contact in person was of great help to favour a relaxed atmosphere and the confidence of the organisations to share their information. From then on, regular contacts were maintained by e-mail. At this point, it must be noted that the research started in 2015 and the ground idea was to collect data covering a longer period of time. This goal ended up being a difficult task for various reasons.

To begin with, the participant organisations tended to have more complete, systematic and digital data files – particularly, when it came to the records of attendance – for the two previous years of the study – i.e. 2013 and 2014. This was mainly to meet established bureaucratic and administrative requirements by the organisations providing funds for these activities to take place. These documents, hence, were those that could be accessed quickly and shared easily. Data from previous years were not so precise and, above all, sharing that information required more prior work on behalf of the organisation's staff – mainly finding the relevant files in the archives and prepare the documents to be distributed. Considering that these organisations usually count with little personnel dealing with many tasks, these issues slowed down the process and made it complicated. Therefore, it was decided to take 2013 and 2014 as the reference period for the present study, leaving the door open to extend the analysis to previous (and subsequent years) for later.

Once received the data – mainly excel files and word documents – three data bodies were compiled. During this process, other secondary data sources were cursorily analysed through strategic overviews so as to have a holistic view of the characteristics and participants of each selected activity. The sources comprised documents such as annual reports of the private associations consulted and informative materials regarding the syllabus and contents of the activities.

The first task was to create a database containing the knowledge-related activities organised during the period 2013 – 2014. The directory of activities was completed with relevant attributes useful to characterise them (see Table 11). This task was helpful to proceed with a careful selection of activities to be included in the analysis. In this regard, the final list of activities selected – including a total of 51 educational activities – kept only those ones whose purpose was: 1) training of employees and industry representatives on new skills, and/or 2) updating their knowledge on management of tourism organisations to meet the continuous changes in the sector and promote innovation in the region. These activities provided participants with new or updated knowledge about marketing and sales strategies, application and usefulness of ICT in tourism or language skills for improving customer service, among other topics. On the contrary, promotional events, institutional meetings or sessions oriented to update the sector on new regulations, for instance, were excluded.

Table 11. *Attribute variables of activities compiled*

	Activities Educational activities (i.e. courses and seminars) organised	
Attribute variables	Year	2013 or 2014
	Type of activity	Seminar (only half or one day) or course (longer duration).
	Type of knowledge	E.g. language skills, social media, e-business, customer service, promotion planning, sales techniques, energy efficiency, market intelligence, quality, ICT.
	Type of innovation	Marketing, product, managerial, process, institutional.
	Main organiser	Name of organisation
	Collaborators	Name/s of organisation/s
	Venue	Name of the place
	Duration	Number of hours
	Cost	Free or amount of registration fee.
	Total attendees	Number of attendees participating in the activity

Source: Author

The second task was to compile the records of attendees – including employees, middle managers and executives of both private companies and public organisations – and speakers to the 51 selected activities. In both cases organisations in which participants worked or represented were taken as actors, rather than individuals. As did in the case of activities, the lists of attendees and speakers were completed with relevant information describing the organisations represented (Table 12). The 'main activity' attribute was used to apply the social

network analysis technique, while the rest of attributes were of help to understand and interpret the results obtained in the analysis.

Table 12. *Attribute variables of actors compiled*

	Actors Organisations who participated in one or more of the activities identified (as attendee or speaker)	
Attribute variables	Main activity (type of firm)	R+D+I, education, apartments, camping resort, hotel, hotel chain, P2P, leisure & entertainment, association, public organisation, construction, ICT, systems, energy, marketing, consultancy.
	Size	In the case of accommodation firms: number of rooms.
	Category	In the case of accommodation firms: stars.
	Location	Central Costa Daurada, Costa Daurada or external.
	Chain	Yes or no.
	Ownership	Local or foreign.

Source: Author

Thirdly, there was need to construct the two relational matrices that would be used as the basis for the two-mode network approach. These matrices captured, respectively, the attendance of each actor at each activity and the participation of certain actors as speakers in activities. In these matrices, the actors (attendees or speakers) are presented in rows and the activities in columns and they are assigned a value 1 only if actors participated as attendees or speakers in a specific activity. Table 13 displays a simplified example of how these matrices are constructed.

Table 13. *Examples of how relational matrices were constructed*

	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Attendee 1	0	1	1
Attendee 2	1	0	0
Attendee 3	1	1	1

	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Speaker 1	1	0	0
Speaker 2	0	1	0
Speaker 3	0	1	1

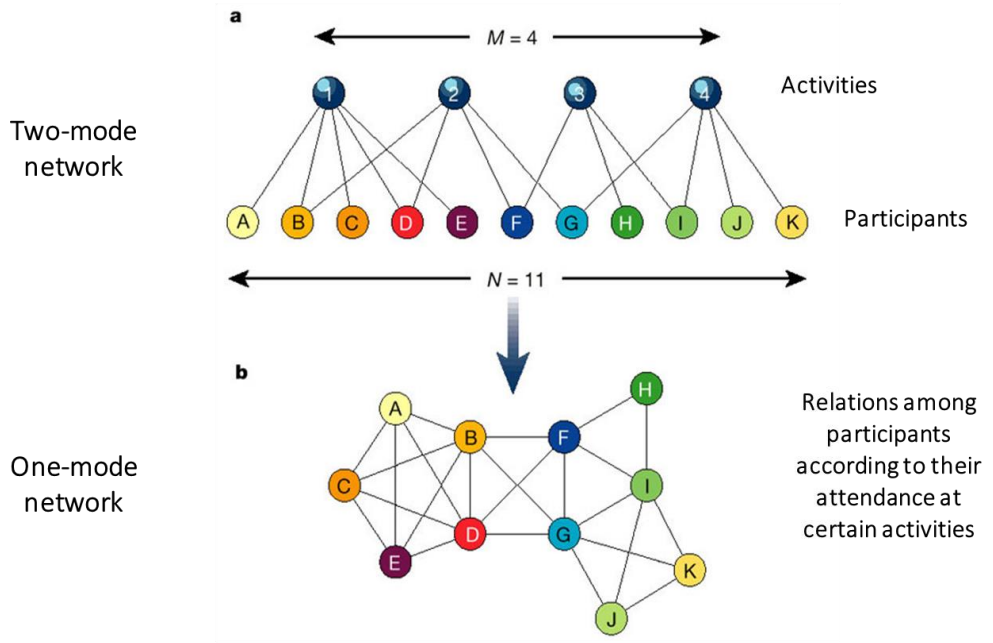
Source: Author

3.3.2. Network construction and analysis

Summarising, databases created contained information about two types of elements: seminars and courses, on the one hand, and organisations (actors) involved in them on the other, as well as relations between them (who participated in each activity). From a network analysis viewpoint, such a sort of information structure is labelled 'bipartite' network (see the seminal contribution by Davis et al., 1941; or more recent applications in economic geography such as Balland, 2012; Crespo et al., 2016; Vicente et al., 2011).

As shown in Figure 16, bipartite networks are usually transformed into two or more 'one-mode' networks (i.e. where nodes are elements of one type or the other) in order to make the analysis more manageable. As the main interest of this research is to analyse how the networks of actors are organised, 'participant networks' were built were organisations would be linked through the participation in (at least) one activity.

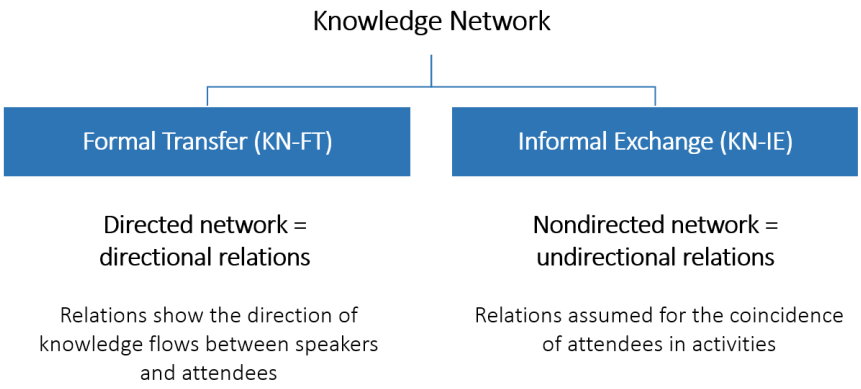
Figure 16. *Example of how two-mode networks are constructed and analysed*



Source: Based on Strogatz (2001)

The above-described bipartite analysis was applied to two sort of knowledge flows, as indicated earlier in the chapter: a) formal transfer (FT), resulting from the transmission of knowledge from speakers or lecturers to attendees; and b) informal exchange (IE) among attendees to the same activities, which is produced through casual or spontaneous conversation among actors (Figure 17). Accordingly, two networks were constructed. First a Knowledge Network with Formal Transfer (KN-FT), where nodes are organisations and arcs connecting them represent directed knowledge flows from speakers to attendees. Second a Knowledge Network with Informal Exchange (KN-IE), where nodes are organisations and a link between two of them indicate attendance to (at least) one common activity.

Figure 17. *Knowledge flows analysed in central Costa Daurada's knowledge network*



Source: Author

Once both networks were created, a preliminary analysis using *igraph* and *sna* packages of *R* statistical toolkit was conducted (Butts, 2013; Csardi & Nepusz, 2006; R Development Core Team, 2013) in order to examine the general structural properties of both networks. Specifically, besides the number of nodes, the number of edges or arcs and their density, some basic structural features were obtained, namely: clustering coefficient, average path length, diameter, degree assortativity, assortativity by activity field, and degree distribution.

Next, the analysis focused on quantifying the relevance of concrete nodes and to determine the brokerage roles played by these nodes in the *KN-FT* and *KN-IE* networks. For this purpose, it was first calculated the three centrality measures formalised by Freeman (1979) – namely Degree, Closeness and Betweenness centralities. Second, a brokerage analysis adopting the methodology proposed by Gould and Fernandez (1989) helped to identify up to 5 brokerage roles, namely: coordinator, consultant, representative, gatekeeper and liaison role (Butts, 2013).

Complementarily, taking the normalised values of the five brokerage roles for the two networks as initial data, the authors applied a clustering technique (using Euclidean distances and paired-group clustering) so as to seek for relational patterns among actors. Table 14 shows an overview of the different stages in the analysis conducted, as well as further details regarding the specific techniques and measures used.

Table 14. *Development stages, techniques and measures used in the social network analysis*

Analysis	Objective	Techniques and measures
Stage 1: Graphs	Visual assessment of knowledge networks' structure.	**Undirected network (KN-IE):** non directional relations (relations assumed for the coincidence of attendees in activities).
		Directed network (KN-FT): directional relations (relations show the direction of knowledge flows from speakers to attendees).
Stage 2: Structural metrics	Obtain the topological characteristics of the KN-FT and KN-IE.	**Order:** number of nodes (actors).
		Size: number of links (relations).
		Density: size (number of edges) over all possible connections.
		Clustering coefficient: density of 'closed triads' in the network (e.g. A->B->C->A). Its value is bounded between 0 and 1.
		Average path (geodesic) length: average number of steps along the shortest paths for all possible pairs of nodes (i.e. 'jumps' among nodes along edges).
		Diameter: length of the longest path in the network (informs about global cohesion of the network).
		Degree assortativity: tendency of network's nodes to connect to others with similar number of connections. Its value is bounded between -1 and 1.
		Assortativity by activity field: tendency of nodes to connect to other ones with the same activity field. Its value is bounded between -1 and 1.
		(Cumulative) degree distribution: probability distribution of the degree over the whole network. In directed networks, nodes have two different degrees: **in-degree** (incoming edges) and **out-degree** (outgoing edges).
Stage 3: Centrality (Freeman, 1977)	Identify the most important actors' in KN-FT and KN-IE.	**Degree centrality:** actors with high degree centrality maintain numerous contacts with other network actors so they can access to and/or influence over others. Central actors occupy a structural position – at or near the centre in network diagrams – that serves as a source or conduit for larger volumes of information exchange and other resource transactions with other actors. In the case of directed networks, nodes have two different degree centralities: **Degree (in) –** incoming edges – and **Degree (out) –** outgoing edges.
		Betweenness centrality: actors with high betweenness centrality occupy a "between" position on the path connecting many pairs of the actors in the network. This means that they act as intermediaries and might control the flow of information or the exchange of resources.
		Closeness centrality: in this case, central actors have minimum path distances from the g-1 alters. Actors that are close to many others can quickly interact and communicate with them without going through many intermediaries. This provides a global view of the connectedness in the network.

(*Continued*)

Table 14. *(Continued)*

Analysis	Objective	Techniques and measures
Stage 4: Brokerage Analysis (Gould & Fernandez, 1989)	Examine the roles played by actors who mediate contact between two alters in KN-FT and KN-IE.	**Coordinator:** the broker mediates the contact between two individuals from its own group who would not otherwise communicate with each other.
		Consultant: the broker mediates the contact between two individuals from a single group to which it does not belong who would not otherwise communicate with each other.
		Representative: the broker mediates an incoming contact from an out-group member to an in-group member. These brokers represent their own group for any kind of negotiations with the outside group.
		Gatekeeper: the broker mediates an outgoing contact from an in-group member to an out-group member. Brokers in this type control incoming information/resources to their group and make decisions about whether or not the unconnected actors in the group have access to information/resources.
		Liaison: the broker mediates the contact between two individuals from different groups, neither of which is in the group to which he/she belongs.
Stage 5: Cluster analysis	Identify the presence of brokerage behavioural patterns in KN-FT and KN-IE.	Using Euclidean distances and paired-group clustering. Initial data: the normalised values of the five brokerage roles calculated for the two networks.

Source: Author's review

3.4. Findings

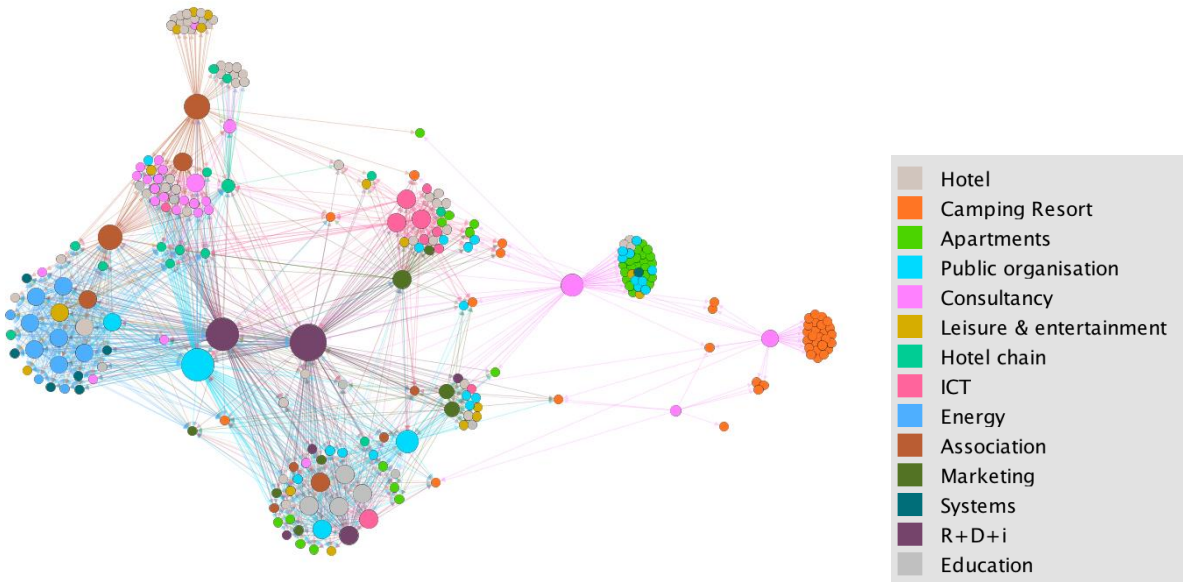
This section presents the findings emerging from the social network analysis carried out. First, the structural characteristics of the central Costa Daurada's formal and informal knowledge networks are examined by means of interpreting the visual representation of the networks and basic descriptive statistics. Second, an in-depth analysis is explained as regards the individual roles of key actors in the networks, including the interpretation of centrality measures and brokerage roles.

3.4.1. Resulting networks: structure

The two networks under study are displayed in Figure 18 and Figure 19. In both cases, it can be observed that a small number of 'bridging organisations' prevent the network from falling apart into separated groups. When comparing across the two networks, KN-IE looks denser

than KN-FT. This is an expected consequence of the way both networks were constructed, as each activity generates more links in the first than in the second case.

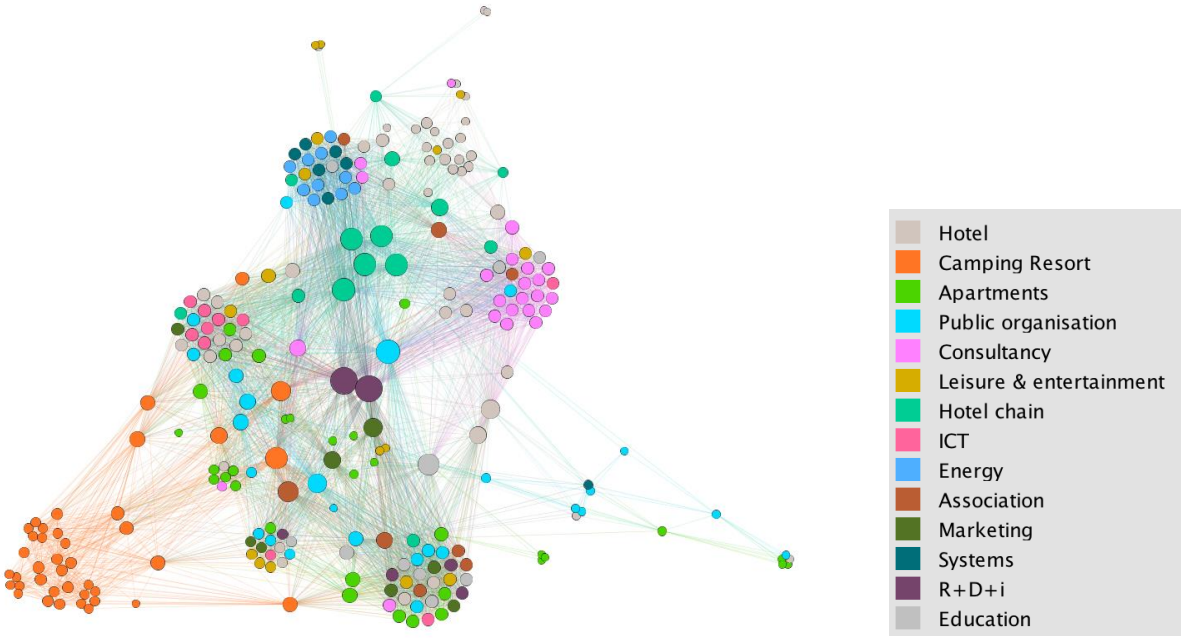
Figure 18. *Visual representation of central Costa Daurada's KN-FT*



Colours represent actors' activity field

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

Figure 19. *Visual representation of central Costa Daurada's KN-IE*



Colours represent actors' activity field

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

The relatively high clustering coefficients and positive values of assortativity by activity field shown in Table 15 confirm quantitatively that in both networks similar nodes tend to connect in dense groups. Despite having approximately the same number of nodes, KN-IE presents more than twice the number of connections in KN-FT, a much higher density and double clustering coefficient. As pointed out, these results should be related to the nature of the relationships represented by links. Moreover, the low diameter values (as a reference, notice that the diameter of a random regular graph with 250 nodes is LOG(250) = 5.52, approximately) and negative degree assortativities would indicate the presence of hubs (i.e. nodes concentrating a number of connections far above the average). Hubs have been reported to have a highly significant influence on knowledge dissemination and, therefore, the analysis was further deepened concerning this point.

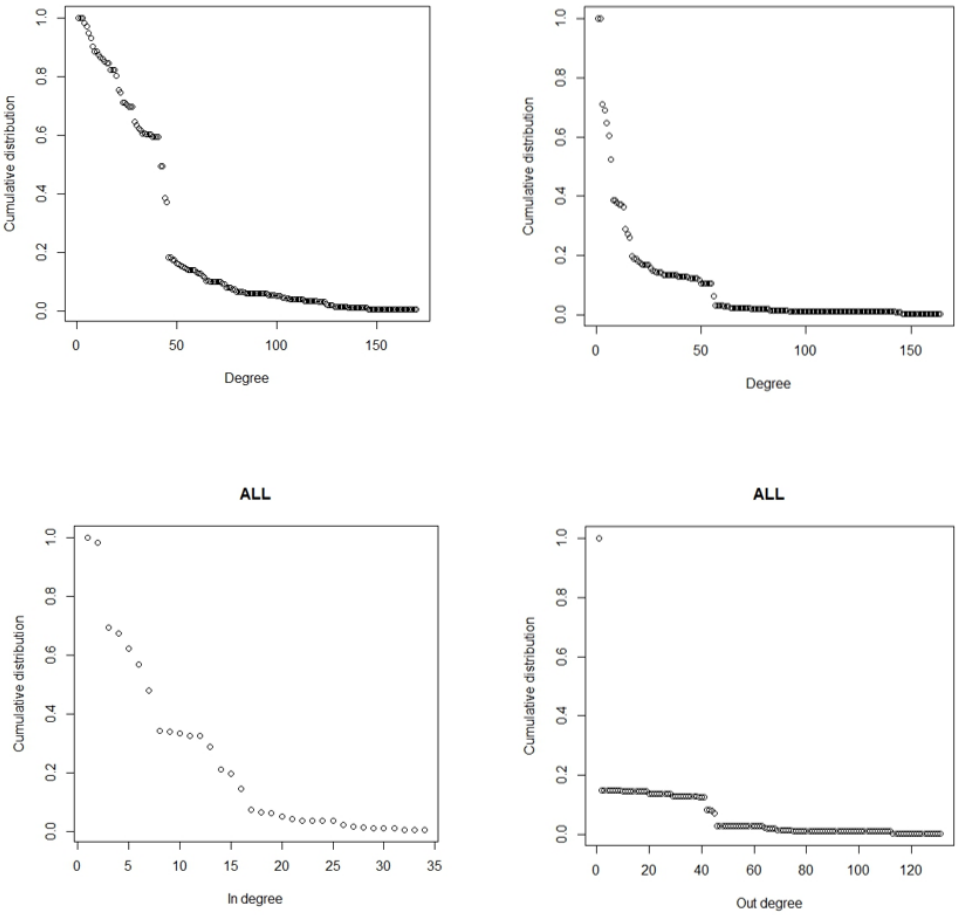
Table 15. *Basic descriptive structural measures for both networks under study*

Structural measures	Informal exchange (KN-IE)	Formal transfer (KN-FT)
Order (Num. of nodes)	249	253
Size (Num. of edges/arcs)	4894	1804
Density	0.16	0.03
Clustering Coefficient	0.64	0.33
Average Path Length	2.04	1.78
Diameter	4	3
Degree assortativity	-0.05	-0.11
Assortativity by activity field	0.14	0.04

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

A degree distribution analysis of both networks, with details on in- and out-degree for KN-FT, confirms that there were, indeed, a few organisations with an extraordinarily high connectivity. Sharp decays and long queues showed by all four plots (Figure 20) indicate a severely unequal scenario, where few nodes have very high degrees and most of them have relatively few connections - this is especially clear for KN-FT (see top-right plot). The two plots at the bottom allow for a separated look at attendees (in degree, left panel) and speakers (out degree, right panel). The degree distribution for attendees roughly reproduces the general pattern of strong inequality, which in this case implies that only few organisations (around 10%) had direct contact with 15 or more different speakers (and could, therefore, benefit from a diversified incoming knowledge flow.

Figure 20. *Cumulative degree distributions of central Costa Daurada KN-FT and KN-IE*



TOP: Total degree of KN-IE (left) and KN-FT (right). BOTTOM: In and Out degree of KN-FT (left and right, respectively). Sharp decays and long queues indicate a severely unequal scenario

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

In sum, results derived from the visualisation and analysis of basic descriptive measures evidence that networks under study are integrated by a relatively large number of actors who tend to connect with other players working in the same economic activity. Therefore, these actors need the presence of a small group of organisations that facilitate connectivity within the networks. As a natural next step, such individual organisations were identified and the nature of the roles they were playing in both networks, uncovered.

3.4.2. Individual roles: centralities and brokerage

Network analysis' literature provides us with different centrality measures to quantify the relevance of concrete nodes for the whole network. Despite several measures proposed in

recent times (Newman, 2010), the three measures formalised by Freeman (1979) - namely Degree, Closeness and Betweenness centralities – are still widely used (see for instance, Vicente et al., 2011). Table 16 and Table 17 present the 'top-10' values of "Freeman's" centrality measures for the two networks KN-FT and KN-IE. These lists include firms and business associations, R&D organisations, and also actors representing the public sector.

Table 16. *Centrality measures for central Costa Daurada's KN-FT*

Degree centrality		Degree (in) centrality		Degree (out) centrality	
PCT – TIC	163	PCT – TIC	33	PCT – TIC	130
URV – University	144	URV – University	33	URV – University	111
GEN – Regional government	141	GEN – Regional government	30	GEN –Regional government	111
FEH – Business association	90	TPR – Local camping resort	27	FEH – Business association	73
PTD – Destination Manag. Org.	81	ATM – Consultancy MK	26	SCP – Business association	67
SCP – Business association	72	4RH – Local hotel chain	25	PTD – Destination Manag. Org.	63
GOT – Consultancy	62	EPS – Local hotel chain	24	GOT – Consultancy	62
IPR – Consultancy MK	59	BEH – Local hotel chain	24	IPR – Consultancy MK	44
AJS – Local government	55	GRE – Local hotel chain	24	ITG – Consultancy ICT	44
GHB – Business association	55	OHT – Local hotel chain	24	STM – Consultancy ICT	44
Betweenness centrality		**Closeness centrality**			
PCT – TIC	1593.927	PCT – TIC	0.003		
URV – University	1079.777	URV – University	0.002		
GEN –Regional government	863.027	GEN –Regional government	0.002		
SCP – Business association	411.169	GOT – Consultancy	0.002		
EPS – Local hotel chain	258.936	PTD – Destination Manag. Org.	0.002		
IPR – Consultancy MK	200.983	FEH – Business association	0.002		
PTD – Destination Manag. Org.	198.974	AJS – Local government	0.002		
FEH – Business association	191.886	SCP – Business association	0.002		
ESV – Consultancy	45.602	EPS – Local hotel chain	0.002		
AJS – Local government	11.083	IPR – Consultancy MK	0.002		

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

Results for Degree centrality show that organisations displaying the most influential position in both networks are the TIC and the University. Noteworthy, these nodes are those that provide new or external knowledge to the actors of the destination. In addition, the regional government can be found in the third position in both networks. Regarding the other actors presenting high values of degree centrality, slight differences can be identified when comparing the results obtained in the KN-FT and the KN-IE. In KN-FT, the relevance of the TIC, the University and the regional government is shared with consultancy firms and business associations, as well as the Destination Management Organisation (Tourism Board) of the destination and one of the local authorities. Going a step further, Degree (in) and Degree (out) results help us identify that when it comes to knowledge formal transfer (KN-FT), consultants and business associations are positioned as knowledge providers and larger firms are the main

consumers of new knowledge. The situation is significantly different in KN-IE, where larger firms – i.e. local hotel chains and camping resorts – are the actors who play a central role, rather than consultancy firms, business associations and the DMO.

Table 17. *Centrality measures for central Costa Daurada's KN-IE*

Degree centrality		Betweenness centrality		Closeness centrality	
PCT – TIC	169	TPR – Local camping resort	2489.722	PCT – TIC	0.003
URV – University	169	RSS – Local camping resort	1872.379	URV – University	0.002
GEN – Regional Gov.	144	PCT – TIC	1813.717	GEN – Regional Government	0.002
EPS – Local hotel chain	134	URV – University	1813.717	BMJ – Consultancy	0.002
TPR – Local camping resort	127	OHT – Local hotel chain	1812.683	PTD – Destination Manag. Org.	0.002
OHT – Local hotel chain	124	4RH – Local hotel chain	1727.556	ITG – Consultancy ICT	0.002
4RH – Local hotel chain	123	RBH – Foreign hotel chain	1620.559	FOR – Tourist apartments	0.002
GRE – Local hotel chain	123	EPS – Local hotel chain	1431.092	LPA – Local camping resort	0.002
BEH – Local hotel chain	119	GRE – Local hotel chain	1149.978	STM – Consultancy ICT	0.002
ASC – Business Association	112	GEN – Regional Gov.	1075.880	IPR – Consultancy – MK	0.002

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

Turning to the betweenness centrality, results present only slight differences in the rank order. The TIC, the University, and the regional government keep their influential position as knowledge intermediaries in the KN-FT. Conversely, the actors presenting a stronger power of intermediation in KN-IE are some active local camping resorts - this is due to the fact that these subsector is a fairly closed group, in which the majority of firms are poorly connected to the rest of actors in the network. Finally, low and homogeneous closeness centrality values show that relations in both networks are non-hierarchical – actors in general are able to reach other actors and exchange knowledge on shorter path lengths.

Centrality measures provide information on the relevance of concrete nodes taking into account information about the KN-IE and the KN-FT as a whole (macroscopic scale). As this chapter aims to study knowledge-related processes, it is of interest to uncover the influence of individual nodes at local (micro-) or intermediate (meso-) scales. With the purpose to determine the frequency of nodes playing mesoscopic brokerage roles, as well as their statistical significance taking into account the general characteristics of the network, Gould and Fernández proposed a sort of census methodology in 1983. Their method identifies up to 5 other brokerage roles, namely (Butts, 2013): coordinator, representative, consultant, gatekeeper, and liaison. With the purpose to analyse the brokerage strategies of actors participating in the networks under study, a complete Gould and Fernandez (1989) brokerage analysis has been developed. Table 18 and Table 19 display the most significant results obtained.

Table 18. *Standardised Brokerage Scores* (β) *for the most relevant actors in KN-FT*

Nodes	Coordinator	Consultant	Representative	Gatekeeper	Liaison
PCT – TIC	23.635	32.173	72.693	38.342	105.156
URV – University	5.805	24.787	54.507	29.249	84.912
GEN – Regional government	10.328	14.805	32.218	23.287	79.212
PTD – Destination Manag. Org.	7.387	6.467	4.051	13.669	17.108
FEH – Business association	12.329	2.068	25.912	3.069	14.193
SCP – Business association	-0.182	-1.062	13.612	-0.445	1.251
EPS – Local hotel chain	-0.277	1.819	-0.561	11.973	7.879
IVT – Consultancy R&D	5.805	-1.351	-0.387	-0.387	-1.818
IPR – Consultancy MK	-0.161	4.621	-0.417	3.019	14.823
EST – Consultancy	-0.444	-1.281	1.354	11.973	0.439

These values are calculated as z-scores and, assuming normal distribution, values $|\beta| > 1.96$ are considered to significantly exceed chance at any role (see Gould and Fernandez (1989) for details).

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

Table 19. *Standardised Brokerage Scores* (β) *for the most relevant actors in KN-IE*

Nodes	Coordinator	Consultant	Gatekeeper	Liaison
PCT – TIC	8.584	34.334	20.365	72.061
URV – University	8.584	34.334	20.365	72.061
GEN – Regional government	8.986	17.177	17.711	46.737
EPS – Local hotel chain	10.290	22.727	16.067	38.490
TPR – Local camping resort	15.166	5.421	38.547	20.596
OHT – Local hotel chain	10.290	19.939	13.228	30.221
GRE – Local hotel chain	10.290	21.301	12.786	28.984
4RH – Local hotel chain	10.290	18.514	12.995	29.405
BEH – Local hotel chain	10.290	16.376	11.878	25.902
RSS – Local camping resort	16.573	2.289	27.221	6.222

These values are calculated as z-scores and, assuming normal distribution, values $|\beta| > 1.96$ are considered to significantly exceed chance at any role (see Gould and Fernandez (1989) for details).

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

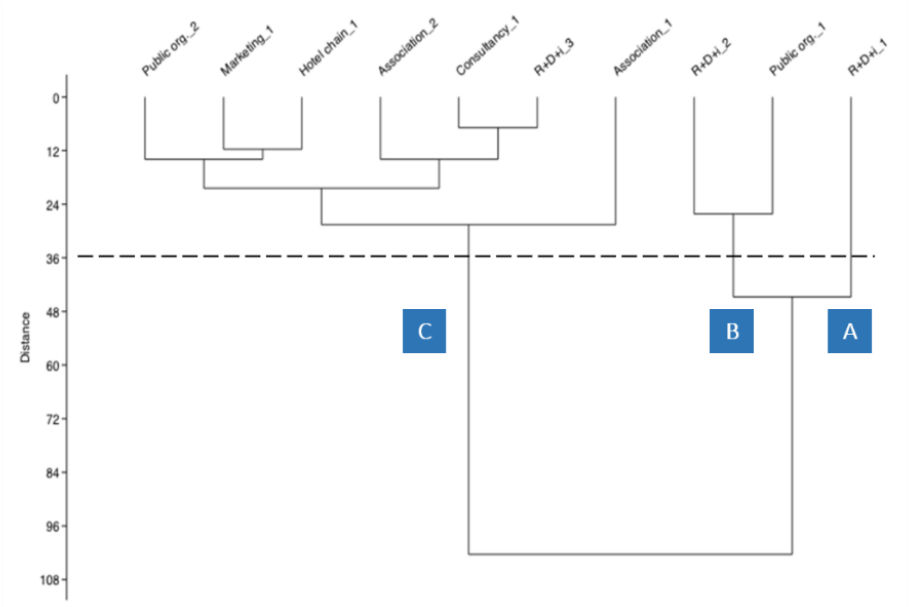
Focusing on KN-FT (Table 18), it can be observed that brokerage roles are well defined and performed by few actors. The TIC exhibits high scores in all types of brokerage, but it seems to have a more significant role as 'liaison'. This indicates that the presence of this actor encourages members from different groups to establish relationships and exchange knowledge. Likewise, the TIC also obtains a lead role as 'representative' of the R&D organisations group, which means that this actor also facilitates members of other groups to contact and absorb the knowledge of R&D organisations. The University presents a similar brokerage profile to that of the TIC, but with lower scores.

Complementarily, the DMO in the area also presents higher values as 'liaison'. However, the results focusing on each specific role (columns) show that the distinguishing roles are: 1) 'gatekeeper', encouraging public authorities to transmit knowledge to members of other groups; and 2) 'coordinator', favouring contacts and knowledge sharing between different public sector organisations. If one compares these results to the profile exhibited by the regional government, it can be seen that the results obtained by this actor are higher in the case of the 'representative' role and 'consultant' role. This means that the regional government facilitates members of other groups to have contacts and access knowledge provided by public organisations and, at the same time broke relations between members of other groups to which it does not belong.

Results obtained in the case of KN-IE (Table 19) show that in this network actors playing brokerage roles are more numerous (58) than in KN-FT (10). Focusing on the top ten actors playing the most significant brokerage roles in KN-IE, R&D institutions (the TIC and the university), similarly to KN-FT, continue playing a leading role as 'liaison' and 'consultant', which means that these nodes speed up knowledge exchange among all members of the network. Public organisations, in turn, do not display a role as relevant as in formal transfer but still are positioned as supportive actors assuming functions of 'liaison'. When it comes to informal exchange flows, firms – especially the larger ones – come into play as key actors facilitating knowledge dissemination. In this group, two types of brokerage roles can be identified. On the one hand, the 'liaison' function is played by larger local hotel chains, who facilitate the exchange of knowledge beyond the borders of their own group. On the other hand, a locally-owned resort firm stand as 'gatekeeper', acting as intermediary in the exchange of knowledge among members of its own group and actors representing other sectors in the network. This role is supported by several firms in the same sector, which are of help to coordinate the exchange of knowledge within the group, and in no case with members of other groups.

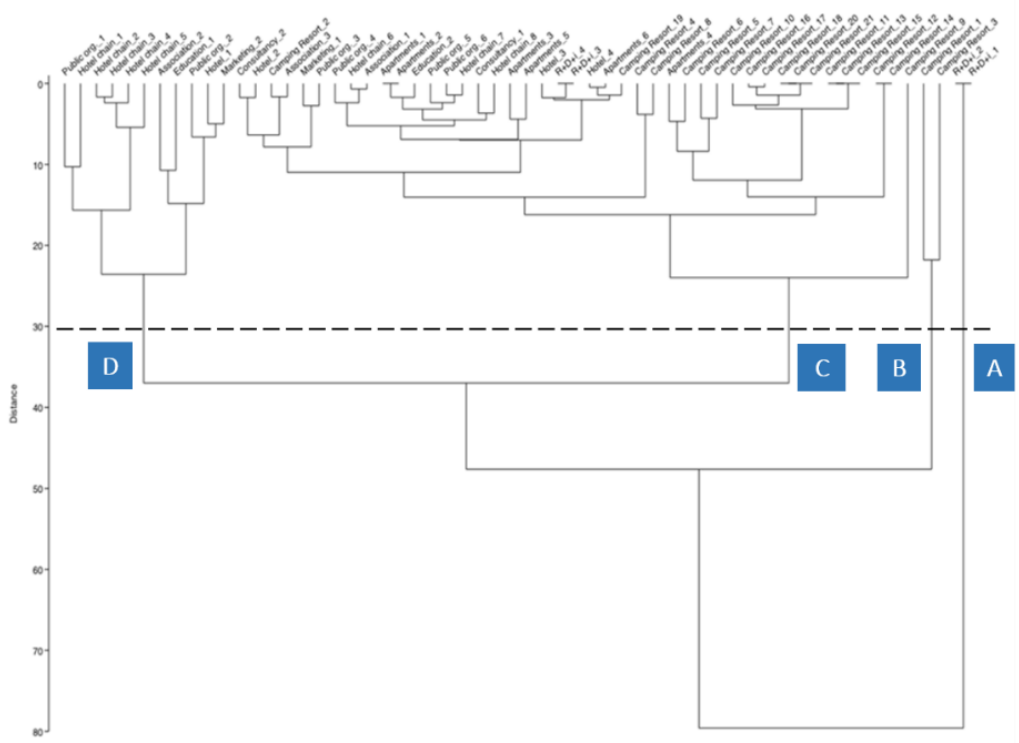
With the aim to obtain a classification of actors depending on their role played in KN-FT and KN-IE, a cluster analysis technique was executed, using Euclidean distances and paired-group clustering and taking the normalised values of the five brokerage roles calculated for the two networks. Results obtained – see dendograms shown in Figure 21 and 22 – allowed to determine groups of actors with homogeneous performance but with a certain degree of heterogeneity with respect to actors included in other clusters. In formal transfer processes (KN-FT) the cut level has been established giving a partition of actors into three different clusters, while in informal exchange (KN-IE), into four clusters. Table 20 displays the main characteristics of each clusters as well as a definition of the role each cluster performs according to the brokerage results.

Figure 21. *Dendogram representing the hierarchical clustering in KN-FT*



Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

Figure 22. *Dendogram representing the hierarchical clustering in KN-IE*



Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

Findings from the cluster analysis confirm that TICs are the most relevant actor. In the case of KN-FT, TICs are the leading administrators, acting as benchmark legitimated by others in the network as the most knowledgeable actor because of his contribution in creating knowledge and making external knowledge available to the localised system of knowledge. When it comes to Informal Exchange, TICs – hand in hand with universities – proactively coordinate and act as neutral intermediary in order to favour the entry and transfer of new knowledge through the organisation of activities and meeting arenas for actors to interact and learn from each other. In comparison to universities, these centres are more flexible and can develop applied research which gives response to local needs and helps guiding local development strategies.

Table 20. *Clusters of main brokers in KN-FT and KN-IE*

Cluster		N. Actors	Type of actor/s	Behaviour in the network	
KN-FT	**A**	1	TIC	**Administrator (benchmark)**	Legitimated by others as the most knowledgeable actor – creates knowledge and/or make external knowledge available to others.
	B	2	University Regional Government	**Supporter**	Supports the distribution of knowledge among actors in the network.
	C	7	Others (firms and business associations)	**Follower**	Benefits from other actors' knowledge or the new knowledge resources introduced in the network.
KN-IE	**A**	2	TIC University	**Administrator (coordinator)** **Supporter**	Proactively coordinates and favours the exchange of new knowledge through the organisation of activities where interactive learning can take place. Supports the distribution of knowledge among actors in the network.
	B	7	Regional Government Large firms Business associations	**Seeker**	More actively involved in the network and in the search and exchange of knowledge. Example to follow and driving force.
	C	2	Large firms (isolated subsector)	**Bridge**	Filters and transmits knowledge to members of their group when it is not well-connected within the network.
	D	46	SMEs DMO (regional/local) Business associations Consultancy	**Follower**	Benefits from other actors' knowledge or the new knowledge resources introduced in the network.

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Lozano and Anton Clavé (submitted)

With regards to Formal Transfer (KN-FT), universities and regional governments hold the position as supporter for the distribution of knowledge among actors in the network. In these processes, in turn, firms tend to be less active and play a passive role in knowledge transfer. This scenario changes considerably when focusing on the behaviour in networks emerged as a result of knowledge Informal Exchange processes. Public organisations not necessarily have to hold the more outstanding central position in knowledge network for these structures to be efficient. Instead, regional governments share with business associations and large firms an important role as knowledge 'seekers/hunters', becoming highly involved in knowledge-related activities with the aim to acquire and exchange knowledge. Finally, large firms' role is even more crucial when they belong to a subsector that is not well-connected to the rest of the network, as they can mediate as 'bridges' who filter and transmit knowledge to members of their own group that otherwise would be isolated.

3.5. Discussion

The main objective of this paper was to tackle the nature and functioning of knowledge networks in tourism specialised regions, an issue that is still a black box to decode in the literature (Balland et al., 2016; Balland & Rigby, 2015; Giuliani, 2007; McLeod & Vaughan, 2015). More specifically, the findings of a two-mode social network analysis applied to study how knowledge networks are created in a Mediterranean tourism destination, leads to an understanding of how interactive learning in these productive places is supported by formal and informal relations (Bathelt & Glückler, 2011; Østergaard, 2009) and shed light on who are the brokers enabling the proper performance of these networks (Drew et al., 2014). In so doing, findings presented in the previous section raise some discussion points which help advance established concepts and theories not only in the tourism literature but also in economic geography.

Certainly, approaching this phenomena by analysing the participation of actors in seminars and courses constitutes just one of the many forms in which local actors acquire and transmit knowledge in specialised regions. Nonetheless, it is argued here that these sort of activities still represent one of the most efficient channels for promoting interactive learning in economic sectors such as tourism, with a high fragmentation and in which there exist a gap that traditionally tends to separate economic actors who otherwise might hardly interact (Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015) – this is illustrated by the high cluster coefficients and positive values of assortativity obtained in the study, which show that connections tend to be in place between actors involved in similar activities. Besides, similarly as Bathelt and Glückler (2011) maintain in the case of international trade fairs, seminars and courses in tourism are organised in a way that provide unique opportunities for multiplex encounters and external social relationships, which not only facilitate the access to new information but also the transfer of

these information from one type of relationship to another (business partnerships, community membership, neighbouring, etc.). This reinforces the pertinence of comparing how knowledge networks emerging from the participation of agents in this formative activities are structured in formal Knowledge Transfer and informal Knowledge Exchange processes, as proposed in this chapter.

From an overall perspective, results evidence that not only knowledge networks' structure differ from the structure of networks responding to other actors' needs – e.g. business networks or social networks – (Giuliani, 2010), but also that this structure happens to change considerably depending on the nature of interactions - as can be seen both in the visual representation of these networks and the basic descriptive structural measures. The degree distribution and centrality analysis confirmed the presence of few hubs in formal Knowledge Transfer and informal Knowledge Exchange (as found in Giuliani's, 2010, work) and that these actors bring a glue that connects actors who tend to and engage them in interactive learning (Hallin & Marnburg, 2008). The comparative analysis of brokerage roles also makes a contribution in the sense that it helps revealing the significant role of other actors, besides the most prominent brokers, in knowledge dissemination (Giuliani, 2010).

These outcomes trigger the idea that tourism destinations need to implement knowledge management strategies oriented to create an environment where actors consider knowledge diffusion and interactive learning as an essential process (Goddard et al., 2012; McLeod & Vaughan, 2015). Along these lines, results show that knowledge networks need and are favoured by the presence of an organised structure in which several actors have an active participation and play complementary brokerage roles that positively contribute to the proper performance of these networks and the localised system of learning. These organisational systems are referred here as 'administered knowledge networks', which should be understood as efficient knowledge governance arrangements that speed up learning, innovation, and spread efficient business practices (McLeod & Vaughan, 2015).

More precisely, these networks are put forward here as platforms that should be proactively fostered by tourism specialised regions willing to: 1) connect the diverse communities of practice present in a region, including academia, the public sector, and firms representing the different subsectors involved (Cooper, 2006); 2) enhance informal relationships and trust among stakeholders with the aim to ease the transmission of tacit knowledge (McLeod & Vaughan, 2015); 3) enrich the local knowledge base through the organisation of seminars and courses on topics highly relevant to the operation of firms and organisations; and, finally, 4) orientate decision-making processes in innovative ways which improve the competitiveness of the destination and puts in place the grounds for drawing new development pathways (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017; Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson, & Anton Clavé, 2017).

Turning to the specific behaviour that each actor belonging to these 'administered knowledge networks' should perform, findings regarding brokerage roles and cluster analysis indicate that TIC is the most relevant actor. In comparison to university, these centres are more flexible and can develop applied research which gives response to local needs and helps guiding local development strategies (S. Miller, 2014). It is worthy to highlight that the prominent position of TICs supposes a slight contrast to the prevailing idea that universities are the actors performing the most crucial role as drivers of knowledge creation and dissemination in regional economic development (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Srinivas & Viljamaa, 2008). Furthermore, brokers are generally associated in the literature with gatekeeper functions, that is, as intermediaries that make connections between local and external knowledge systems (Breschi & Lenzi, 2015). This function is necessary for all specialised regions to enrich local knowledge bases and avoid lock-in – and can be identified in the networks studied – but, as the high values on liaison role evidence in the case studied brokers can also play a vital role when it comes to facilitate local connections and knowledge exchange in the case of fragmented and traditionally not well-connected economic sectors such as tourism.

TICs are the main leaders of 'administered knowledge networks' but these leadership must be performed in close non-hierarchical collaboration with a wide variety of actors, including universities, private sector associations, public organisations and firms (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). Each has its distinctive behaviour, depending on the type of knowledge flows (formal vs informal). This finding expands the scope of this kind of analysis in economic geography, usually focused on inter-firm relations (Balland et al., 2016; Balland & Rigby, 2015). In fact, what emerges from the research is that effective knowledge coordination can also be private-led, in contrast with the generalised public-led vision of knowledge creation and dissemination in tourism (Cooper, 2015; Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015), as public organisations not necessarily have to hold the more outstanding central position in knowledge network for these structures to be efficient. Likewise, findings show that large firms became examples to follow when it comes to informal knowledge exchange dynamics and act as driving forces for the rest of actors to be innovative and transform local communities (Feldman, 2014).

All in all, specialised regions are networked regional economies in which geographical proximity and frequent contacts facilitate the transfer of specific and embedded knowledge and expertise that is 'in the air' (Bathelt & Glückler, 2011; Ter Wal & Boschma, 2009). The path to learning and innovation in these productive spaces is supported by interactions and knowledge flows between the different actors directly or indirectly involved in the development of the economic activity in which the region is specialised – i.e. firms, private sector associations, universities, technology and research centres, and public organisations (Gertler, 2003). Sustained localised learning in specialised regions, consequently, require the search for new modes of knowledge governance based on stable and durable organised knowledge networks (Asheim & Herstad, 2005). 'Administered knowledge networks', with

configurations and roles adapted to the type of knowledge flow are put forward here as a useful framework for the governance of knowledge in tourism specialised regions.

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CHAPTER 4. Strategic coupling and upgrading

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CHAPTER 4. Strategic coupling and upgrading

The content of this chapter is mainly based on the following article:

Sanz-Ibáñez, C., & Anton Clavé, S. (2016). Strategic coupling evolution and destination upgrading. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *56*, 1–15. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2015.10.010

4.1. Introduction

Research aiming to disentangle how tourism destinations evolve over time has been a fundamental pillar of tourism studies. Indeed, extensive debates, analytical proposals and a number of empirical case studies have been published in order to address these concerns (see Brouder et al., 2017b for a review on this topic). However, there are still many unresolved issues with regard to the forces at work that influence change in tourist places and, hence, act as catalysts shaping their development trajectories (Butler, 2014). Particularly, further research on the dynamics and long-term repercussions – in terms of innovation and competitiveness – of global–local linkages at firm and destination levels are called for (Agarwal, 2005; Milne & Ateljevic, 2001), including those settled within increasingly complex business networks for the distribution of tourism services in the global market (Kracht & Wang, 2010). Likewise, while impacts of political interventions have shaped much of the discussion of restructuring and rejuvenation of mature destinations (Agarwal, 2002), arguably little has been done to discover which role bottom-up entrepreneurial synergies have in enabling new paths.

In order to address these concerns, this chapter draws inspiration from recent developments in economic geography in order to contribute to the literature on tourism stakeholders' collaboration and destination evolution. Particularly, the chapter adopts the terms strategic coupling (Yang, 2009; Yeung, 2009, 2015) and upgrading (Gereffi, 1999; Gereffi & Lee, 2016; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002)—core foci of analyses of global production network (GPN) theories (Coe, 2012; Yeung & Coe, 2015). Taking an integrated evolutionary economic geography (EEG) (Boschma & Martin, 2010b) and relational economic geography (REG) (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003, 2011) approach, these terms are employed in understanding the contribution of strategic alliances between local actors and global intermediaries in enabling

innovation at the firm level, and thus, by extension, in opening new opportunities for mature destinations facing lock-in. Therefore, it provides evidence of the specificities and the effects of global production networks in the case of tourism; a service sector that still has not received enough attention in the economic geography literature (Niewiadomski, 2014).

The empirical analysis is situated in central Costa Daurada, Catalonia (Spain), a mature coastal destination whose restructuring in the early 1990s was favoured—among other factors—by the development of strategic relationships between local firms and global players. Their aim was attracting the Russian market at a moment when this market was, for many Mediterranean coastal destinations, one of the most desirable as a consequence of the break-up of the Soviet Union (Mariani, Buhalis, Longhi, & Vitouladiti, 2014; World Tourism Organisation & European Travel Commission, 2009).

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 4.2 outlines the specific theoretical background of this piece of work, mainly centred on the concepts of strategic coupling and upgrading within global production networks. Section 4.3 describes the research design as regards the qualitative study undertaken, which was based on in-depth interviews supplemented with secondary data. Next, section 4.4 elucidates the findings of the research in relation to two specific issues: (1) the dynamics of strategic coupling processes between central Costa Daurada's actors and global intermediaries in the Russian market during the period 1994–2013; and (2) the resulting upgrading synergies in the local tourism industry and the destination. Section 4.5 discusses the results in light of the theoretical framework.

4.2. Analytical foundation

With the aim to give valuable insights to the analysis of the changing dynamics of tourism global production networks in tourism, as well as the effects of global-local connections on the upgrading of firms and destinations, this chapter proposes to integrate and apply to tourism destination research GPN theories (Coe, 2012; Coe, Dicken, & Hess, 2008; Coe & Yeung, 2015; Yang, 2009; Yeung, 2009) with the analytical approaches of EEG (Boschma & Martin, 2007, 2010b) and REG (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003, 2011; Jones, 2013; Jones & Murphy, 2011). The origins, scope and complementarities of these approaches, as well as their potential to help advance research within tourism geography are explained in the sections below.

4.2.1. Global production networks in destination evolution

The complex interconnections arising as a result of economic globalisation and their effects on the geographies of production and consumption have become a key focus of analysis in

current economic geography (Benner et al., 2011). In effect, since the beginning of the 1990s different competing approaches have been proposed to tackle these issues. This is the case of global commodity chains (Gereffi, 1999), global value chains (Gereffi, Humphrey, & Sturgeon, 2005), and GPNs (Henderson, Dicken, Hess, Coe, & Yeung, 2002). The points of convergence and divergence of these frameworks have been extensively discussed (Coe et al., 2008) and a number of empirical studies have been conducted to analyse the new relational forms in which international trade and production networks are organised in the global economy, with a special focus on the industrial, retail, and high-tech sectors.

Within this body of work, the GPN approach is seen as a powerful heuristic analytical framework that compensates for some of the weaknesses identified in prior conceptualisations (Henderson et al., 2002; MacKinnon, 2012). As stated by Coe (2012), the GPN framework tries to capture the complex and contingent nature of network configurations – or governance structures – instead of focusing on the analysis of linear structures – or 'chains', as previous interpretations did. Moreover, it takes a multiscalar perspective, in that it studies the relevant relationships established between actors from the local to the global arenas. The analysis also includes the broad range of actors shaping economic activities – including firms and other non-firm organisations. Besides, it also opens up the discussion of the impacts arising from these local-global interactions in the development of firms and territories (Yeung, 2009). Last but not least, taking the words of Yeung and Coe (2015), "GPN theory not only accounts for the origins of these networks but also specifies their changing configurations over time" (p.53).

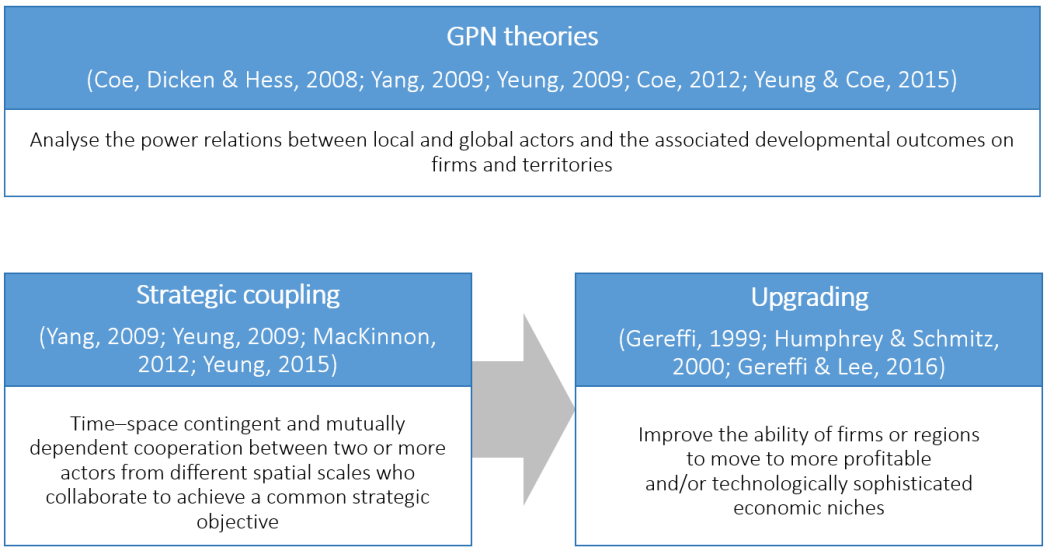
The main concern of GPN theories is to analyse the power relations between local and global actors and the associated developmental outcomes on firms and territories (Yeung, 2009). These issues are addressed by taking, as a reference, the terms of strategic coupling and upgrading (Figure 23). Yeung (2009) defines strategic coupling as "a mutually dependent and constitutive process involving shared interests and cooperation between two or more groups of actors who otherwise might not act in tandem for a common strategic objective" (p.332). This general definition is completed by MacKinnon (2012), who highlights three main assumptions behind the conceptualisation of coupling processes. First, strategic coupling brings together actors from different spatial scales with a common goal that motivates them to work together. Second, the launching and continuity of these processes need the engagement and active intervention of both local and global participants. Third, couplings are time-space contingent, so decoupling and recoupling may also occur when interests of participants and/or institutional contexts change (Yeung, 2015).

As introduced earlier, GPN scholars maintain—albeit not without criticism (Tokatli, 2013) – that strategic coupling determines the boost of economic and social upgrading at the industry level and could have real influence on local and regional development trajectories (Gereffi & Lee, 2016; Yeung, 2009). According Schiller (2013), upgrading activities "are the result of

proactive strategic decisions and intense long-term efforts" (p.194) that involve "organisational learning to improve the position of firms or nations in international trade networks" (Gereffi, 1999, p.39), implying the offering of better products (or services), producing them more efficiently, or incorporating complementary functions (sometimes skill-intensive) within the production process.

Much of the discussion on this issue has covered essentially technological upgrading paths, while neglecting other non-technological upgrading paths—i.e., those related, for instance, to organisational and marketing initiatives (Schiller, 2013). Nonetheless, some of the latest developments on this topic propose different taxonomies in order to capture the complete variety of upgrading paths that could be applied to any industry, including the service sector. This is the case of Humphrey and Schmitz (2002) and Schmitz (2004), who propose a useful typology distinguishing between product, process, functional and inter-sectoral upgrading, depending on the nature of the improvements promoted by the participants in strategic couplings.

Figure 23. *Conceptual notions within the Global Production Networks (GPNs) approach*



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In any case, when assessing advances in GPNs research, issues such as the degree of explicit coordination and power asymmetries among actors (Yeung & Coe, 2015), as well as the results of the diverse strategies implemented by local stakeholders – either implicit or explicit, depending on whether the initiative respond to spontaneous firm-led initiatives or deliberate and selective actions headed by public authorities (Yang, 2009) – and the multiple governance structures arising from the strategic choices of the counterparts (Gereffi et al., 2005; Gereffi

& Lee, 2016) emerge as domains that should be analysed in more depth. This is even more necessary when it comes to the analysis of such processes in service sectors, and particularly in tourism (as demonstrated in the work of Niewiadomski, 2014, author who uses the GPNs approach for addressing the complex power relations arising from the process of international expansion of the hotel industry).

4.2.2. Strategic coupling and upgrading within tourism GPNs

GPN theories study the ‘‘nexus of interconnected functions, operations and transactions through which a specific product or service is produced, distributed and consumed” (Coe et al., 2008, p.272). Thereby, it is argued here that this approach may contribute to analysing the relationships established among the multiplicity of actors participating in what have been traditionally known in the tourism literature as ‘‘distribution channels”; that is, the platforms that connect local suppliers and global consumers, facilitating the commercialisation, delivery, and the production of tourism services (Buhalis, 2000; Kracht & Wang, 2010).

The structure of the tourism distribution systems and the role of intermediation have undergone huge transformations in recent times as a result of advances in information and communication technologies (see Kracht and Wang, 2010, for an extensive analysis of this process). As a result, the distribution of tourism services is nowadays represented by an (even more) globally-connected, complex, multi-channelled networks in which supplier-to-consumer – and, more recently, even consumer-to-consumer (or peer to peer) (Russo & Quaglieri, 2014) – online channels coexist simultaneously with more conventional but renewed multi-layered and internationally-mediated networks. This circumstance has set the scene for an environment of fierce competition in which – although obviously the Internet gains importance, especially in mature markets – established relationships with global intermediaries are still crucial in some destinations, especially in many mass global coastal destinations (Cavlek, 2004). This is partly due to the fact that these destinations—and particularly the accommodation firms located there—still rely heavily on international tour companies for gaining visibility and attracting the large number of consumers they need to ensure profitability.

The literature analysing relationships within the tourism distribution system has traditionally emphasised a relatively vulnerable position of local players in the grasp of major tour operators (Buhalis, 2000). Nonetheless, as Ioannides (1998) pointed out, in the global tourism economy both type of actors might be interested in joining efforts to maintain and enhance their competitive position. Thus, there is room for deeper theoretical reflection and empirical investigation to fully understand the dynamics of interaction between local firms and global intermediaries.

Some researchers have attempted to translate the formulations proposed under the 'chain' metaphor into the tourism domain (see, e.g., Mosedale, 2006, for GCC, and Erkuş-Öztürk & Terhorst, 2010, for GVC), but the fact is that, as Hjalager (2007) points out, there is need of more detailed insights on the changed composition of value chains – or networks – in the context of the global tourism industry. In a recent paper Niewiadomski (2013), adopting a supply side perspective, presented an attempt to translate the GPN approach into the tourism domain, while stating that it might serve as an effective platform for addressing the complex power relations arising from the process of international expansion of the hotel industry – so, adopting a supply side perspective. Indeed, analysing relations between stakeholders in tourism destinations using the notion of strategic coupling might be useful in going beyond the conventional analysis of cross-sectoral networks, public– private partnerships, and other community-based collaboration issues (Bramwell, 2014).

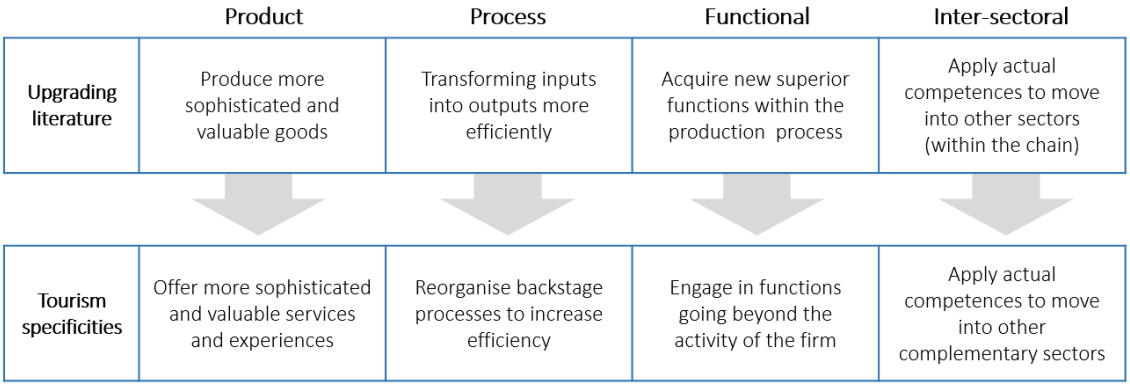
The strategic coupling notion adds value to these other related approaches by opening the floor to discussion of collaborative relationships between local stakeholders and global actors (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Timothy, 1999). Additionally, two other issues arise. First, couplings are essentially based in trans-local business networks, so the goal that motivates the counterparts to work together responds essentially to economic interests—for instance, the development of a new outbound demand market (Pan, 2008). This contrasts with the goals traditionally associated with tourism partnerships, which have been more related to planning, management, and policy-making issues (Dredge, 2006). Second, whereas the collaboration and cooperation literature highlights how power relations determine which local actors have more influence on partnerships' decision-making processes (Bramwell & Lane, 2000), the strategic coupling notion tackles the distribution of power between local and global actors (Niewiadomski, 2014). This issue is of particular interest to international destinations, where tourism development might be strongly influenced by major tour operators.

Otherwise, there is also a need for increased theoretical discussion and empirical evidence on the contribution of relations between local stakeholders and global actors on the innovativeness of firms and the competitiveness of destinations (Erkuş-Öztürk & Eraydın, 2010). The work of Niewiadomski (2017), adopting GPN theories, shows how the expansion of international hotel groups in Eastern Europe has had remarkable impacts on the economic performance of the tourism sector in these countries in terms of direct investment and infrastructure upgrading, the creation of employment, the forge of local linkages and the transfer of know-how and technology. Along these lines, the notion of upgrading—connected with strategic coupling—can give a helpful perspective when examining the role of private-led innovation initiatives promoted by local and global players working together and their effects on destination performance over time (Yeung, 2009). Nevertheless, some conceptual and operational adjustments should be made in order to apply the established categories of

upgrading proposed in other fields of production – i.e., process, product, functional, and inter-sectoral (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002; Schmitz, 2004) – into the tourism context.

In this sense, the typologies of innovation in tourism proposed by Hjalager (2010) – who distinguishes product, process, managerial, marketing, and institutional innovations—are useful in adapting and enriching the application of the established categories of upgrading to the case of tourism. Figure 24 shows the adaptation made to translate the upgrading categories into the tourism context. Product upgrading should also comprise actions geared to offering more sophisticated and value-driven tourism services and experiences. Process upgrading, in turn, should also be related to finding new, more efficient ways of organising internal processes within firms. Functional upgrading would appear when firms acquire new superior functions beyond the production and commercialisation of tourism services. Finally, inter-sectoral upgrading would embrace initiatives in which firms apply their actual competences to move into other complementary sectors.

Figure 24. *Translation of upgrading categories into the tourism context*



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4.2.3. Strategic coupling and upgrading in the evolution of destinations

This GPN approach—including the notions of strategic coupling and upgrading—presents potential complementarities with two other key current analytical approaches in economic geography, recently adapted to the analysis of destination evolution (Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014): evolutionary economic geography (EEG) and relational economic geography (REG). EEG scholars aim to explain the processes underlying the transformation of economic landscapes over time (Boschma & Martin, 2010a) and consider path dependence—i.e., the influence of past events, circumstances, and decisions— a fundamental force shaping development trajectories. REG researchers (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003), in turn, study how context-specific social relations and actors' practices drive distinctive organisational forms for

production systems. In this context, the added value of the GPN perspective within an integrated EEG–REG–GPN approach relies on emphasizing the role of global–local linkages in processes of regional evolution (MacKinnon, 2012).

Otherwise, the EEG–REG approach acknowledges that the evolution of tourist places is strongly influenced (but not determined) by the social, economic, and political structures or institutions in which they are embedded (Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014). In the context of the globalisation of the tourism industry, not only local environments act as an element that enables or constrains the development of tourism in such places, but (global) external forces—such as demand markets and intermediaries—also play a role (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001).

This is an issue that most studies in tourism have neglected except when they have a negative or critical influence, while it is particularly crucial when studying the development of mature destinations, tourist places that are "fragmented, integrated into, and partly subjugated by international forces and, as a result, have become subject to more intensified international inter-regional competition" (Agarwal, 2005, p.359). The integration of the GPN perspective could give valuable insights in this regard by exploring both positive and negative influences of global connections, including the processes of innovation within local firms and the capacity of destinations to remain competitive in the constantly-changing global market.

Along these lines, stakeholders' intentions, strategies, and practices—that is, human agency—are precisely the mechanisms that could mindfully promote change in destinations (Gill & Williams, 2014). In this regard, political interventions are usually highlighted in the literature, but there is a need to recognise the role of pro-active entrepreneurial strategies (Russell & Faulkner, 2004) – frequently led by a few visionary entrepreneurs or 'champions' – in facilitating the adaptability of destinations to local and global changes. Likewise, in a context where one can find extensive analysis highlighting the utmost importance of interrelations between local – or at most regional – economic and non-economic actors in enabling innovation and shaping tourism destination development (Dredge, 2006; Guia et al., 2006; Novelli et al., 2006), there is need to look for analytical frameworks that also recognise external – or global – relations and their crucial contributions to the creativeness and innovation of tourism firms and the competitiveness of destinations (Erkuş-Öztürk, 2009, 2010), as well as to the competitiveness of destinations in the global market (Erkuş-Öztürk, 2009). This is because, as Milne and Ateljevic (2001) pointed out, "we cannot understand the context of local tourism development unless we (…) better understand how key stakeholders (government, industry, community, tourists) interact both within and between multiple nested scales" (p.374).

Last but not least, the EEG–REG approach postulates that the historical trajectory of destinations provide clues about their past, present, and future conditions, while highlighting

the contingency of destination evolutionary pathways (Ma & Hassink, 2014). In this vein, notions such as path creation (Gill & Williams, 2014)—which is related to disruptive changes—and path plasticity (Halkier & Therkelsen, 2013)—associated to incremental shifts—are seen as powerful tools to increase understanding of the open-ended and unpredictable nature of destination evolution. In this respect, by also adopting the GPN lens, the fostering of strategic coupling between local actors and global intermediaries— aimed at attracting a new demand market to a destination—could be regarded as a proactive survival action to generate a new path for the destination.

4.3. Methods

As previously introduced, this chapter aims to elucidate two specific issues. First, the nature and evolution of the crucial strategic alliances between local actors and global intermediaries working in the Russian market that were forged between 1994 and 2013 in central Costa Daurada, the period when this market grew exponentially. Second, the upgrading effects derived from the complex global production network created are also assessed. Table 21 displays an overview of the fieldwork planning for the empirical analysis carried out.

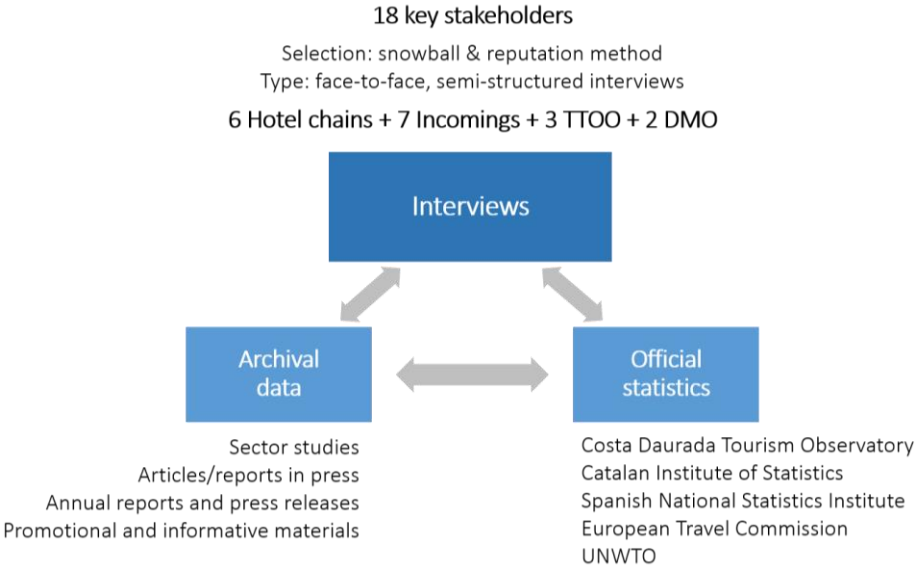
Table 21. *Fieldwork planning for studying the Russian GPN in cCD*

Task	Information needed	Data and methods
1. Analyse the process of strategic coupling formation between local actors and Russian tour operators	Qualitative description of the coupling process (evolutionary perspective) Types of strategic coupling Transformation of coupling processes over time	Interviews with key stakeholders Complementary secondary data (official publications and news in the media)
	Evolution of the Russian market at the destination	Secondary data (official statistics and TTOO)
2. Analyse the upgrading outcomes of strategic coupling processes	Qualitative description of the upgrading process (evolutionary perspective) Types of upgrading	Interviews with key stakeholders

Source: Author

In order to gain a better picture of the complex issues under study, the methodological design was based on primary resources obtained through semi-structured interviews, complemented with the exploration of informative secondary sources (Figure 25). More details regarding the methods used and the research process are explained below.

Figure 25. *Overview of the data gathering process for studying the Russian GPN in cCD*



Source: Author

Primary resources

The analysis of strategic coupling processes and upgrading outcomes was based on semi-structured interviews that were conducted over the period March – June 2014. This method was considered the most effective method to both provide the wealth of information needed and also a more direct contact with the participants. The interviews generated rich testimonies and opinions of key informants in relation to the origins, development, and future prospects of the Russian global production network in central Costa Daurada.

The group of participants was constructed following a snowball and reputation sampling. The first round of interviews consisted of specifically targeted respondents who were known to play an active role in the orientation of central Costa Daurada to the Russian market – either for references in the local press or local knowledge acquired within the GRATET research group. As part of the interviews, these participants were asked who else in the area should be approached for interview. This strategy helped to reduce the risk of excluding stakeholders who do possessed relevant knowledge to the particular objects of inquiry. It was considered to reach the sufficient number of respondents when the information provided by the participants was not different from earlier interviews.

During the process, a great care was taken in trying to approach a well-balanced and sufficiently representative sample including the right persons representing the different stakeholders participating in such processes – hotel firms, travel agencies, tour operators and public organisations. In so doing, the gathering and comparison of the different views each stakeholder had would provide a more holistic and multi-faceted understanding of the issues

under study. Finally, 18 interviewees participated in the study. These included: the managers of 6 local hotel chains (representing 45% of the total hotel bed-places in the area), 7 local incoming travel agencies (which manage more than 90% of the Russian tourists coming to the area), 3 tour operators specializing in the Russian market (which operate approximately 80% of the Russian market in the area), and 2 destination management organisations involved in the promotion of the destination. For the sake of anonymity, the names of the firms and organisations are not displayed in the study.

The first contact with the participants was made through an e-mail explaining the research objectives – in some cases, though, a telephone call proved to be more effective. Certainly, the fact that most of the interviewees had contacts with Rovira i Virgili University and the Science and Technology Park for Tourism and Leisure of Catalonia (PCT) – whether for personal acquaintances or professional relations – allowed to access them with a certain facility. The main difficulty came in some cases when trying to find room in their busy agenda. With the aim of facilitating as much as possible the process, the interviews were usually conducted in the respective offices of the interviewed representatives of firms and organisations – located in Salou, Cambrils, Vila-seca (La Pineda), and Tarragona. A complete registry of the communications and meetings held with the participants was created in order to provide a traceable record of the research process.

Interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 2 hours on average. Even though the interviewing process was held on a conversational way, a detailed checklist of topics – including guiding questions written in full (in Catalan) – was used in order to make sure the coverage of all the key topics and data needs which were identified in the conceptual framework for the study (see a summary of the checklist in Table 22). The checklist was adapted depending on the type of respondent – i.e. hotel owner, travel agency/tour operator representative or public organisation spokesperson. The interviews covered aspects of the origins, development and future relationships between local stakeholders and Russian tour operators and the impacts of these alliances at their own companies and at the destination as a whole.

It is worthy to note that the content of the checklist evolved during the research process, including some new topics emerged from interviewees themselves. Having a checklist of prescribed questions did not prevent the interviewer to improvise depending on the flow of the interview, as well as to encourage respondents to speak freely on the topic in the order they wished to and ask them follow-up questions to explain their answers. The interviews were tape recorded – with the permission of interviewees – but also detailed notes were taken to keep track on the questions answered, as well as to write down important issues to consider in the following interviews or later on in the analysis.

Table 22. Summary of the checklist for conducting interviews with key stakeholders

Task	Topics	
1	Origins and evolution of strategic coupling processes in cCD	Participant actors Strategies/actions undertaken Key dates and contextual milestones Constraining and enabling factors Competing destinations in the Russian market
	Characteristics of strategic couplings over time	Actors' interests/motivation Actors' role/contribution Gaps (knowledge, technology, market) Power relations Collaboration synergies and agreements
2	Consequences of the coupling (general opinion)	Specialisation of the area in the Russian market Changing international markets
	Upgrading at the firm level over time	Actions undertaken Resources invested Difficulties and facilities encountered
	Upgrading at the destination level over time (general opinion)	Strategies implemented Participant actors Difficulties and facilities encountered Strategic positioning in comparison to other competing destinations

Source: Author

Interview data was examined following an iterative and hierarchical process that was successfully applied in studies such as Bramwell and Cox (2009) or (Dodds, 2007). This process consisted of the analysis of recordings and notes by means of identifying salient emergent themes in the responses given by the stakeholders, elaborating descriptive accounts for summarizing the emerging topics – trying to capture both the language used by respondents and the substantive content of their speech (Spencer, Ritchie, & O'Connor, 2003). Once this step was completed, the next task was discussing and reflecting about the connections of these themes with the broader conceptual framework and aims of the research. In this vein, particular attention was given to identify patterns of association in the data which allowed to develop typologies to describe and explain the strategic coupling processes and upgrading effects in central Costa Daurada as a means to develop more general theory on the topic (Spencer et al., 2003).

Secondary resources

In addition to the primary data obtained through the interviewing process, secondary data was cursorily analysed through strategic overviews so as to have a holistic view of the characteristics and development of the outbound Russian market, being of particular interest how this phenomena occurred in central Costa Daurada, Catalonia, and Spain.

The sources comprised documents such as sectoral studies and annual reports published by relevant tourism policymakers and research centres—namely, the Catalan Tourism Board, the Tarragona Provincial Tourism Board, and the Science and Technology Park for Tourism and Leisure of Catalonia. Further information was obtained from informative documents generated by local/regional/international public authorities and private companies – including the World Tourism Organisation or the European Travel Commission. Media articles and reports—both printed and online—were also consulted to gain an overview of the news made public in relation to the subject.

Complementarily, official statistical data was searched and processed with the purpose to measure and gain inputs about two main aspects. First, about the evolution of the Russian market in the area from 1994 to 2013 in terms of number and profile of Russian tourists and overnight stays – including a comparison with the figures corresponding to other major international markets. Second, about the evolution of the hotel accommodation supply during the same period, as well as the financial performance of these establishments. The data was obtained through the official statistic organisations at the national, regional, and local levels (i.e. the Spanish National Statistics Institute, the Catalan Institute of Statistics and the Costa Daurada Tourism Observatory). A summary of this data can be found in the presentation of the study area included in the introduction of this dissertation.

4.4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the research focusing on two specific issues. First, it comprises an in-depth analysis of the nature and evolution of strategic couplings operating in the Russian market identified in central Costa Daurada from 1994 to 2013. The evolving interplay of local and global institutional-spatial conditions which enabled or constrained coupling practices are also identified. Second, the upgrading outcomes of these processes are evaluated. The qualitative description of the findings is complemented with figures that have been designed following the most established studies on such issues (Gereffi et al., 2005; Hjalager, 2010; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002; Schmitz, 2004).

4.4.1. Strategic coupling dynamics

The configuration of central Costa Daurada's global production network in the Russian market is scrutinised in this part to examine the properties determining the nature and dynamics of the different strategic coupling processes identified at the destination from 1994 to 2014. In addition to this, the evolving interplay of local and global institutional-spatial conditions that enabled or constrained coupling practices are also evaluated.

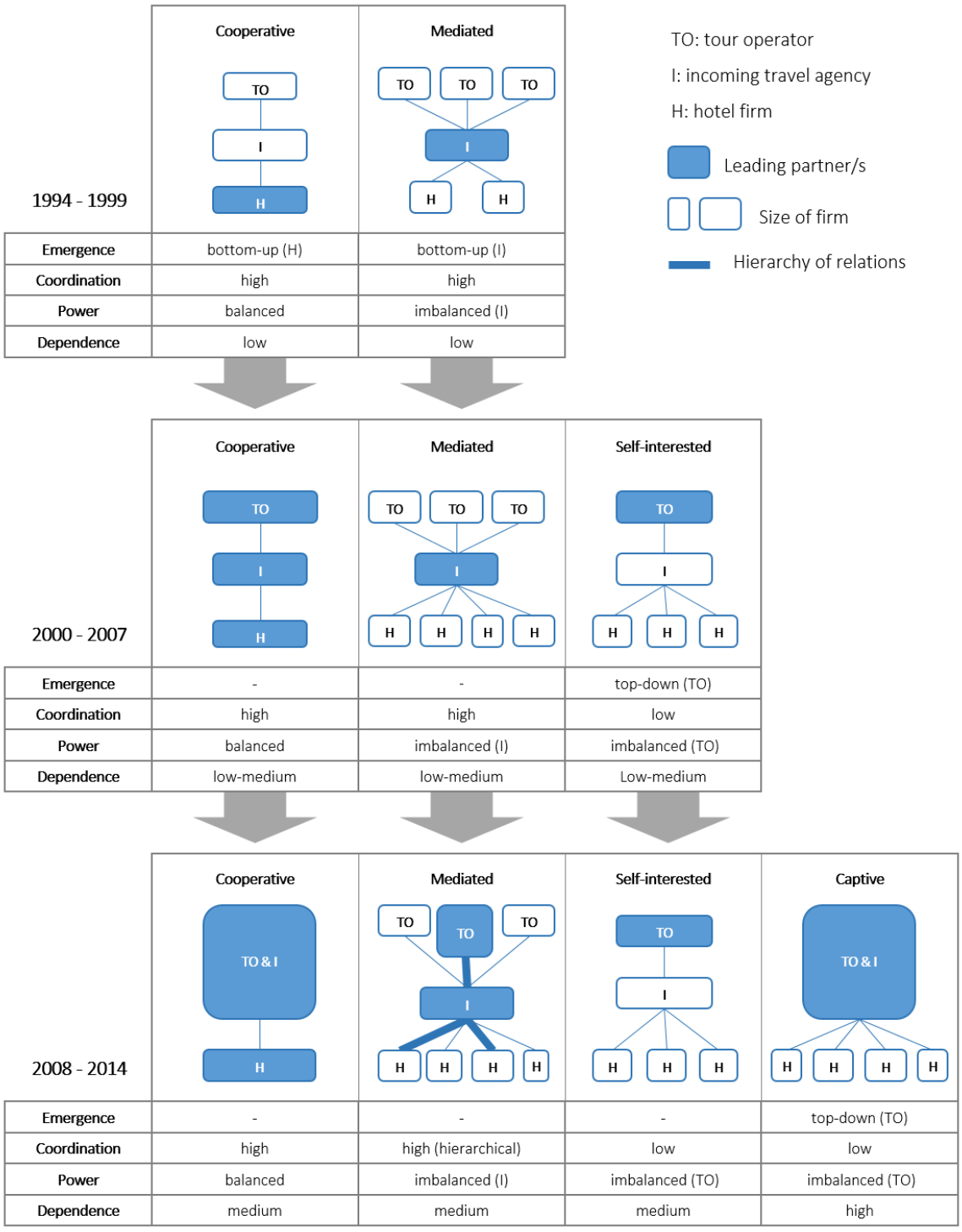
1994 – 1999: the emergence of cooperative and mediated couplings

Towards the end of the 80s and the early 90s – with the exception of the Barcelona '92 Olympic Games period, tourism in central Costa Daurada faced a considerable downturn (Anton Clavé, 1997b). To tackle this, and in parallel with other strategies aimed at renewing the tourism product of the area (Anton Clavé, 2010), a small group of local pioneer entrepreneurs (hoteliers and incoming travel agencies) searched contacts among the emerging Russian outbound travel agencies as an opportunity to unlock the destination. This was during the geopolitical and economic opening of Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Union (see World Tourism Organisation & European Travel Commission, 2009, for more insights regarding the development of the Russian outbound tourism). The initiative was strongly supported by the Catalan Government who, perceiving the potential interest of Russia and the ex-USSR countries on Catalonia as a tourism destination, opened a promotion office in Moscow in 1993. These pioneer contacts between the local industry and the Russian global intermediaries had, as a result, the settlement of two initial different patterns of coupling: cooperative and mediated (Figure 26), with each partner playing interdependent and complementary roles with the aim to open and develop the new and promising demand niche.

In the cooperative coupling, the partners—a prominent hotel firm, a nationally-renowned incoming and an emerging Russian operator— worked in very close (even personal) collaboration and in well-balanced association. This is illustrated by the words of the manager of the hotel firm: ''the market was new for us and the destination was new for the Russians. . . We shared a common objective and started to collaborate. We travelled to Russia frequently. . . We got along very well with them'. In the mediated coupling the strategy was different. In this case, the incoming agency involved in the process acted as a crucial intermediary between some hotels and several small Russian outbound agencies. According to the incoming's manager, ''It was the sum of many small companies what made [them] grow in the Russian market". Thus, this second coupling presented highly cooperative but slightly imbalanced power relations in favour of the incoming operator. The degree of dependence, bearing in mind the limited importance of the market at that point in time, was low in both types of coupling. As a consequence of these initial alliances, the Russian market acquired a slow but

steady increase, which brought to the area a considerable number of Russian tourists with high acquisitive power. This made this segment very attractive for the – at that moment stagnated – local tourism industry.

Figure 26. *Evolution of strategic coupling patterns in the Russian GPN of cCD*



1994 - 1999	Cooperative	Mediated
Emergence	bottom-up (H)	bottom-up (I)
Coordination	high	high
Power	balanced	imbalanced (I)
Dependence	low	low

2000 - 2007	Cooperative	Mediated	Self-interested
Emergence	-	-	top-down (TO)
Coordination	high	high	low
Power	balanced	imbalanced (I)	imbalanced (TO)
Dependence	low-medium	low-medium	Low-medium

2008 - 2014	Cooperative	Mediated	Self-interested	Captive
Emergence	-	-	-	top-down (TO)
Coordination	high	high (hierarchical)	low	low
Power	balanced	imbalanced (I)	imbalanced (TO)	imbalanced (TO)
Dependence	medium	medium	medium	high

Source: Sanz-Ibáñez and Anton Clavé (2016)

In 1998, the Russian outbound tourism market seriously struggled as a consequence of a financial crisis (Oficina Española de Turismo de Moscú, 2000) that affected severely the structure of the Russian intermediation sector. Many of the intermediaries operating in the destination—especially smaller ones with less turnover— became bankrupt and disappeared. As the representative of a local incoming agency explained: ''in the crisis of 1998 many [Russian tour operators] were ruined. We worked at that time with major companies... They left us, owing a lot of money'. This occasioned difficulties to the local industry and a dramatic decrease of Russian tourists that year.

2000 – 2007: stabilisation of pioneer coupling strategies and new self-interested coupling mechanisms

At the beginning of the 2000s, the Russian economy gradually recovered, the demand for travelling abroad increased, and the number of actors involved in the Russian global production network grew. At the local level, more high- and medium-class hotels became interested on this new segment; while at the global arena, new operators included the destination in their brochures.

These circumstances led to the recovery and stabilisation of the two initial coupling strategies—cooperative and mediated coupling—while the enlargement of the market share generated more ambitious and business-oriented goals than in previous times. According to interviewees, trust, strong interpersonal social relations – accomplished by frequent (event face-to-face) interactions despite the spatial distance –, and collaborative attitudes still remained as the pillars sustaining the success of their high degree of explicit coordination. Power relations remained as the main factor differentiating these two coupling practices. In this vein, while the cooperative was characterised by presenting no (or at least low) power asymmetries between partners, the mediated was still governed by lightly imbalanced power relations, giving a higher degree of centrality to the incoming firm.

In parallel, during this stage a new set of self-interested coupling practices emerged (). The process, mainly top-down driven, was fostered by new tour operators dealing with the Russian market in the area—most of them of Turkish origin. Their strategy consisted of establishing purely commercial agreements and less close relationships with local incomings and hotel firms. The ties among participants were thus weaker and the degree of coordination was also (intentionally) considerably lower. Interestingly, this pattern of coupling was either established between former strong TO's in the area and the number of local firms who recently joined the network; or between the local tourism industry and the new powerful TO's – created by Russian and Turkish investors which were standing out in the global Russian outbound travel market since the mid-2000s.

The new scenario facilitated the arrival of new profiles of Russian tourists who, coming from the country's regions, had slightly lower acquisitive power in comparison to the very first Russians visiting the area at the beginning of the 1990s who came from the capitals – namely, Moscow and St. Petersburg. This circumstance was particularly favoured by several institutional-contextual issues (Figure 27). As informants explained, the most important factor was the progress achieved in what concerned visa expedition issues from Russia – either in terms of flexibilisation of requirements for Russian tourists or the improvement of Visa expedition procedures. This was the result of crucial and intense negotiations between local entrepreneurs and governments at different scales. Complementarily, informants pointed out that organizing and participating in events and activities to promote the destination in the Russian market (e.g. tourism fairs, roadshows, fam trips and press trips – became part of the agenda of the major local stakeholders – the regional destination management organisation and the CEOs and representatives of the prominent local hotel chains and incoming agencies – in very close collaboration with the Catalan destination management organisation located in Moscow and the tour operators.

2008 – 2014: the coexistence of cooperative, mediated, self-interested and captive couplings

According to interviewees, the picture changed substantially when, in 2008, a decoupling crisis occurred between tour operators and the local incoming firms engaged in cooperative coupling. This crisis—in parallel with the consolidation of central Costa Daurada as the preferred Spanish destination for most Russians—became an inflection point because of the entrance of the larger Turkish tour operators, who at that moment controlled the majority of the Russian market. This resulted in the configuration of a much populated and complex network in which four distinct coupling strategies— including a new form of captive coupling—coexisted. This happened to the point that the same actor might become engaged in more than one coupling practice, and in doing so, acting differently depending on the partners with whom they interacted.

The decoupling process resulted in the subsequent increase of power and influence of the tour operator (also incoming) participant in the cooperative coupling. Nevertheless, the nature of the alliance with the original local hotelier partner remained highly cooperative and mutually benefit-oriented, while opening the floor to much more direct—but also more dependent—relations. In this case, the actors involved argue that the power balance between counterparts was particularly favoured by the durable, trustworthy, and strong personal links between the representatives of each firm. This facilitated the planning and financial co-participation in joint projects in the destination.

With regard to the mediated coupling, the well-established relationships between the counterparts also remained stable and fruitful. The power asymmetries derived from the central role of the incoming were still in place, but relationships were closer, which facilitated

a higher degree of coordination. Nonetheless, a certain hierarchisation of relations between partners emerged and despite working with different tour operators at the same time, the incoming strengthened relations—in the form of a joint venture—with the more powerful intermediary. Besides, the incoming firm also became a shareholder in some hotel firms.

At this stage, self-interested coupling practices—those with weak ties and in which the counterparts worked together for convenience—materialised in different business strategies. According to informants' explanations, some of them took advantage of an alliance with an influential pre-existent local incoming, while others induced the creation of new foreign-owned (but independently-run) incomings. In both cases, the degree of coordination was higher than in previous times, but it was not as effective as in the cooperative and mediated couplings. Likewise, interviewees remarked that global intermediaries still acted as leaders and reciprocal dependence increased considerably, but local suppliers tried to diversify relations – couplings – in order to avoid being subjected to their absolute control.

Finally, as announced earlier, a new globally-driven type of alliance emerged, adopted particularly by tour operators of non-Russian origin: captive coupling. Under this pattern, the operator—integrating receptive services—simply sought advantageous (or even extractive) commercial relations, using its power to obtain good prices and conditions from the subordinate local hotels, particularly those in the mid-class range in the context of a lack of demand in their traditional markets. This practice, hence, was based on unidirectional top-down flows of information and demands, so giving the TO a highly privileged position. As the testimony of a local hotel chain's manager illustrates: 'some [larger operators] tried to come previously but they could not find enough beds for them. But when the British market fell, and the Spanish market suffered with the crisis, then the Turkish came here and said: 50 rooms in each hotel! And the hoteliers accepted their conditions'.

Thorough this period, some factors emerging from the institutional-contextual environment had an impact on the consolidation of the complex Russian global production network (Figure 27). First, the advent of the economic crisis that severely hit Spain and the rest of Europe favoured that the Russian niche became a priority market for the area – as well as for Catalonia as a whole and other regions in Spain. Second, this resulted in the organisation of specific and extensive in coverage marketing campaigns leaded by DMOs and local tourism firms – in straight collaboration with tour operators – with the objective to consolidate the brand in Russia and attracting new segments from the ex-URSS countries. Third, and emerging again as a key issue, the pressure made by tourism associations as well as the various administrations at regional and national levels, made possible to continue implementing measures for speeding up the expedition of tourist visas and the opening of bilateral negotiations with Russia to ease these bureaucratic barriers. The expansion of the PortAventura theme park into a whole resort was also a positive project to expand and improve the accommodation facilities

and the consolidation of the leisure offer in the area, both strategies were really welcomed by the tour operators working in the Russian market.

Figure 27. *Contextual milestones influencing coupling processes in cCD*

Source: Author

From an overall perspective, the nature and evolution of coupling patterns in central Costa Daurada's Russian global production networks exhibited two relevant peculiarities in comparison to other industrial sectors (Gereffi et al., 2005). First, coupling—especially in its initial phase—was possible thanks to a key player: the incoming travel agencies. These firms offered the tour operator their support to sign commercial agreements with local suppliers, while providing guarantees to the locals in advancing them payments and managing contracts (March, 2000). Further, in slight contrast to other productive contexts (where knowledge and technologies transferred from global actors to local firms is considered the main strategic value of coupling), in this case study the market gap (Bastakis, Buhalis, & Butler, 2004)—that is, the accessibility and influence to develop and dominate the Russian demand market—was the most prominent issue underlying the emergence and consolidation of coupling processes. On the other hand, results also have shown how in tourism these networks are not closed or exclusive, in other words, that actors at different levels may became engaged in different

coupling strategies at the same time, although as more direct and close the relationships are, less likely is that local actors diversify their alliances.

The following section provides the results obtained with regard to the contribution of the strategic coupling processes in enabling (or even fostering intentionally) specific economic upgrading outcomes in central Costa Daurada's tourism sector during the period 1994 - 2013. Hence, particular attention is paid to the critical factors affecting the activation and development of synergies as such in relation to the patterns and dynamics of the strategic couplings previously presented. In addition to this, an analysis of the role and contribution of each partner in facilitating (or developing) the upgrading strategies is also included.

4.4.2. Upgrading outcomes

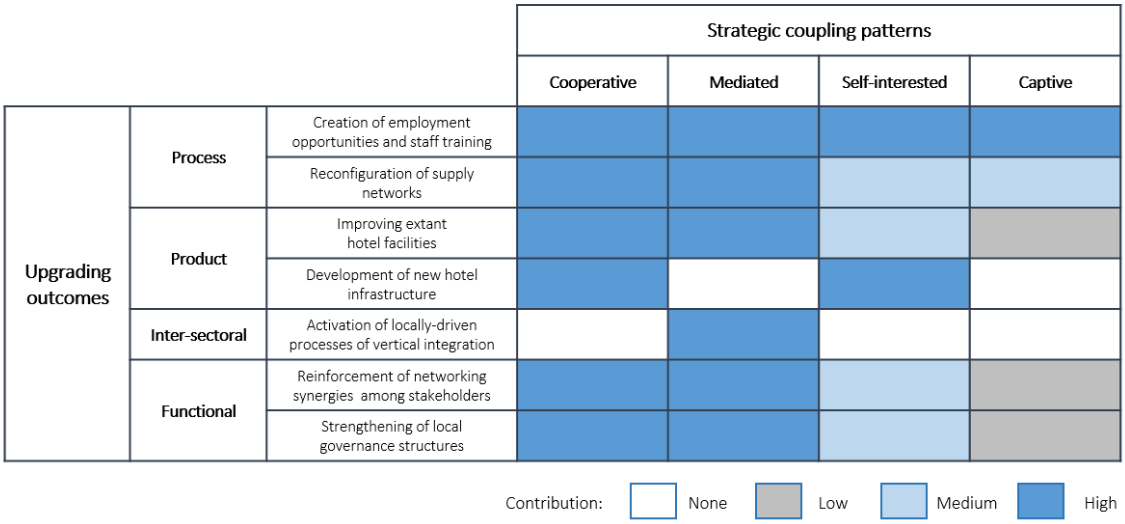
From the interviews emerge the idea that the evolution of the strategic coupling patterns identified stimulated distinct types of upgrading. These upgrading outcomes are classified using the categories proposed by Humphrey and Schmitz (2002) and Schmitz (2004), adjusted to the tourism sector as previously stated. Figure 28 summarises the relationship between the types of coupling and the characteristics of each category of upgrading—process, product, inter-sectoral, and functional. Lesser magnitude upgradings, such as process improvements and low-investment product renovations, were generally facilitated by all types of coupling. In contrast to this, more complex and ambitious upgrading dynamics (mainly inter-sectoral and functional) were certainly favoured by the existence of closer, durable, and balanced power relationships between the counterparts.

According to interviewees, the most common type of improvements developed by the local hotel sector since 1994 —and to a lesser extent, the incoming agencies—falls into the category of process upgrading. This upgrading was basically necessity-driven, and thus responded to the need of local firms to adapt their products and services to the demands and expectations of Russian tourists. The main motivation was to gain efficiency in relation to the new market by reorganizing internal production processes. In terms of the roles played by each partner to foster process upgradings, it comes out that hoteliers and incomings assumed the investment needed to implement such improvements. The global counterparts, on their behalf, acted as instigators and advisers—sometimes directly or via the incoming agency—by providing up-to-date information on market demands and guidance to orientate the reforms.

Actions undertaken in this regard were mostly related to human resource management. In particular, the sector struggled to find a workforce with the appropriate language skills and cultural sensitivity – especially, front-office employees, commercial positions and tour guides. As the manager of a local hotel chain explained: ''there were locals who took courses and learned Russian but it was mainly a lot of people from Russia and other neighbouring countries

that came here to work, either through the tour operators or even some hoteliers recruited them at origin. . . This was appreciated by the Russians'. So, on the one hand, this circumstance caused that local workers in the tourism sector became interested in attend Russian language training courses, many of which were offered by the business associations of the area – especially those representing the hotel sector. On the other hand, this scenario led over the years the arrival of an increasing number of citizens from Russian-speaking countries interested in working in central Costa Daurada. All types of coupling favoured the creation of new employment opportunities and improvements in employee training. It must be noted that this phenomena generated also jobs indirectly in other tourism-related services – especially in the case of retailers, restaurants and leisure firms.

Figure 28. *Strategic coupling patterns and upgrading outcomes in cCD*



Source: Sanz-Ibáñez and Anton Clavé (2016)

Besides human resource management, informants revealed that tourism firms carried out other backstage improvements in what concerned their network of providers. Hotels looked for new providers (or expanded their commercial agreements with previous ones) to include new products in their buffet and bar services, to offer Russian newspapers, magazines, and television channels, or even to schedule special cultural and recreational activities. On their behalf, the incoming travel agencies made efforts to design attractive holiday activities for the market. This meant the expansion of their services portfolio (e.g., transfers and local tours to visit the principal attractions, such as Barcelona, and provide them with experiences geared to their tastes). In both sectors, the use of professional services to translate webs, menus, or brochures, was also another relevant action. It is worth noting that couplings with a longer trajectory and higher degree of coordination—i.e., cooperative and mediated—contributed

more significantly to the reconfiguration of the network of providers in comparison to the most recent and more intensely globally-driven, self-interested, and captive couplings.

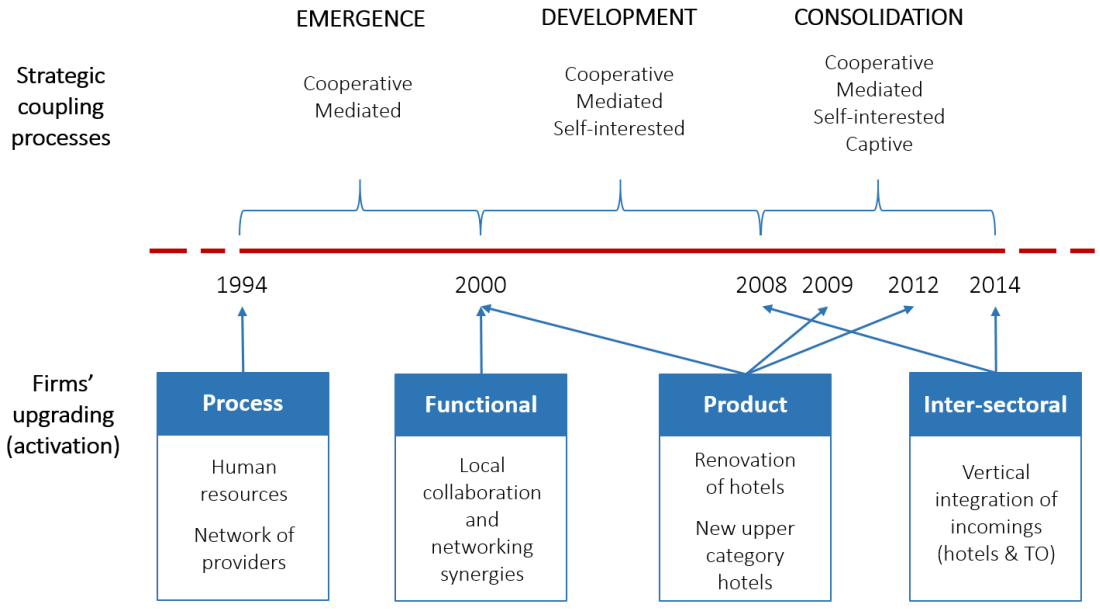
Turning to product upgrading synergies, interviewees agreed that the Russian market had a major impact in the improvement of 3- and 4-star hotels, which made considerable investments since the beginning of the 2000s to assure a better competitive position (Figure 29). In this sense, the hotels included quality restaurants, fitness and spa facilities, and a wide variety of healthcare and luxury services and products. Likewise, some hotels also renovated indoor and outdoor areas in terms of decoration and gardening, keeping in mind Russian tastes and preferences. The role of each counterpart in favouring these market-driven innovations was similar to the dynamics previously explained—that is, the local hoteliers were the principal investors, while the tour operators and the incoming firms provided their knowledge and guidance. This was informed by one representative of a local incoming firm, who affirmed: 'we have always pushed [the reforms] but if the hotel is not ours we have not participated [financially]'.

Aside from favouring the renovation of the hotel infrastructure, two specific couplings among powerful local firms and global intermediaries promoted costlier and more ambitious product upgrading projects by opening new upper-category hotels clearly oriented to the Russian market. In the case of the cooperative coupling the counterparts participated equally in financing the purchase and renovating a pre-existing hotel in order to convert it into a 4-star superior hotel in 2012. In contrast, a self-interested coupling of three actors (a Russian-Turkish tour operator, a local incoming, and a local entrepreneur) resulted in the opening of the first 5-star hotel in the area in 2009. However, in this case, as reported by the hotelier: ''The Russian market was looking for high-class accommodation and there were no 5-star hotels in the area, so we thought that it could be a good business to go into. . . It was very hard for us. . . The investment was very high and we did not have financial support from anyone [tour operators or destination management organisations]". In this case, the incoming and tour operator counterparts only provided their commitment to attract customers looking for this new high-class accommodation offer.

With regard to the inter-sectoral upgrading—a more complex and business-driven innovation—the most fruitful synergies occurred between partners participating in mediated couplings. The central position of the local incoming was a key factor in converting the firm into an agent capable of developing vertical integration processes with the objective of applying their competences and influence in other complementary sectors in their network. In fact, the incoming became engaged in a joint venture with one of the main (Turkish) tour operators in the Russian market in 2014 (Figure 29). During this process – which was still in a formation phase at the time of completion of the research – each partner contributed equally to the upgrading: the global counterpart provided direct access to and knowledge of the market and investment, while the incoming travel agency contributed with their expertise,

investment, and, particularly, their large portfolio of local contacts – including the most prominent hotel firms in the area but also the destination management organisations at local and regional level, which whom the incoming had a very close relation. As reported by the incoming's manager, since around 2008 they intensified their participation 'in the ownership of local hotels, which facilitated [their] operations in the area'. This circumstance was not exclusively due to their participation in the Russian global production network but somehow contributed.

Figure 29. *Strategic coupling evolution and activation of firms' upgrading*



Source: Author

Interviewees affirmed that another major contribution derived from the development of strategic couplings was the reinforcement of collaboration and networking synergies among actors at the local level since the 2000s (Figure 29). These organisational-driven synergies are referred here as functional upgrading. The aim (and active intervention) of the local private sector to attract the Russian market drove the industry, especially the biggest firms participating in the more durable alliances – i.e. the cooperative and mediated couplings, as well as, to some extent, in the self-interested – to join forces and become exceptionally engaged in functions beyond those in their traditional fields of action. In fact, from the beginning of the 2000s the private sector in central Costa Daurada exhibited a more proactive attitude and interest in taking part in the decision-making and governance of the destination, as well as a certain rapprochement and increased collaboration between entrepreneurs and destination management organisations, with whom they shared a collective strategy –

consisting on doing everything in their power to facilitate the arrival of the Russian tourists to the destination.

This was particularly evident in the case of the measures adopted to increase the efficiency in visa expedition processes. This was also carried out in the promotion and marketing of the destination—a function traditionally played almost exclusively by the destination management organisations. In this sense, as explained by a hotel firm representative: ‘‘As a result of the extensive promotional activities aimed at attracting the Russian market, the ties between local hoteliers have tightened... We shared long trips, at minus 30 degrees, you know... Living this experience together allowed us to know each other better . . . And the result has been spectacular, now we [the hoteliers] collaborate more with each other as well as with the destination management organisation and we participate in making decisions related to the promotion of the area”.

All in all, empirical evidence illustrates how strategic coupling dynamics acted as a stimulus for the upgrading of tourism firms in central Costa Daurada. In more detail, results highlight that the contribution to meaningful upgrading outcomes is considerably low when relations are essentially dependent and imbalanced, and in the opposite sense, is higher when power relations between local and global players are equal.

4.5. Discussion

Taking into account that the competitiveness of a destination is largely determined by the performance of firms operating there (Claver-Cortés, Molina-Azorín, & Pereira-Moliner, 2007), this chapter argues that the dynamics of the Russian global production network in central Costa Daurada—even though it only dealt with a specific part of the demand market of the destination—decisively contributed to increase their competitiveness of the destination as a whole. However, as the empirical evidence shows, upgrading opportunities certainly depend on the coupling pattern the firms feed into (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002). Interestingly, certain determinants were found as key in enhancing the potential of strategic coupling processes to act as catalysts for different upgrading outcomes in a destination, such as the position of local firms as promoters of alliances, the support of public organisations throughout the process, and the presence of compatible attitudes towards business and collaboration between counterparts.

To begin with, coupling processes emerging as a result of an implicit bottom-up strategy were found to be more beneficial both for firms and the destination (as also stated by Yang, 2009, in the case of the information technology sector). Under these circumstances, the local partners—especially the larger firms—occupied a stronger and more autonomous position,

which made them able to foster durable win-win alliances (in the case of cooperative and mediated coupling) and to diversify their relations (in contrast to what occurs in other productive sectors). Alternatively, when globals were the initiators, power relations between participants tended to be asymmetrical and less beneficial in terms of upgrading (as evidenced in the self-interested and captive couplings). It is worthy to note that, as Buhalis (2000) and Erkuş-Öztürk and Eraydın (2010) noted, large firms are those that occupy a stronger and autonomous position in these processes. This kind of firms are precisely the ones which play a leading role in fostering and developing durable and balanced win-win coalitions with global intermediaries. In a similar vein, when they take part in globally-driven captive kind of couplings, they have the chance to maintain a certain strength in the negotiations with their global counterparts.

Indeed, findings show the decisive role of entrepreneurs in tourism destination governance and in triggering positive shifts in the evolutionary trajectory of destinations. The research conducted demonstrates how the decisions made by 'champions' (or charismatic visionary entrepreneurs) at one point in time (Gill & Williams, 2014) – in the case studied, an individual hotelier who saw the attraction of the emerging Russian outbound market as an opportunity – can end up becoming years after a collective strategy able to shape the course of the evolutionary trajectory of a destination – as occurred in central Costa Daurada, where the potential of this market has motivated the sector to renew their establishments and expand their supply by carrying out costly and innovative upgrading projects especially aimed to increase the value-added of their service and sustain their competitiveness in relation to the increasing number of competing destinations in Spain and other countries. In this vein, it remains clear that private-led initiatives not only contribute effectively to activate upgrading or innovation in tourism – as it has been traditionally suggested in the literature (e.g. in Hjalager, 2010) –, but also to mindfully favour major institutional changes (Bathelt & Glückler, 2014) needed to un-lock mature destinations.

In addition, the research also evidences that the support and cooperation of destination management organisations and public authorities at different levels is a valuable factor, facilitating the emergence and consolidation of coupling processes and their fruitful outcomes. Public actors act as a platform through which to activate and efficiently organise potent joint promotional actions with the local private sector and starting negotiations with global intermediaries. Likewise, as illustrated by the efforts for solving the problematic issue of visa expedition in the case studied, in practical terms the role of these non-firm actors is to orientate their actions to adapt the institutional-contextual scenario these partnerships need for success (Yeung & Coe, 2015). Promoting actions to improve or renew the facilities for tourists and the image and urban characteristics of destinations is another function which must be leaded by the agents belonging to the public sphere (Rovira Soto & Anton Clavé, 2014), as well as to assume and actively perform their role as representatives of the interests of the destination.

Finally, factors such as the social, economic, and cultural contexts in which the counterparts are embedded were found as crucial in influencing the way in which local and global actors interact (Pan, 2008). In the case studied, for instance, local hoteliers and incomings more positively valued their relations with the Russian tour operators in comparison to the intermediaries run by Turkish- Russian or English capital firms—to whom they attributed more hostile practices and the aim of pursuing their own benefits at the expense of the local industry (this was also identified previously by Buhalis, 2000). This implies that relations and commitment among actors engaged in coupling strategies were generally not set at the level of firms or organisations, but rather among the individuals at the forefront of the respective counterparts. In this vein, as stated by Gill and Williams (2014) in the case of local collaboration in tourism, when dealing with local–global relationships the couplings that generate most beneficial upgrading outcomes (such as the opening of new high-quality hotel facilities) are those in which relations are based on durable informal linkages, mutual trust, and understanding between the representatives.

Obviously, as Tokatli (2013) pointed out in a critique of the upgrading literature, the upgrading effects at the destination level cannot be exclusively attributed to the strategic coupling between local firms and Russian intermediaries. Other relevant (national and international) markets and (mediated or non-mediated) production networks coexisted in the destination during the same period. Likewise, new ambitious policy-led projects aimed to renew and diversify the traditional beach product—i.e., the development of the PortAventura theme park that will be analysed in the following chapter (Anton Clavé, 2010)—might also have had something to do with the process, as well as the general economic atmosphere (Agarwal, 2002), and the knowledge governance mechanisms put in place previously analysed and discussed in chapter 3. Besides, a more complex analysis of the upgrading outcomes of the GPNs identified would help to uncover whether trans-local strategic coupling processes have also generated social upgrading for workers and local communities at the destination (Gereffi & Lee, 2016). In any case, the evidence provided clearly indicates the role of coupling between players within the Russian distribution network in central Costa Daurada as the stimulus catalysing firms' upgrading and, thus, contributing to the unlocking of the destination path.

CHAPTER 5. Moments as path shaping catalysts

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THE EVOLUTION OF DESTINATIONS. AN EVOLUTIONARY AND RELATIONAL ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY APPROACH.
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CHAPTER 5. Moments as path shaping catalysts

The content of this chapter is mainly based on the following book chapter:

Sanz-Ibáñez, C., Wilson, J., & Anton Clavé, S. (2017). Moments as catalysts for change in the evolutionary paths of tourism destinations. In P. Brouder, S. Anton Clavé, A. M. Gill, & D. Ioannides (Eds.), *Tourism Destination Evolution* (pp. 81–102). Oxon and New York: Routledge.

5.1. Introduction

Studies on the evolution of destinations are well established (e.g. Butler, 2006a, 2006b, 2014), although research focused on analysing how and why destinations change over time as well as the long-term effects of leading policies and agency of the processes of change are arguably more scarce (Saarinen, 2004). Even less researched are the specific moments at which destinations' economic paths are forced to shift direction, be this through the creation of new paths or the appearance of a more subtle incremental change over time. Indeed, as Gale and Botterill (2005) argue in a critique of traditional life-cycle approaches, "the critical incidents that mark the transition from one stage to the next [in destination evolution] are poorly defined and often difficult to substantiate empirically" (p.159). This chapter focuses on the potential for moments as a conceptual framework in examining how destinations evolve over time and as a viable alternative to traditional life-cycle-based models.

Interpretation of this field of research as representing a path metaphor may hold some answers in this respect. This chapter uses the term 'path metaphor' in a collective sense to refer to the range of concepts framed by the idea of economic paths, such as path dependence, path shaping, path creation or path plasticity. This metaphor has been increasingly employed by regional economists and economic geographers when analysing the long-term dynamics of regions and industries (Boschma & Martin, 2010b; Kogler, 2015) and, more recently, of tourism destinations (Brouder, 2014; Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014).

Related to moments as key components of the evolutionary path of a destination, evolutionary approaches to tourism have mainly focused the attention on studying responses given by destination stakeholders to incidents along the lines of triggering events, critical

events or shocks with a notable impact – either positive or negative – on destinations' trajectories (e.g. Ritchie et al., 2013). Nevertheless, recent developments in urban social geography such as the cultural political economy approach (Ribera-Fumaz, 2009; Sum & Jessop, 2013) have started to examine the root causes of urban socio-economic change through a new lens, including cultural aspects, policies and agencies (Moulaert, Martinelli, Gonzalez, & Swyngedouw, 2007), which should also be fruitful when analysing the dynamics of destinations. Drawing upon this work, moments are defined as path-shaping evolutionary inflection points that cause a destination's path (trajectory) to shift in direction and focus.

This chapter examines the role and nature of such moments in the tourism evolution process, in terms of how paths are shaped by their occurrence(s). Section 5.2 focuses in the first instance on the context of moments in evolutionary economic geography (EEG) via a review of previous research, for proposing then a conceptual framework for understanding the moments as inflection points in path shaping via the main discourses associated with their effects on tourism destinations. Section 5.3 explains the qualitative methodology implemented – mainly based on documentary analysis – in order to illustrate the framework's potential for understanding how destinations change over time. Section 5.4 comprises the main findings of the exploratory research conducted by applying the conceptual framework relating to moments in interpreting a key moment in the evolution of Catalonia's central Costa Daurada – the opening of the PortAventura theme park in the mid-1990s. Finally, section 5.5 discusses the capacity and potential for the framework's application in tourism destination contexts.

5.2. Analytical foundation

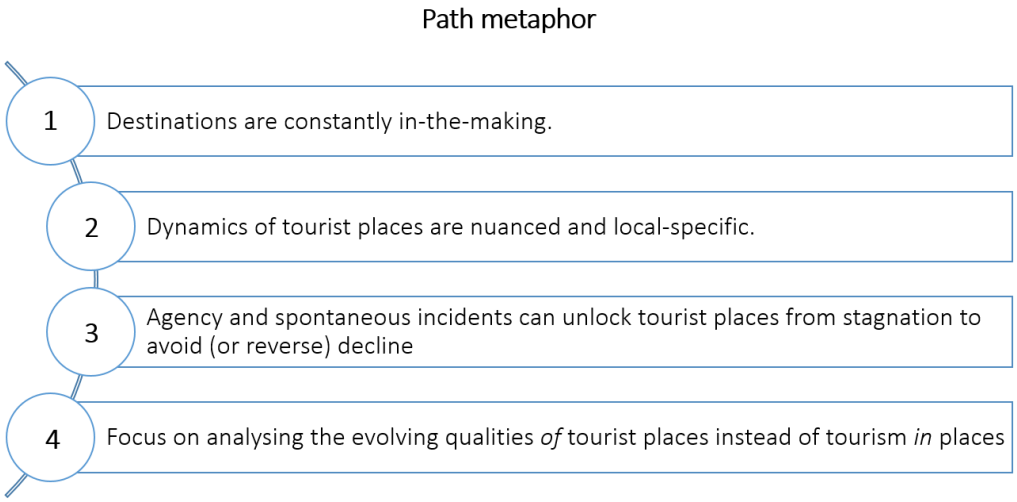
5.2.1. The path metaphor in tourism evolutionary approaches

In the context of tourism geography, a fledging yet promising line of research has recently begun to focus on the translation of contemporary economic geography approaches – hitherto used to analyse the evolution of industrial districts, clusters and other localised forms of specialisation (Boschma & Frenken, 2006; Boschma & Martin, 2007, 2010b) – to increase understanding of how and why tourism destinations evolve over time (Brouder, 2014; Brouder et al., 2017a; Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014). The work published so far presents some seminal reflections and exploratory case studies that are generally sound in theoretical and empirical terms, while highlighting the potential of applying notions such as co-evolution (Brouder & Fullerton, 2015; Ma & Hassink, 2013; Randelli et al., 2014), resilience (Ioannides & Alebaki, 2014; Mariotti & Zirulia, 2014), survival (Brouder & Eriksson, 2013a), complexity (Meekes et al., 2017), path dependence (Bramwell & Cox, 2009; Ma & Hassink, 2014; Williams,

2013), path creation (Gill & Williams, 2011, 2014), or path plasticity (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017; Halkier & Therkelsen, 2013).

The path metaphor – encompassing the path-dependence concept, as well as the different notions therein that represent diverse alternative evolutionary trajectories such as path creation and path plasticity – has been the most recurrent within EEG. This established analogy between paths and evolutionary processes assumes that destinations are constantly in-the-making, permitting an approach which displays distinctive powerful forms of interpreting the nuanced, local-specific dynamics of tourist places over time (Figure 30). Indeed, the analogy emphasises the significant role of both stakeholder agency and selective/spontaneous incidents in unlocking tourism places from stagnation and avoiding decline. This presents an opportunity with which to address these issues from a non-deterministic perspective – a common criticism of traditional life-cycle approaches – which may help to focus on analysing the evolving qualities of tourist places (Équipe MIT, 2002) instead of the analysis of tourism in places (Butler, 1980; Plog, 1973; Prideaux, 2004).

Figure 30. *Main assumptions of the path metaphor*

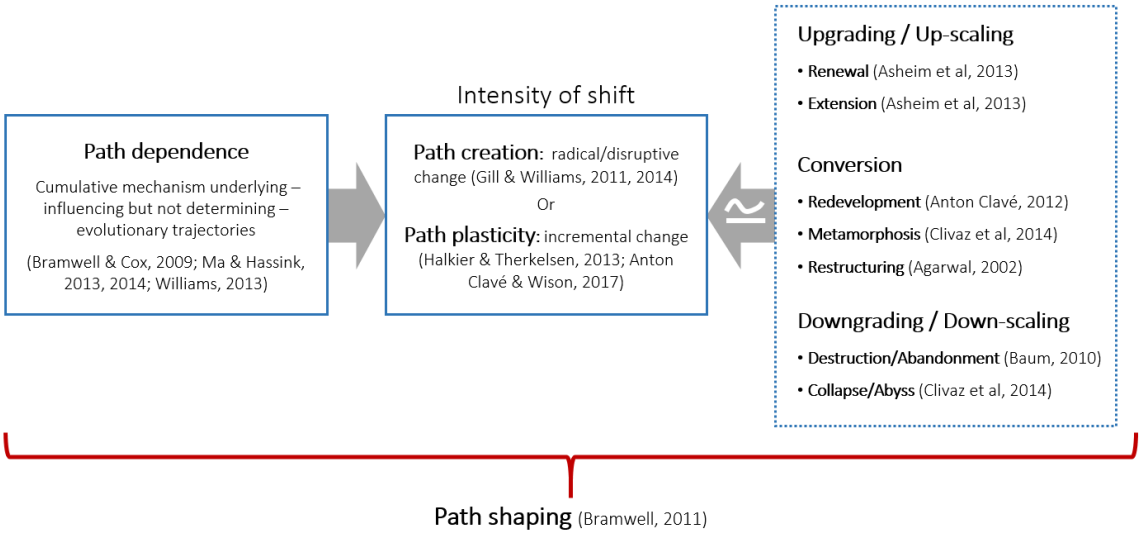


Source: Author

The domain of the path metaphor can be used to understand the unexpected ways in which destinations can depart from their historical legacies and structures in the same sense that (Bramwell, 2012) mentions the concept of path shaping (see the diagram displayed in Figure 31). First, it includes the translation of the path-dependence concept, directly associated with place dependence (Arthur, 1988; David, 1985; Martin & Sunley, 2006). This notion, following the work of Ma and Hassink (2013, 2014) in the tourism context, emphasises the role of history – that is, pre-existing conditions, as well as the past events and decisions, even the smaller or

chance events – and geography – understood as the contextual specificities of each destination in social, economic and environmental terms – in influencing development paths.

Figure 31. *Notions relating to the path metaphor in evolutionary studies*



Source: Author

However, path dependence is not only a force constraining destination dynamics that leads to political, cognitive or functional lock-in processes (see, for instance, the extensive debate on this issue in Bathelt & Glückler, 2003; Grabher, 2005; Hassink, 2005; Martin, 2010). Nor is it a force that generates inevitable downgrading or down-scaling effects or even path destruction in tourism places, which would suppose the complete abandonment of the tourism activity (Baum, 1998). Instead, breaking with existing dependent paths can enable the definition of new pathways of development by transforming the current model of tourism, improving destination competitiveness and sustainability and/or enhancing the performance of firms, which might ultimately be associated with growth and upgrading or up-scaling processes (Gereffi, 1999; Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2016).

Along these lines, and without underestimating the central role of path dependence as a useful mechanism to explain change and the configuration of evolutionary trajectories (Strambach & Halkier, 2013), there are other powerful notions that might elucidate the well-documented emergent, continually transforming and essentially contingent nature of destinations' evolutionary trajectories (Agarwal, 2012). For instance, Gill and Williams (2011, 2014) took the notion of path creation (Garud & Karnøe, 2001) as an explanatory framework for both the deliberated and agency-driven processes adopted in the case of Whistler, British

Columbia, to increase the sustainability of the resort while adopting a highly responsive global strategy. Alternatively, Halkier and Therkelsen (2013) and Anton Clavé and Wilson (2017), from a path-plasticity perspective (Strambach, 2010; Strambach & Halkier, 2013), emphasised the possibility of incremental innovations within established institutional settings as sources of readjustment enabling destinations to remain dynamic in the long run.

Complementarily, other tourism geographers studying the long-term dynamics of mature destinations labelled such effects with diverse terminologies that might also be taken into account in building up the path metaphor. This is the case of Agarwal (2002) when applying the concept of restructuring to destination change processes or (Anton Clavé, 2012a), who categorised three different types of destinations according to the (re)development strategies implemented by decision-makers: the 'reactives', who adopted policies of renewal, differentiation, heritage preservation, image improvement and maintenance of tourism activity; the 'creatives', who made innovative use of potential attractions and value innovation processes generated by their own residents and visitors; and finally, the 'transitives', who intensified their residential functions by incorporating more permanent urban services and making a transition towards the urban condition (Harvey, 1989) as fully fledged urban places, having previously evolved only as tourism resorts (see also Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017).

In parallel, similar proposals emphasizing the role of (pro)active policy intervention and institutions as a tool to favour regional resilience and develop new growth and development pathways have emerged recently within the field of EEG that could be applied to tourism places. Asheim, Bugge, Coenen, and Herstad (2013), for example, introduced the notions of path renewal, a process characterised by regional branching into new technological trajectories, and path extension, associated with the strengthening of existing industries by incremental process innovations geared to securing higher productivity. Others have analysed processes of downgrading/downscaling of destinations or even the abandonment of tourism as an industrial activity (Baum, 1998). In this vein, Clivaz et al. (2014) introduce the concept of abyss to describe the total collapse of the tourism sector in a place without any economic alternative. Using the concept of tourist capital of resorts, the latter authors also discuss how collective agency can even suppose a metamorphic dynamic in relation to the conversion of resorts into urban places (op. cit.). In addition, in a third dimension of their threefold typology (beyond the possible outcomes of abyss and metamorphosis), (Clivaz et al., 2014) refer to relay as the capacity of a resort to keep its touristic attractiveness. All in all, based on Martin and Sunley's (2006) claims, it is argued here that the path metaphor might be regarded as a heuristic approach,

> Wherein the process of economic evolution could be understood as an ongoing, never-ending interplay of path dependence, path creation, [path plasticity] and path destruction that occurs as actors in different arenas reproduce, mindfully deviate from, and transform existing socio-economic-technological structures, socio-economic practices and development paths. (p.408)

In the context of the research conducted under the umbrella of the 'path metaphor', the specific catalysts for change – that is, the incidents, events or decisions with an impact on destinations' evolutionary trajectories – have generated a significant body of research using different but related terminologies. Baggio and Sainaghi (2011), employing a complex systems lens, pointed out the effects of natural or anthropogenic, external or internal triggering events in challenging existing structures and the current states of destinations and even move them to a new (non-permanent) order. Similarly, Ritchie, Crotts, Zehrer, and Volsky (2013) emphasised the spill over effects of crisis-related events – either crises, which they consider are caused by lack of management and anticipation, or disasters, which can only be responded to in retrospect – and demonstrated that such disaster events have not only negative outcomes, which may be the most salient, but also positive ones such as incentives to innovate and anticipate future similar situations. In the same vein, Mariotti and Zirulia (2014) explored adaptive (or evolutionary) resilience as enacted by public and private strategies in a local tourism destination to respond to a negative shock. Hall (2010), dealing with the notion of crisis events, also raises more pertinent insights into this issue.

However, above all, it seems the literature on specific catalysts for change is mostly oriented towards analysing critical, external and unexpected shocks or events – such as natural disasters or economic crises – while leaving an uncovered gap, which concerns those moments beyond the natural environment and general economic trends, principally social and cultural ones. Such an issue is reflected increasingly in urban social geography (Bianchi, 2012; Moulaert, Martinelli, Gonzalez, & Swyngedouw, 2007; Ribera-Fumaz, 2009, on cultural political economy; Sum & Jessop, 2013), where there is a gradual engagement with the ideas of path dependence and path creation and concern for inter alia the analysis of selective moments in urban socio-economic change (Moulaert et al., 2007), policy intervention, institutional change and key agencies, causing initially dependent economic paths to shift in a different direction. These new approaches are opening up new avenues in the tourism research agenda (Bramwell, 2012; Mosedale, 2011).

To address these issues, the authors put forward the notion of 'moments' conceived of as given points in time (and space) signalling shifts in the development pathways of tourism places. It is argued here that analysis of such moments over the course of destination evolution is a useful endeavour in addition to studying a given evolutionary trajectory, life cycle or simply the end results of path-plasticity/creation processes in action. This might be useful in answering more nuanced questions, for example the one raised by Randelli et al. (2014) in a rural tourism context when asking: "in an evolutionary scenario, who [is it that] drives the change?" (p.277). This is clearly an important question in EEG, and one might add to this 'who' the question of what drives the change, and when, where and how. In encompassing this complex vision of triggers for change in evolution and their resultant impacts, the term 'moments' is seen to be more holistic and multi-faceted than other, more

traditional terminologies. The following section will unravel the thinking behind this conceptual framework proposed.

5.2.2. Moments in path-shaping trajectories

The aim of this section is to debate how the concept of moments might be useful as a heuristic device in understanding how destinations evolve as places. The starting point for advancing this concept was the question of whether more attention should be paid to what happens at (and between) the key points of change in the evolutionary trajectory of a destination. Synonymous with these key points in this sense, moments are proposed as path-shaping evolutionary inflection points that cause a particular path (trajectory) to shift in direction and focus, rather like a join-the-dots exercise. In this sense, the moments idea is conceived as a response to the tendency to only focus on the impact of one key moment (e.g. a shock) in destination evolution, when perhaps it would be pertinent to conceptualise and contextualise the various moments or path shifts of any given destination, considering the role and the components of the before, during and after each moment in their evolutionary trajectory. This will be discussed and illustrated later in the chapter when analysing the whole course of one of the key moments of the evolution of the two central Costa Daurada towns where the PortAventura theme park is located.

Moments as evolutionary inflection points

In differential calculus, an inflection point is a point on a curve at which the curvature or concavity changes sign from plus to minus or from minus to plus. In considering evolution as path shaping (Bramwell, 2012; Jessop, 2008), or even in terms of the impacts and shifts that might take place caused by the onset of a given moment, the inflection-point analogy is a useful one.

The moments concept is, of course, imbued with multiple meanings and displays considerable complexity. Clearly, however, each moment is entirely unique in terms of its characteristics, in that there are a multitude of parameters that they might display and catalytic or transformative functions that they might perform. Their complex nature also depends on whether they constitute primarily a causative trigger or a consequential impact, suggesting that many moments might be binary in nature. Consider, for example, whether some moments are path-creating, while others are path-plastic in nature, according to their eventual effects. In terms of their impacts (or outcomes), these effects might either be instantaneous, like switching a light on or off (creation), or more gradual/incremental, like a huge ocean liner changing course slowly but surely and then regaining speed (plasticity), hereby suggesting that there are many dimensions to consider.

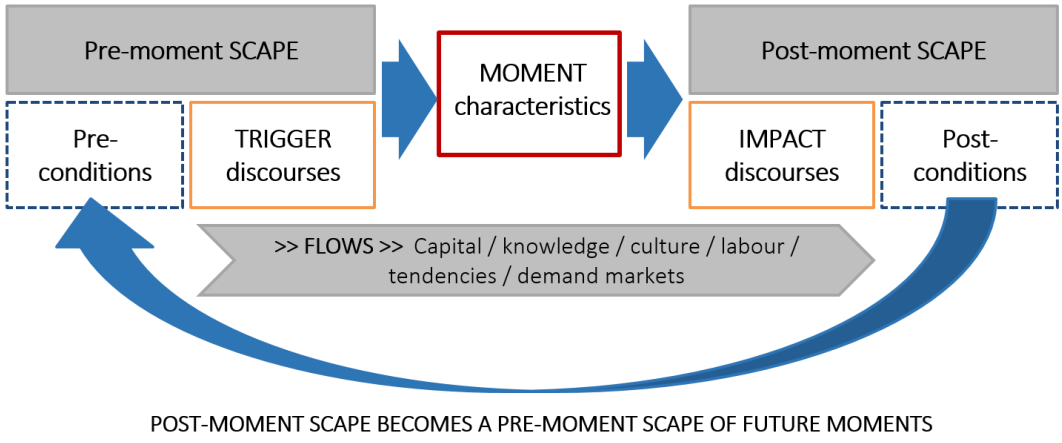
Attention will now be turned to the discourses surrounding the moment and the range of parameters and characteristics that such moments might display. Having established that moments are probably much more than snapshots of particular significant points in time, this chapter argues that it is also possible to identify different types of moment depending on their characteristics, range, scale and orientation. For instance, they might be the result of a planned initiative or spontaneous, or driven by a top-down or bottom-up process, be regulatory or resource-based or endogenous or exogenous. Finally, they could engender different types of change in relation to 'pre-lock-in' or 'pre-moment' conditions – recuperation, abandonment, reinforcement, renewal, extension or transition, for example.

The intensity of the moment may also be important, as observed above, with some being path-creating (more radical) and others path-plastic (more incremental). What seems to remain clear is that the understanding and narrating of moments requires local context specificity to prevail. Moulaert et al. (2007) observe (with reference to path dependence and cultural political economy approaches) a "tendency to overlook the fact that development is deeply historical, place-specific and embedded within specific and concrete institutional settings" (p.196). They also advocate use of social innovation approaches which, they argue, give "fuller consideration to the path-dependent and context-bounded nature of urban development strategies" (Moulaert et al., 2007, p.197; and see also Sum and Jessop, 2013), providing further justification for a more in-depth, nuanced reading of evolutionary trajectories by zoning in on particular moments therein.

Discourses of the moments in the path metaphor

Figure 32 provides a visualisation of the kinds of discourses that might be associated with the path metaphor in relation to a given moment; it should be read and understood sequentially from left to right in a timeline manner. Starting on the far left, there is the pre-moment scape – taking a conceptual cue from Williams (2013) on scapes and flows; and Van der Duim's (2007) notion of tourismscapes (see also Van der Duim, Ren, and Thór Jóhannesson, 2012). This is the contextual domain in which everything that might have a bearing on the subsequent nature of the moment is considered; be they pre-conditioning factors and situations, prior economic, social, environmental, political and cultural conditions (and tendencies) and indeed, pre-cursor/prior moments (which might be termed secondary or peripheral moments). Also present are the underlying contextual 'impetus' narratives (at different scales), which relate to the origins of a given moment and which shape the discourses associated with the subsequent shift in path. These narratives may be hegemonic or alternative in nature; top-down or more grassroots; and the extent of their influence will ultimately depend on their degree of place embeddedness in the local context.

Figure 32. *The moments conceptual framework*



Source: Based on Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Anton Clavé (2017)

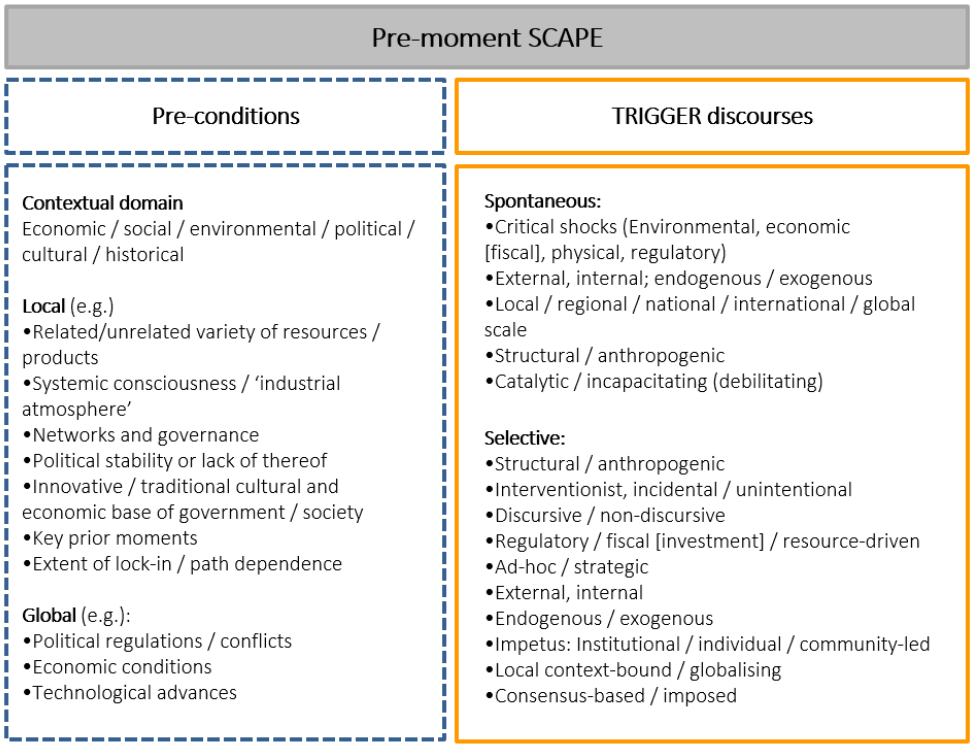
Next, the conceptual framework anticipates that, at some point within the space-and-time context of the pre-moment scape, there will be a trigger incident of some kind. The second column from the left in Figure 33 deals with these triggers and sets out what form they might take in relation to a given moment. Butler (2014) terms them "key agents of change in a resort that affect the transition process from one stage of development to another" (p.218) and argues that these have not been dealt with to any real extent in tourism research. He also states that it would be of great value to destinations if it were possible to identify and anticipate situations and events which might act as triggers to such unrest and stage change in the life cycle (citing Gale and Botterill, 2005).

For the purposes of the framework, the main dichotomy in relation to the nature of triggers is whether they are spontaneous or selective (taking a cue from Moulaert et al. 2007). As outlined above, most previous conceptualisations have only really dealt with the spontaneous kind, in terms of critical shock-type events, although such spontaneous triggers need not be so radical in nature. In terms of spontaneous triggers, these may relate to environmental, economic (fiscal) or physical factors or even, to a lesser extent, unexpected and/or unpredictable outcomes of social, cultural or political processes. Spontaneous triggers may also be external or internal, endogenous or exogenous, and occur at different scales (local/regional/national/international/global). They may be more structural or relate to agency and anthropogenic factors, while they may also be catalytic and stimulatory or incapacitating and debilitating in the first instance.

Selective triggers, by contrast, do not depend on a shock occurrence (although arguably they may emerge in response to a prior moment based on a spontaneous trigger). More likely to

be based on decisions made, they may relate to structural factors or be agency driven and more anthropogenic in nature. Furthermore, despite being selective (hence intentional) they might still take on an interventionist orientation or perhaps be more incidental or unintentional (albeit selective). The underlying stimuli for selective triggers might be regulatory and investment driven or possibly resource driven. In terms of policy-related selective moments, their impetus may be ad hoc and responsive or more strategic, coming from endogenous or exogenous forces. In terms of originators, the moment may be triggered selectively on an institutional level or be individual and/or community led, while triggers may also be embedded in the local context or have a more globalizing effect. Finally, selective triggers may be generated from consensus or having been imposed from the top down, while the kind of industrial diversification, or variety, they might trigger may be related or unrelated to the existing economic base (Frenken et al., 2007).

Figure 33. *The moments conceptual framework: pre-moment scape*



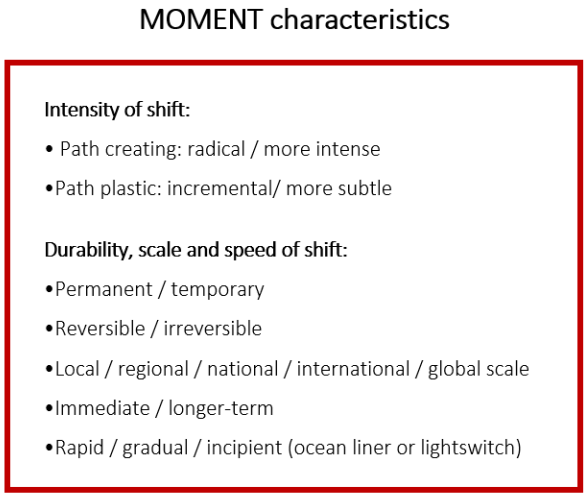
Source: Based on Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Anton Clavé (2017)

The central column of the framework (Figure 34) relates to the characteristics and dimensions of the actual moment in which the shift in path is caused. The elements that might come into play at this point in the process are mostly related to the specific characteristics of the inflection point; the moment in which the path shifts in direction in response to a given trigger or triggers. Among the most important characteristics are the durability, scale and speed of

the moment in which the shift takes place – ranging from instantaneous/immediate to prolonged/longer term; from macro to micro scale (global to local); and rapid, gradual or incipient (returning to the metaphor of the light switch and the ocean liner discussed above).

By extension, the moment may represent a permanent or temporary catalyst for change (note that this refers to the nature of the actual point of change, rather than the permanence or otherwise of the subsequent effects that stem from it – which is discussed later). There is also the question of whether the moment sets a reversible or irreversible process in motion, as well as whether the scope of the moment is radical or incremental (and this latter point would determine whether a moment might be described as path creating or path plastic). Similarly, the relative intensity of the shift is also a necessary consideration, in terms of whether the moment represents a more subtle or more intense shift in direction.

Figure 34. *The moments conceptual framework: moment characteristics*



Source: Based on Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Anton Clavé (2017)

The second column from the right, as illustrated in Figure 35, deals with discourses surrounding the impacts that the moment generates once it has happened. If one was to think about impacts as underlying narratives of moments in path evolution, one might talk about such impacts as consequential processes leading to path-shaping effects and, indeed, to new processes. In conceptualizing the narratives of these impacts as outcomes of a moment (or moments), again one might distinguish between a number of different characteristics and associated discourses of change.

To begin with, there is the question of whether the resultant impacts have an overall stabilizing or destabilizing effect post-moment. Along these lines, there would appear to be a dichotomy of impacts – those relating to upgrading/up-scaling effects and those relating to

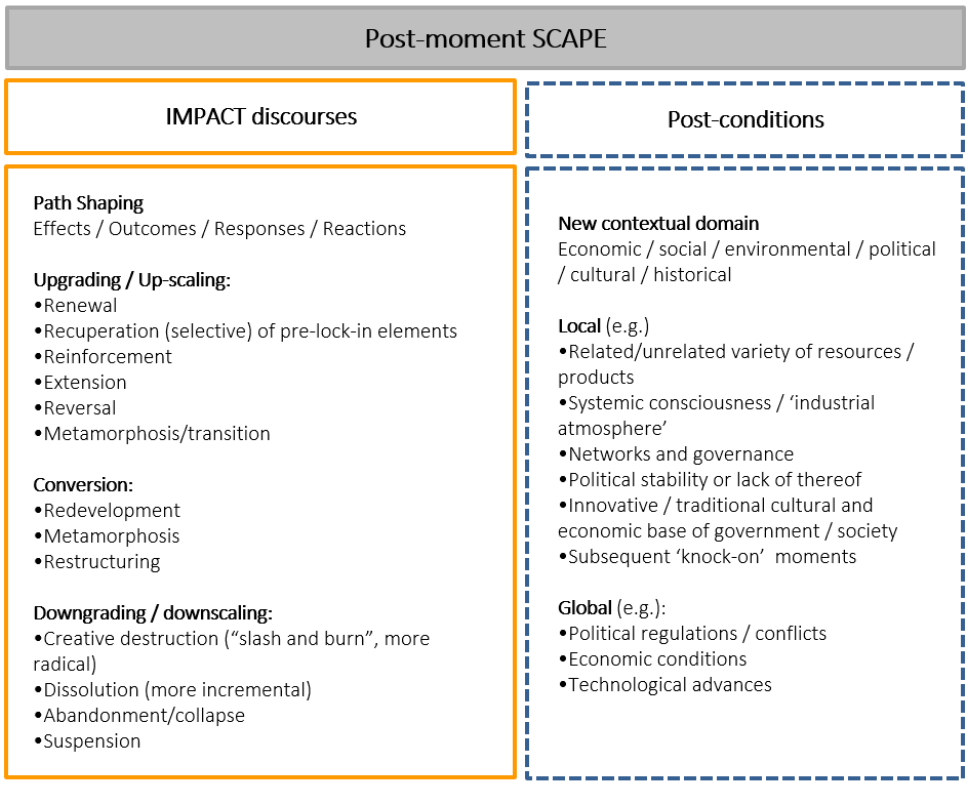
downgrading/downscaling effects. Firstly, possible upgrading and upscaling discourses may centre on processes of renewal, the (selective or forced) recuperation of pre-lock-in economic activities, reinforcement of existing industrial bases, extension of successful elements, reversal of problematic elements, transition (which may involve a shift to either related or unrelated variety of the economic base) and, of course, innovation in its many possible manifestations. Conversely, downgrading and/or downscaling impact discourses may stem from processes of creative destruction (possibly in a 'slash and burn', more radical manner following a major shock), dissolution (a more incremental effect), complete abandonment of existing elements and, finally, the (temporary) suspension of economic elements that have undergone stagnation. Ultimately, redevelopment, metamorphosis and restructuring could also represent new paths, not only for tourism in the destination but for the destination as a fully-fledged place in its own right (Anton Clavé, 2012a; Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017; Clivaz et al., 2014).

Beyond this, it is worthy to note that these results may produce the shaping of a single path or multiple paths in parallel. This co-evolution can be manifested both at inter-sectoral or intra-destination level (Brouder, 2014). On the one hand, the occurrence of a specific moment in destinations located in diversified regional economies does not necessarily impact exclusively tourism narratives but also could generate side-effects in other non-tourism development paths extant in the area. On the other hand, destination structure also has effects on how the moment's outcomes end up materializing. One can consider, for example, destinations – even relatively small ones – which combine a few resorts or municipalities closely located with each other and with their own local governments. In these cases a specific moment could be conducive to distinctive development paths in each resort/municipality even if they share homogeneous triggering factors and contextual environments. These differential courses of change are strongly linked with the diversity among destination stakeholders and the contextual restructuring policies they propose and implement which could favour some paths over others. This could be observed in destination areas where there are considerable differences between more and less developed co-evolving tourism paths (Brouder & Fullerton, 2015) or even in adjacent places that present a resembling tourism development in terms of competitiveness and performance.

The final column of the table (on the far right-hand side) is that of the post-moment scape. This phase relates essentially to longer-term outcomes, which may represent a new context(s); new economic landscapes evidenced by a clearly identifiable shift in path. There may be subsequent 'knock-on' moments to come in the future and these will depend not only on the nature of the prior moment (or moments) which shaped them, but also on the geographical and historical local specificity of the place in question. The future paths that permeate the post-moment scape may also be based on hegemonic narratives or alternative narratives. Just like in earlier phases, new processes may stem from top-down or grassroots initiatives or stimuli, and the direction they take will depend on their degree of place

embeddedness and whether the resultant variety of flows will be related or unrelated to earlier economic, political, social, cultural and environmental situations. In this sense, the post-moment scape effectively becomes the pre-moment scape of future moments.

Figure 35. *The moments conceptual framework: post-moment scape*



Source: Based on Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Anton Clavé (2017)

Finally, running beneath the framework are the flows, which pass through the entire process in a fluid manner, not necessarily in a linear sense, and which almost certainly will contribute to sending the path-shaping process in one direction or another. It is argued that these different phases as represented by the columns in the framework, as well as the underlying flows, amount to a more nuanced and complex manner of understanding the evolution of (tourism) places. Moreover, there is scope for this conceptual framework – developed in the context of tourism destinations – to be adapted and applied to other economic landscapes and contexts that have been theorised via the path metaphor, with the aim of understanding what happens in path-shaping terms between two given points of an evolutionary trajectory.

5.3. Methods

As introduced earlier, this chapter employs a specific case study – the opening of the PortAventura theme park in central Costa Daurada – with the purpose to illustrate the capacity of the moments framework to explain path-shaping processes centred on a given moment.

The research focused on determining explanatory elements seen to be key as regards the three main phases included in the moments conceptual framework: (1) the elements setting the favourable conditions for having situated PortAventura in central Costa Daurada – the pre-moment scape; (2) the actual opening of the park in 1995 – understood as the moment; and (3) the contextual conditions generated by the activity and development of the theme park in the area – the post-moment scape. Table 23 below outlines the information needed to portray each of the phases and the tasks undertaken for this purpose.

Table 23. *Tasks and Information needed for applying the moments conceptual framework*

Phase of the moments framework		Task and information needed
Pre-moment scape	**Pre-conditions**	Characterise the local and global contextual domain at the destination prior the moment occurrence (economic, social, environmental, political, cultural, historical).
	Trigger discourses	Identify spontaneous and/or selective triggers behind the occurrence of the moment.
Moment	**Characteristics**	Classify the moment (shift) in terms of its intensity (path plastic or path creating), durability, scale and speed.
Post-moment scape	**Impact discourses**	Assess the path shaping effects and responses at the destination (upgrading, downgrading, conversion).
	Post-conditions	Characterise the new local and global contextual domain at the destination after the moment occurrence (economic, social, environmental, political, cultural, historical).

Source: Author

This was achieved by collecting and examining a range of relevant documentary sources. Among them, there were municipal and regional planning documents representing the tourism and urban policy strategies and management in the area with a specific focus on the period starting from 1980 to 2014. Media articles covering key events in relation to the planning, construction, development and effects of PortAventura were also examined. A review of prior literature presenting longitudinal research of the study area was also conducted. This review incorporated studies mainly conducted by members of the URV Research Group on Territorial Analysis and Tourism Studies (GRATET), other academics from the URV and professionals closely linked to the tourism activity in the area (see a list of the selected publications in Table 24). The fact that all documents were in the public domain or, alternatively, were handled as documents used in previous works of the GRATET research

group, made the process of data collection and selection less time-consuming and more efficient. Complementarily, nonstructured interviews with some key stakeholders were scheduled so as to confirm the information gathered through secondary sources.

Table 24. *Publications on the case study of central Costa Daurada and PortAventura*

Author/s	Topic/focus	Year
Anton Clavé	Reestructuring strategies of the destination.	1997a
	Role of PortAventura as an engine for the redevelopment of the destination.	1997b, 2010
Beas	Reestructuring policies implemented and effects at the destination.	2009
Campa & Veses	PortAventura in the leadership, differentiation and social responsibility in the area.	2012
Duro	Transformation of the hotel development model.	2012
Fuentes & Rodríguez	Tourism and Leisure Centre Consortium (TLC) as innovative administrative tool for managing local projects.	2012
Oliveras	Urban planning and territorial management practices.	2012
Ros Santasusana	Public-private collaboration and consensus policies.	2012

Source: Author

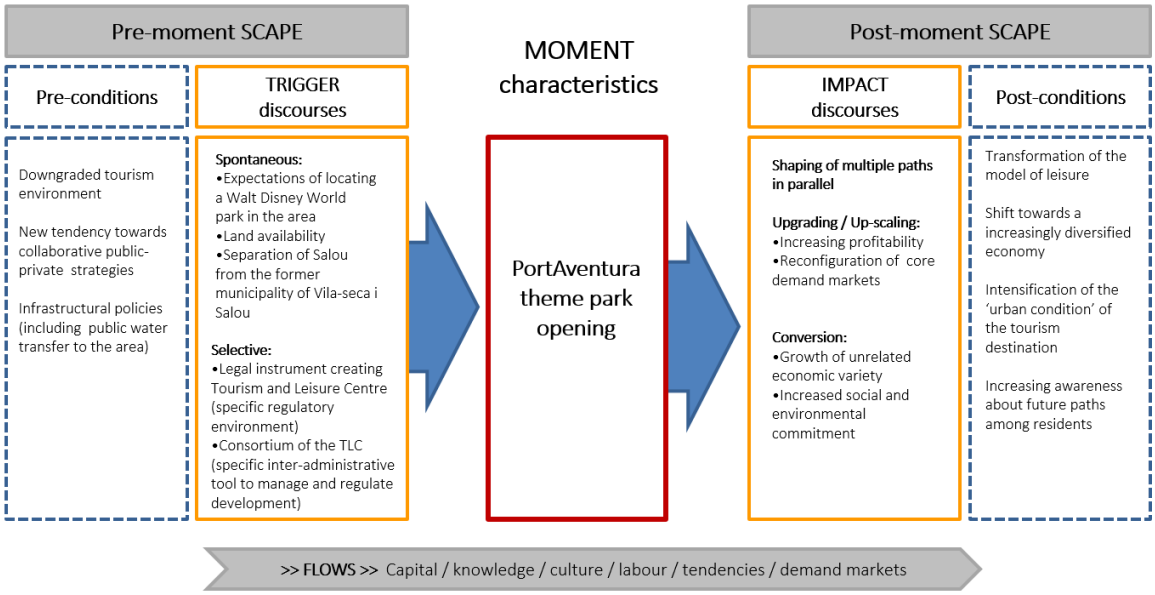
The document analysis involved an iterative procedure centred on doing a first-pass document review to identify pertinent information, followed by a more critical and thorough examination, and a final interpretation (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2016). The thematic analysis of the qualitative evidence yielded by such material permitted to reconstruct the conditions arising before, during and after the moment occurrence through the moments lens. For doing so, a mapping exercise was of help to find, select, appraise, synthesise and put together the fragmented chronology of key events revealed in the documents. In this task special attention was paid to comprehend the social and cultural meanings attached to the moment in a wider context, as well as to distinguish the different stakeholders who played an fundamental role in the process (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017). The events and decisions identified were then organised into the different phases specified in Table 23 and were included in the figure that captures the most relevant elements to consider in the interpretation of PortAventura as a moment in the path-shaping of central Costa Daurada's evolutionary trajectory (Figure 36).

5.4. Findings

This fourth section of the chapter presents the findings of the research resulting from interpreting the case study in light of the moments conceptual framework. First, the key

events, decisions and trigger discourses which created the conditions for the setting of PortAventura in the area are explained. Second, attention is given to disentangle the characteristics of the moment – the actual opening of the theme park. Third, the effects of PortAventura on the path shaping of the destination and the new conditions created are evaluated. Figure 36 displays a visual summary of the main findings, taking cue of the graphical representation of the moments idea previously presented in section 5.2.2.

Figure 36. *PortAventura as a moment in the evolution of central Costa Daurada*



Source: Sanz-Ibáñez, Wilson and Anton Clavé (2017)

5.4.1. Pre-moment scape: pre-conditions and trigger discourses

The PortAventura theme park was developed in collaboration with both Vila-seca and Salou, as well as regional public agents. Both towns considered PortAventura (currently receiving around 4 million visitors per year) as the ideal promoter of a new image for the combined destination and as a tool for the reorganisation of the destination's urban structure (Anton Clavé, 2005). The setting of the Park was planned in the 1980s and its development was afforded the benefits of a law as regards the concession of available land (833 ha) and possibilities for its expansion. In applying the moments idea to this case, a chronology of events and the tangible results of the strategies of management, cooperation and development, promoted both by the public and by the private sectors, will be explained briefly in order to illustrate how the opening of PortAventura might be understood as a key moment in the path shaping of the central Costa Daurada as a tourism destination.

Figure 36 illustrates that, even though the Park opened in 1995, the preconditioning contextual domain in which the PortAventura inauguration takes place, the pre-moment scape, can be traced back to the beginning of the 1980s. Studies clearly reveal a lock-in situation for tourism activity in the area during the 1980s (Anton Clavé, 1997a). One of the main reasons was the loss of appeal and competitiveness of the destination faced with the emergence of other newer, alternative coastal resorts, as well as the new range of demand trends and tourism motivations seen in the 1980s. Other local problems exacerbating the lack of competitiveness for the tourism sector in the area included the close proximity of a large-scale and intensive petrochemical industry and the extension of the industrial and commercial Port of Tarragona. Add to this the considerable pollution associated with the Port that affected the beach and the water-supply problems for the whole area, which influenced negatively the quality of life of the local population as well as the day-to-day economic activities of the many industries located in the area.

Nevertheless, thanks to a collective envisioning of the conditions underlying these social, economic, cultural and environmental tendencies, several actions and strategies were undertaken, both to ensure the economic viability of the area (including a major water transfer from the nearby river Ebro, about 80 km south of the area) and, in the specific case of the tourism industry, to finances, a promising economic outlook and greater collaboration between private initiative and the municipal institution, initiatives were taken within the tourism sector with the aim of promoting new hotel developments and the creation of recreational facilities as means of renewing the destination's amenities (Ros Santasusana, 2012). These initial actions were accompanied by urban restructuring and public infrastructural improvements (Rovira Soto & Anton Clavé, 2014). These might be understood as prior actions trying to generate some path plasticity to combat the rigidity of the existing pathway that was heading towards a lock-in situation. In fact, an increasing level of public involvement can be identified since the 1980s, years before PortAventura was even planned.

The moments conceptual framework anticipates the existence of trigger incidents that were spontaneous and/or selective – that is, not dependent on a shock occurrence, but related to structural factors or agency driven. Among the spontaneous factors in this case were Walt Disney World's plans to create a theme park in Catalonia during the 1980s, before eventually deciding to locate their European park in Paris. Local and regional stakeholders considered the area to be a serious candidate for the location of the European Disney park and the decision of the company to locate it in Paris stimulated the idea that having a top tourism attraction could be a catalyst for releasing the place from its lock-in. Also, there was enough well-located land available and ready for developing a new concept of recreational and tourist activity, which stemmed from a conflictive process of negotiating the new urban plan for the area during the 1980s. Due to this, the approval of the plan was delayed and the more than 833-ha area where the future Park would be located remained available without any specific development purpose designated. Finally, coinciding chronologically with the decision to

situate the Park in the area, the separation of Salou, the richest and more tourism-oriented part of the former municipality of Vila-seca i Salou, and the 1989 creation of two new local administrations also represented a strong trigger. Although spontaneous, in the sense that these factors were not driven with a theme park development objective in mind, all of three were triggers that created the conditions, following a process of incidental intervention, both endogenous and exogenous in impetus, that left a specific environment ready for the creation of PortAventura (see also Campa and Veses, 2012; Oliveras, 2012; Ros Santasusana, 2012 for more detail).

In terms of selective triggers, there was the political will on the part of the Catalan Government and of the local municipal administrations of Vila-seca (and after the separation, Salou) to respond to the need to transform an outdated model of tourism and leisure that was hegemonic in Catalonia during the 1980s. This political will also led to the implementation of a novel legal framework for both Spain and Europe, which gave an incentive to develop and regulate a theme park in a manner that, at that time, was relatively ground breaking (Anton Clavé, 1997b). Besides the theme park, hotels, residences, shopping centres, and golf and other sport areas were also envisaged, as well as the creation of the Vila-seca i Salou Tourism and Leisure Centre Consortium, an inter-administrative tool developed as a response to the separation of Salou in order to manage and regulate the development of the Park and the complementary commercial, recreational, sporting, hotel and residential activities that were planned around it (Fuentes & Rodríguez, 2012).

5.4.2. Moment characteristics

On 2 May 1995, PortAventura in its present guise was officially opened to the general public. This event can be understood as a symbolic representation of the actual moment in which the shift in path took place for the central Costa Daurada. The characteristics and dimensions of the Park are the direct result of and the response to the spontaneous and selective triggers which had played a prior role. Additionally, it is worthy to mention the initial choice of the US company Anheuser Busch as the developer of the project in 1989, plus the several setbacks and challenges such as the separation of Salou, the negotiations with landowners and also the strategies of new players that entered as new developers between 1989 and 1995, such as the Grand Tibidabo corporation, the utilities company FECSA, the Catalan savings bank (La Caixa) and the British group Pearson.

Furthermore, there was the new legal framework enacted to determine the development course of the project. Since then, PortAventura has been undergoing a phase of expansion which is heading in the direction of transforming the initial Park into a larger tourism and leisure complex (Table 25) by developing new concepts and generating wider opportunities for the economy of the area, as well as conditioning the whole urban and spatial pattern of

the local and regional area where the Park is located. New players have since entered into the management of the project, most notably Universal Studios (between 1998 and 2004), the Italian group Bonomi (part of Invest Industrial and currently the main stakeholder; in 2009) and the US investment fund KKR (in 2013). New attractions have been developed within the Park since 1998, including a new waterpark and an two additional theme parks, four four-star hotels and one hotel boutique (offering a total of 2,100 rooms), a Beach Club located on the sea front, three golf courses with 45 holes, and a Convention Centre.

The most important factors in the case of PortAventura as a key moment in the recent path-shaping of Salou and Vila-seca, as well as in Catalonia in general, are its durability (around a 20-year span of creating new conditions for tourism development activity), scale (both local and regional) and speed (a sustained and long-term gradual process of creating innovations and adding new components to the tourism and leisure value chain generated in the area). This represents an ongoing catalyst for change that has set an irreversible incremental process in motion, which can be described as path plastic and whose impacts, as it can be seen in the next section, led to the upgrading/upscaling of the whole area and also foster destinations' transformation into fully fledged urban places, rather than just resorts.

Table 25. *Phases of development of the PortAventura project*

	Until 1997	1998 – 2001	2002 – 2007	2008 – 2014	2015-2017
Parks	1 theme park	3 new major attractions 1 major show	1 water park 2 new major shows 2 major attraction	Water park phase II 1 new themed area (Sesamo Aventura) 2 major attractions Cirque du Soleil	1 new theme park (Ferrari Land) 1 new major show Celebration of 20th anniversary
Hotels			3 four-star hotels (1,500 rooms)	1 four-star hotel (502 rooms)	Expansion of 1 hotel as four-star luxury hotel (78 rooms) 1 five-star hotel boutique (30 rooms)
Leisure/ Business			Beach Club	3 Golf courses (45 holes) 1 Convention Centre (room for 4,000 people)	

Source: Updated from Anton Clavé (2010)

5.4.3. Post-moment scape: impact discourses and post-conditions

As Campa and Veses (2012) describe, the Costa Daurada (as well as both Vila-seca and Salou therein and, indeed, the whole of Catalonia), has not been unaffected by the large influx of visitors to PortAventura over the past 20 years. The most relevant impacts are of course related to the upgrading/upscaling in the tourism sector, including the reconfiguration of the dominant demand markets to the area and the increasing quality of supply markets and, as a consequence, the increasing profitability of the industry.

Other than this, PortAventura has generated diverse and multiple paths in parallel, according to the characteristics and prior path-dependency of each specific place which falls under the influence of the Park. In fact, differences can be observed and differential co-evolution processes are visible between the two different municipalities where the Park is located and also in comparison with the other neighbouring local destination that falls under the Park's sphere of influence, Cambrils. Each municipality is dependent on their respective public and private strategies held by institutions and stakeholders to take advantage of and respond to the opportunities created by the Park development and, as such, their current situations are not the same, even if the path-shaping moment for all of them was exactly the same. Table 26 shows the different paths of hotel beds growth during the three periods identified in the development of the PortAventura project). More particularly, it has been documented that Vila-seca constitutes an example of the implementation of a successful public–private partnership, with the creation of a cluster of high quality hotels (Duro, 2012).

Table 26. *Percentage of growth of hotel beds in Salou, Cambrils and Vila-seca*

	Theme park planning 1987	Theme park opening 1995	PortAventura Resort project 2002	PortAventura World project 2016	Total hotel beds 1987	Total hotel beds 2016
Salou	107.28 %	39.91 %	4.88 %	→	9,739	29,621
Cambrils	75.97 %	20.01 %	61.54 %	→	2,380	8,119
Vila-seca	114.57 %	36.44 %	154.25 %	→	1,064	7,920

Source: Data from 1987 to 2006 based on Beas (2009), data from 2007 to 2016 based on IDESCAT

More generally, the PortAventura project has clearly stimulated the economy of Southern Catalonia by not only boosting the creation of new hotels or new shopping centres and recreational activities in the area and shifting the demand profile towards a more affluent and family-oriented appeal, but it has also accelerated the development of major transport infrastructure (new dual-carriageways, a new terminal at Reus airport and the AVE high-speed train link, among others), as well as the expansion of new, unrelated activities and technical

and knowledge services, plus new commodity suppliers, linked to the development of the Park. In the latter sense, the Park has also been committed to an initiative creating the University School of Tourism and Leisure at the Rovira i Virgili University (now the Faculty of Tourism and Geography) and the Tourism Observatory of the Costa Daurada, launched at the beginning of the 2000s. PortAventura has managed to achieve a level of brand and product visibility only attainable by very few projects, and even some of its iconic rides, for example Dragon Khan, have become a part of everyday parlance, part of the symbolic effects of theme parks as quality tags for specific places, as analysed by Zukin (1991).

More specifically, environmental concerns have been taken into account already by Park managers, and the Park has been a champion of corporate environmental awareness. An Environmental Committee was set up from the outset and the good practices implemented have filtered through the rest of the company, the rest of the industry and even to other industrial sectors that realise the importance of a clean and unpolluted environment in order to ensure the quality of life of the resident population and the wellbeing of visitors. Additionally, PortAventura has become a company that promotes actions related with its immediate social environment (see Campa and Veses, 2012 for examples).

PortAventura is arguably a key component of the new economic landscape of Southern Catalonia in terms of shaping the post-moment scape in the destination. First, it should be emphasised that PortAventura has brought about a major change in the Costa Daurada's leisure and tourism model, and to a lesser extent (but equally noteworthy) in that of the rest of Catalonia and even that of Spain. Future paths of the area are visibly shaped by the characteristics and dimensions of the post-moment path shaped by PortAventura, which in turn is modelling the geographical and historical local specificity of the place. The moments conceptual framework maintains that future paths may be based on hegemonic narratives or alternative narratives and new processes both from the top-down or at grassroots levels, with the aim of configuring new moments triggered themselves by the creation of PortAventura. In this sense, future achievements will depend (as with the configuration of PortAventura's current scape) on the dimensions, characteristics and scale of new events yet to occur and on the discussion and debate held by society directly or through their political representatives. The current shift towards an increasingly diversified economy, the intensification of the urban and residential function of the tourism destination and the increasing awareness about future possible paths among residents are new components of the post-moment scape created directly by the opening of PortAventura. With regard to this, for instance, new social debate in the area is of utmost interest. In particular, the question of how and to what extent new entertainment developments proposed for the wider entertainment complex where PortAventura is located (which include casino-based gaming and other shopping and hotel developments) fit or not with the currently hegemonic narrative of the place as a tourist destination for family holidays, having adopted PortAventura as an iconic symbol (see Anton Clavé and Baron Yelles, 2015). Results will depend in this case (as will results related to other

industrial sectors in the area) on the degree of place embeddedness of the new projects and, as stated in earlier sections, on the resultant variety of flows and their relationships with earlier economic, political, social, cultural and environmental situations. In this sense, the post-moment scape created by PortAventura becomes the pre-moment scape of future moments.

Flows running beneath the entire process illustrate that evolution is not just based on the dimensions and characteristics of processes but, fundamentally, on the inherent policies, instruments, initiatives and programmes that both private and public stakeholders develop in the context of one specific moment. Flows include culture, knowledge, capital, labour, demand markets, global players, tactical approaches, social debates and political short and long termism. One fundamental issue here, thus, is that the transformation of destinations stems from responses by local systems to the needs brought about by global market changes, having many implications for the management of destinations as multi-sectorial regional and local spaces.

All in all, the case of PortAventura highlights the usefulness of analysing how flows materialise in specific contextual scapes, and the question of how moments are triggered (and become triggers themselves) is fundamental in helping to explain the development of moments whose impacts will shape the future of one specific destination. Depending on the nature of the place, the power of such flows and the dimension, characteristics, range and scale of the moment, they can have clear effects, due to their direct and indirect impacts, on the path shaping of the destination and even on the creation of a new unrelated (and perhaps more urban) variety, as Clivaz et al. (2014) or Anton Clavé (2012a) argue, when affirming that resorts do not always necessarily remain as resorts forever.

5.5. Discussion

This chapter has introduced a conceptual framework of moments that draws upon EEG approaches in order to aid understanding of how the trajectory of a given place (in this case, a destination) is shaped, within a geographical and historical conjuncture, via the specific events that affect their dynamics. The framework is intended as a heuristic device that focuses attention on moments as complex, context-bound processes that include several marked elements therein: pre- and post-scapes, triggers and impacts.

The conceptual framework presented has been used to understand what might trigger key moments in the evolutionary path-shaping of places, as well as the associated how, why, when and where of the idea. As a result, upgrading, conversion and downgrading impacts have been identified, entrenching the moments idea within various conceptual notions. Some of these

originally developed from outside the EEG domain, but nonetheless have considerable utility in understanding the trigger effects of a given evolutionary path, path dependence, contextuality and human agency (Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014) in terms of tourism performance evolution, but also in terms of the transformation of (tourism) places.

Furthermore, path-shaping impacts can unfold as path creation or path plasticity, which in turn creates new conditions defining the post-moment scape that, in a long-term approach, may become the new pre-moment scape when new triggers of change start to act and new decisions are taken by stakeholders in the place. The dimension, scope, range and characteristics of flows of capital, knowledge, culture, labour, tendencies and demand markets will determine the specific response, or the characteristic moment of a given destination to the triggers that emerge in any historically given scape. In this sense, geography matters – as the role of spatial scale, historical embeddedness and political advocacy are key – as well as the relationship to pre-lock-in conditions, that is, inertial movement such as recuperation, abandonment, reinforcement, corrective, compensatory and resilience-building responses play a central role (plus, future research on this topic might also bear in mind the possibility that path-shaping moments in some circumstances may have the effect of actually reinforcing prior path-dependence).

This research argues that triggers and impacts are grounded in contextual environments that the authors term pre- and post-condition scapes, which, following Moulaert et al. (2007), "challenge established governance, discourse and projects and the extent to which they can lead to further and wider alternative social action" (p.203). This is obviously affected by the specific historical and geographical context of any local destination at any given moment, according to the inertia effects of its own past and present conditions. In this sense, it has been highlighted the key role that a certain moment can have in the shaping of markedly (even if subtly) different paths for different destinations. This allows recognition of the co-evolutionary nature of long-term destination transformation change and how past decisions affect the capacity of response and influence for the future with regard to a specific key moment in the path shaping process.

Additionally, the conceptual framework presented in this chapter allows the integration of several perspectives that are supported by an increasing body of both theoretical and empirical multi-disciplinary research on the evolution of destinations from the outside the core of EEG (and even including some conventional life-cycle-related analysis). Moreover, the framework holds resonance with recent developments in urban social geography such as the cultural political economy approach (Ribera-Fumaz, 2009; Sum & Jessop, 2013) to theorizing pathways in urban development. This is of utmost interest insofar as one of the very foundations of the moments framework is the recognition of the 'urbanizing' nature of many forms of tourism developments and destinations or, at least, the path towards a fledging urban condition of many tourism places (Anton Clavé, 2012a). In this vein, the authors support

the interpretation by Clivaz et al. (2014) of the different resort trajectories as uneven; and engaging differently constituted touristic capital, as well as the conversion of this capital into other forms of capital, seems an important step for a more thorough analysis and explanation of what happens to tourist resorts over a long period.

To demonstrate the utility of moments as an idea, this research has drawn upon longitudinal empirical research undertaken on the effects of having situated the PortAventura theme park in a specific location on the central Costa Daurada destination and how this moment might be understood over the course of two whole decades of introducing innovations, development of changes and creation of unrelated paths in the planning and everyday reality of area, with a focus on the role of local and global stakeholders therein. This case demonstrates that a moments lens is appropriate and useful in understanding how change is produced instead of only evaluating the end results of path-plasticity or path-creation trajectories. It also demonstrates that a focus on positive moments as well as on negative, critical shocks may be applied.

CHAPTER 6. Conclusion

UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI
THE EVOLUTION OF DESTINATIONS. AN EVOLUTIONARY AND RELATIONAL ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY APPROACH.
Cinta Sanz Ibáñez

CHAPTER 6. Conclusion

This final chapter of the dissertation is divided into three main sections. Based on the hierarchy of objectives of the thesis, section 6.1 makes a reflection regarding the contributions to theory and discussion of the research undertaken. The following section (6.2) suggests some practical directions to consider in the planning and management of tourism destinations. Finally, section 6.3 draws the challenges and future research directions that the research opens.

6.1. Contribution to theory

Tourism destinations are dynamic systems and as such, they need to be managed in order to maintain their competitiveness. In contrast to the deterministic (and in some cases pessimistic) forecasts of some of the earliest evolutionary models proposed in tourism geography, a number of works evidence the extreme adaptability of tourism destination areas and their ability to sustain – and even increase – their long-term competitiveness (Aguiló, Alegre, & Sard, 2005; Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017; Ivars et al., 2013). As a consequence, it is of the utmost interest for tourism geographers not only to identify the changes occurring at the destination level over time, but also to disentangle the mechanisms underlying these changes.

These issues – considered in the general objective of the research project –, have been powerfully addressed in this thesis by adopting and integrating contemporary developments within the field of economic geography, that is, EEG and REG principles (Table 27). From an overall perspective, the integrated evolutionary and relational approach presented addresses destination evolution processes from non-linear and non-deterministic lens, taking into consideration that multiple interdependent forces produce distinctive evolutionary trajectories depending on the specificities of the destination in terms of contextuality, human agency and path dependence as triggers of destination evolution. Although the analytical model put forward doubtless has its own limitations, the arguments provided in section 2.4 demonstrate that the EEG-REG approach compensate for some of the weaknesses identified in existing evolutionary models of destinations for a number of reasons.

First, the EEG-REG approach sheds light upon the analysis of the complex interrelations between destination organisation and evolution (Table 27); two issues addressed so far in the tourism literature from separate perspectives but, as recognised by many scholars, necessarily linked (Haywood, 2006b). Second, while giving many precise insights as to the effects derived

from stakeholder agency in the past and present configuration of destinations, the approach elucidates a much positive, open-ended and non-deterministic perspective that improves explanations given thus far as to the huge capability of destinations to remain attractive and avoid decline (Agarwal, 2012). Third, the approach is focused on the dynamics of place in a global sense and not only on the evolution of tourism activity indicators. Effectively, in contrast to other researches, the approach acknowledges the role of coexisting productive activities (including innovative and creative ones) in shaping opportunities for destinations and the potential emergence of new forms of accumulation (Anton Clavé, 2012a; Russell & Faulkner, 2004). Last but not least, it goes beyond empirical-based research and descriptive outputs by contributing to an overall reflection on the theoretical foundation of the field of destination evolution.

Table 27. Overview of the thesis objectives and knowledge advancements achieved

Objective of the thesis	Knowledge advancement
G1: Generate understanding on the mechanisms underlying the changes occurring throughout the evolutionary trajectory of tourism destinations.	Contemporary advances in evolutionary and relational economic geography give valuable insights to the study of tourism destination evolution, by focusing on the dynamics of place, instead of the evolution of tourism activity.
S1: Study the effects of human agency on the evolutionary performance of destinations.	Administered Knowledge Networks with a TIC as main hub support the dissemination of knowledge and promote the involvement of stakeholders in collective learning, while drawing knowledge-based innovation and development.
S2: Explore the influence of contextuality and the adaptive capacity of destinations in front of dynamics of local and global change.	Strategic coupling between local stakeholders and global actors can effectively contribute to increase the innovativeness of local firms and enable the upgrading of destinations.
S3: Assess the enabling and constraining effects of path dependence in the shaping of tourism destination trajectories.	Moments act as catalysts for change in the economic/social/urban development pathway of places when facing lock-in situations.

Source: Author

All in all, by focusing on the analysis of specific catalysts under the umbrella of the triggers identified in the EEG-REG approach – i.e. human agency, contextuality, and path dependence – to the case study of central Costa Daurada, the thesis illustrates and extracts transferable lessons for increasing understanding on the effects of these forces on the evolutionary processes of consolidated tourism destinations, while providing valuable knowledge advancements that give response to the research questions specified in the introduction.

As regards the first specific objective related to the effects of human agency (Table 27), research to date evidenced that networking and knowledge dissemination shape the evolutionary paths of specialised regions (Kogler, 2015). However, there was need of further theoretical discussion and empirical research to understand knowledge network structures, the ways in which knowledge can be disseminated, as well as the actors whose role is key for these processes to be efficient in tourism specialised regions (McLeod & Vaughan, 2015).

The analysis presented in chapter 3 goes beyond analysing the potential or benefits of collaboration networks as conduits of knowledge, as research to date in tourism studies usually do (Baggio, 2015; Baggio & Cooper, 2010). Rather, it tackles networks specifically developed for the dissemination of knowledge using two-mode social network analysis methods which provide insightful perspectives for increasing the understanding of how knowledge networks and knowledge brokers work in tourism destinations. In particular, this approach has been particularly powerful to tackle one of the most relevant mechanisms of knowledge diffusion within tourism destinations: the participation and interaction of actors – i.e. firms, public sector, business associations and research institutions – in specialised seminars and courses. In this regard, by using this method, two types of knowledge flows have been uncovered: Knowledge Formal Transfer and Knowledge Informal Exchange. This comparative analysis allows to conclude that depending on the nature of interactions (formal versus informal), the structure of knowledge networks varies and that actors holding central positions and brokerage functions are also quite different.

Going a step further, findings provide evidences that tourism destinations need to implement knowledge management strategies oriented to create an environment where actors consider knowledge diffusion as an essential process that potentially leads to increased profitability, innovation and competitiveness (Goddard et al., 2012; McLeod & Vaughan, 2015). These purposes can be facilitated by fostering the construction of what the thesis coins – taking cue of Ness' (2014) work – as 'administered knowledge networks' with a TIC being more than an interface between local stakeholders to facilitate the commercialisation of scientific research (Goddard et al., 2012), but arguably acting as a leading administrator stimulating university–industry–government relations and the active involvement of stakeholders in knowledge sharing and collective learning. From the perspective of the EEG-REG approach, this concept is understood as a useful governance mechanism for consolidated coastal destinations and represents a contribution to the traditionally discussed role of policy interventions as key to draw new development pathways for tourist places.

In addition to human agency issues, another line of enquiry that deserved further attention in the literature was analysing the contextual forces that influence destination development trajectories centred on the effects of global-local interactions (Agarwal, 2005; Milne & Ateljevic, 2001), including those that connect actors within the complex business networks established for the distribution of tourism services in the global market (Kracht & Wang, 2010).

In parallel to this, the role of bottom-up private-led strategies in enabling new paths for destinations has been also underemphasised so far in comparison with the number of works analysing the impacts of political interventions in renewing tourism destinations (Agarwal, 2002). These issues were represented in the second specific objective of the thesis (Table 27).

This thesis has presented in chapter 4 valuable theoretical insights and empirical evidence to illustrate how the consolidation of a global production network – in this case dealing with a specific part of the demand market – can contribute to the upgrading of a destination through coupling strategies between local stakeholders and global intermediaries, which are still pillars for the commercialisation of mass destinations. Of particular note in this context is the stimulus provided for the upgrading of tourism firms participating in processes in this manner (as found by Henderson et al., 2002; and Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002, in other productive sectors).

The empirical research identified four (evolving) patterns of strategic coupling: cooperative, mediated, self-interested, and captive. These depend on the characteristics of the trans-local business networks over time in terms of: (1) the way in which the first contacts emerge, (2) the degree of coordination, (3) the power asymmetries, and (4) the degree of dependence. In so doing, some aspects specific to strategic coupling processes in tourism were determined. The first peculiarity is the crucial role of local incoming agencies as key players that connect global and local actors (Kracht & Wang, 2010; March, 2000) and the function of destination management organisations as actors that accompany and facilitate the establishment and consolidation of global–local relations. The second is that actors can diversify their alliances and become engaged in different coupling strategies at the same time. The chapter also discussed the key factors that enhanced the potential of coupling processes to act as catalysts for different upgrading outcomes and created a specific conceptual framework to apply them to the tourism industry.

Along these lines, the specific contribution of the thesis to the literature on tourism collaboration and destination evolution is threefold. First, it adopts a multi-scalar perspective, in that it includes the global dynamics that affect destination competitiveness in the analysis (Agarwal, 2005). Second, it acknowledges the crucial role of agency in shaping the evolution of destinations by embracing the effects resulting from the action and interaction of the broad range of firm and non-firm actors and highlighting the utmost importance of entrepreneurship and inter-firm relations in destination performance over time (Sanz-Ibáñez & Anton Clavé, 2014). In this regard, the study of the changing attitudes towards strategic collaboration between local actors and global intermediaries and the complex nature of network configurations – or governance structures – emerging as a result, go beyond static and reductionist interpretations of these issues in previous research in tourism (Buhalis, 2000; Kracht & Wang, 2010). Third, it opens up the discussion of the synergies driven by global–

local collaboration in international trade markets and emphasises the potential of these relations to enhance innovation (Bastakis et al., 2004).

By providing empirical evidence on global production networks, strategic coupling dynamics, and upgrading outcomes in the evolution of tourism productive spaces, the research responds to Yeung and Coe's (2015) claim of the need to "offer novel theoretical insights into why and how the organisation and coordination of global production networks varies significantly within and across different industries, sectors, and economies" (p.1). In fact, the results provided reinforce the value of integrating EEG, REG, and GPN approaches to shed light on debates that need further scrutiny for building the economic geography research agenda (Benner et al., 2011; MacKinnon, 2012). On the one hand, such an integrated perspective permits analysis of the effects of (global) external relations in the evolution of the economic landscape, an issue that, according to Hassink (2010), most EEG studies neglect. On the other hand, this research contributes greatly to a better understanding of the role of demand markets and market-making processes in shaping the long-term dynamics of the geographies of production—a topic whose crucial importance has received little attention from economic geographers, regional economists, and social scientists in general.

Finally, another gap in the literature to which this thesis contributes is the study of the role of history in explaining the current state of affairs in tourism destinations (specific objective 3). In particular, the research presented has defined a conceptual framework focusing on the role of specific critical incidents at which destinations' economic paths shift in direction (Gale & Botterill, 2005). The moments idea has been proposed in chapter 5 as a viable alternative to traditional life-cycle-based models and as a complementary framework to current debates on path dependence in economic geography.

The moments concept – under the umbrella of the EEG-REG approach – has scope to go beyond the domain of other evolutionary constructs such as, for example, the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), which, as Gale and Botterill (2005) note, is a resort model and hence less applicable to urban industrial and rural areas that have turned to tourism for the purposes of economic (re)development or to restructured resorts. As it is derived in a non-deterministic vein and not limited to being a resort 'model' in any sense, the moments conceptual framework can address various shortcomings of the TALC by, for example, not defining the shape of a 'global' evolutionary curve as applicable to all tourism places and, instead, allowing analysis of individual places according to their own specific trajectories and key moments therein. Furthermore, the moments framework reaffirms the capability of the EEG-REG to analyse the evolution of tourism destinations as places, rather than focusing on the evolution of tourism in destinations, as the TALC does, and provides a useful lens to examine the positive and negative outcomes of past events and decisions (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Beyond its specific application to the case study analysed in this thesis, the moments conceptual framework is arguably broadly transferable, being adaptable to examine any aspect of tourism destination dynamics at any scale from the local to the global and at any period of time, allowing an integrated understanding of the succession of moments that can shape the trajectory of a destination. Furthermore, the framework could be applied to any place and any industrial sector, and so it is more flexible and transferable not only as a theoretical concept, but also as a planning tool for understanding how and why places transform, an issue that evolutionary economic geographers try to explain but still leave questions open to be answered. Indeed, the moments idea stands as a lens that provide genuine explanations and can be inspiring for progressing the elaboration both theoretically and empirically of the path dependence concept (Boschma & Frenken, 2006; Martin, 2010). Consequently, the direction in which this moments idea shifts the debate on path dependence and tourism evolution is of interest within both EEG and tourism geographies.

All in all, this doctoral thesis represents not only an attempt to reinforce the theoretical constructs in tourism analysis, but also to promote the cross-fertilisation of tourism research and economic geography research that many authors claim the need for (see, for instance, Debbage & Ioannides, 2011; Niewiadomski, 2014). Indeed, tourism researchers can not only benefit from the translation of notions and concepts from economic geography to tourism geography but also contribute to validating them in the service sector and in tourism places (Boschma & Frenken, 2011), while enriching the whole discussion around evolution of places and regions in economic geography (Brouder et al., 2017a; Hassink et al., 2014).

6.2. Social and institutional implications

The findings and discussions raised in this thesis comprise key issues that can also benefit practitioners, decision-makers, and professionals willing to create competitive advantage for firms and tourism destinations.

First, tourism policies aimed at enhancing the resilience of tourism specialised productive regions and promoting sustainable economic development, can benefit from fostering ‘administered knowledge networks’ able to facilitate the generation, dissemination and adoption of internal and external knowledge. What remains clear is that such knowledge governance structures need to be put in place with a clear division of roles and functions among the different actors that intervene; a strong commitment and involvement of the main brokers – universities, public administrations at different levels, business associations, and leading firms operating in different subsectors –; and a common objective: create an innovative environment for ensuring a knowledge-based development (Etzkowitz &

Leydesdorff, 2000). Furthermore, it is of crucial importance that administered knowledge networks remain in transition, monitoring the sector dynamics at the destination and the global market, while in close contact with leading-edge knowledge, technology and expertise which help offering knowledge-related activities responding to skills and knowledge gaps identified. For these synergies to take place, there is need to ensure the sustainability and activity of TICs and their 'administered knowledge networks' by fund raising contracts framed under EU programs, governments at different levels, and of course by private sector associations or firms (Goddard et al., 2012).

Second, stakeholders operating in destinations that rely on traditional intermediation – especially in mass tourism destinations but not only – should be aware of the forms of governance and collective actions that ease the processes to deal with the global forces and actors in order to remain the main leaders and active participants in the planning and development of tourism. Ensuring that coupling strategies with global intermediaries affect the whole destination in a positive manner requires the leadership of the local private sector – including individual firms and private sector associations. Along these lines, in terms of policy implications, policies should be oriented not only to attract and facilitate the agency of visionary and innovative entrepreneurs as much as possible, but also to involve them in policy and planning processes (Russell & Faulkner, 2004). These efforts undoubtedly increase confidence and trust between the public and private spheres (Bramwell, 2014). In this context, destination management organisations, must assume and actively perform their role as representatives of the interests of the destination, which means, in practice, that they must act as referees of these processes to ensure that local–global couplings are actually generating synergies consistent with the values of the brand, standards, and priorities fixed for the development of the destination (Erkuş-Öztürk & Eraydın, 2010). Such an endeavour can be operationalised by promoting policies that provide guidance to the private sector on how relationships with their global counterparts should be handled in order to avoid excessive overdependence and to maximise positive outcomes for their firms and the destination. In fact, besides the actions that firms can undertake to enhance relationships based on trust and reciprocity, destination management organisations can also play a key role as mediators promoting effective and frequent communications between global and local actors and, thus, providing meeting arenas that fortify informal bonds. Likewise, in terms of policy and practice it is also crucial to supervise how these global production networks are developing and be able to put forward policies and practices that can enable destinations and local actors to (re)articulate and disarticulate global production networks when the dynamics and impacts of these trans-local relations change.

Third, monitoring the development progress of destinations and having a clear understanding of how these places transform would allow more efficient and targeted urban and regional planning measures and destination management strategies. For these instruments to be efficient, decision-makers should be sensitive to the specific circumstances characterising the

destination – and its constituent co-evolving products, activity sectors, demand markets and resorts – in the present and the previous evolutionary trajectory, and should be aware of the long-term effects that any decision – even the smallest one – might have in enabling or constraining destination dynamics. This effort requires identifying both the needs and bottlenecks that need to be tackled for avoiding (or coping) stagnation or decline states (Coenen et al., 2017), and at the same time distinguishing the strategies and decisions made in the past that ended up favouring innovative incremental changes for the benefit of the destination competitiveness (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017). This is an important observation for planning authorities and the tourism sector and makes evident that the capacity of tourism places to be resilient resides in leading agency that put in place proactive contextual policies rather than passive policy responses.

6.3. Further research directions

The conceptual and analytical framework put forward in this thesis involves two main challenges which will have to be resolved in further research. First and foremost, testing the utility and validity of the EEG-REG approach requires an effort to apply this lens for assessing the evolutionary trajectories of other tourism destination cases – being, for instance, places where tourism is already consolidated or where tourism is still in its infancy; highly specialised destinations offering traditional beach holiday experiences, cities that are becoming rapidly mass urban destinations, or rural localities in peripheral areas with high hopes in the tourism activity as a means to enhance local economic development. Such an exercise of comparative analysis can contribute to insightful discussions on the extent to which the approach is applicable or needs to be readjusted.

Second, there is a need to find a proper translation of EEG and REG notions and concepts for the geographical analysis of tourism destination evolution; a question that can generate problematic issues – even more so when EEG and REG have gained attention but much work still remains to be done (Hassink et al., 2014; Kogler, 2015). In particular, it would be necessary to test appropriate and effective methods of conducting empirical analyses in order to understand how and to what extent human agency, contextuality and path dependence influence the evolving paths of destinations. The empirical chapters of this dissertation represent an initial step in this direction, further advancements are expected to be tackled in future research.

As regards the study of knowledge networks, future research directions may be oriented to extend the analysis including external linkages, comparing knowledge networks with business networks, or even using other analytical tools that allow to examine in-depth the underlying mechanisms of formal and informal knowledge network formation and evolution, including

social mechanisms (Giuliani & Bell, 2008) and proximity issues (Balland, 2012) in a longer span of time. A comparative analysis of knowledge Informal Exchange and Formal Transfer mechanisms can also be applicable to other sectors characterised by low budget for research and personnel training, predominance of small and medium-sized firms, or with high levels of tacit and contextual knowledge. Complementarily, the two-mode networks technique can be also applied to assess the attendance to national or international trade fairs, formal or informal scheduled meetings, or national/international conferences. Last but not least, finding the ways to empirically prove the outcomes of knowledge network dynamics in terms of innovativeness, competitiveness and sustainability in the long-run would be a promising field of research as well (Erkuş-Öztürk, 2010; Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015)

Next steps in the analysis of coupling and upgrading in tourism destinations should focus on analysing the type of strategic couplings and the evolving dynamics of recoupling and decoupling processes among local and global actors (MacKinnon, 2012; Yeung, 2015) in further case studies to distinguish whether the types of couplings proposed can be generalised to other contexts or new inputs can be taken to enrich the categorisation. Along these lines, there is also scope to go beyond the study of power relations between local stakeholders and tour operators. Other strategic relations with relevant global actors playing a role in the globalised tourism economy – such as international hotel groups (Niewiadomski, 2014) – can also be worth to study in-depth as a means to tackle from a theoretical perspective the unequal relationships that might arise between cities, destinations and regions within global capitalism (MacKinnon, 2012). Besides, further research efforts to empirically examine the economic and social effects of coupling processes (Gereffi & Lee, 2016) – being them related to (positive) upgrading or (negative) downgrading – will provide a clearer picture to quantify the real contribution of these local-global relations in the past, current and future performance of (tourism) places.

The future research potential in relation to the moments conceptual framework is mainly related to the opportunities arising from applying its basic premises to develop this idea according to the needs of other destinations or industrial contexts. Further research adopting the moments idea should uncover the effects of moments with different inherent characteristics – intensity, durability, scale, and speed – that have forced other (tourism) places' paths to shift in direction, as well as the specific responses of stakeholders and consecutive impacts. Of great interest would be to do so in success cases, as a means to identify good practices and enabling pre-conditions that become valuable inputs for guiding planning policies and destination management measures (Anton Clavé & Wilson, 2017; Sanz-Ibáñez et al., 2017), but also in unsuccessful examples that could give clues of the sequence of events and decisions conducing these places to lock-in states. The knowledge acquired through the accumulation of evidences in different places and productive contexts would provide a better understanding of the working of moments in shaping evolutionary paths and would reinforce its potential as a useful planning tool.

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THE EVOLUTION OF DESTINATIONS. AN EVOLUTIONARY AND RELATIONAL ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY APPROACH.
Cinta Sanz Ibáñez

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