



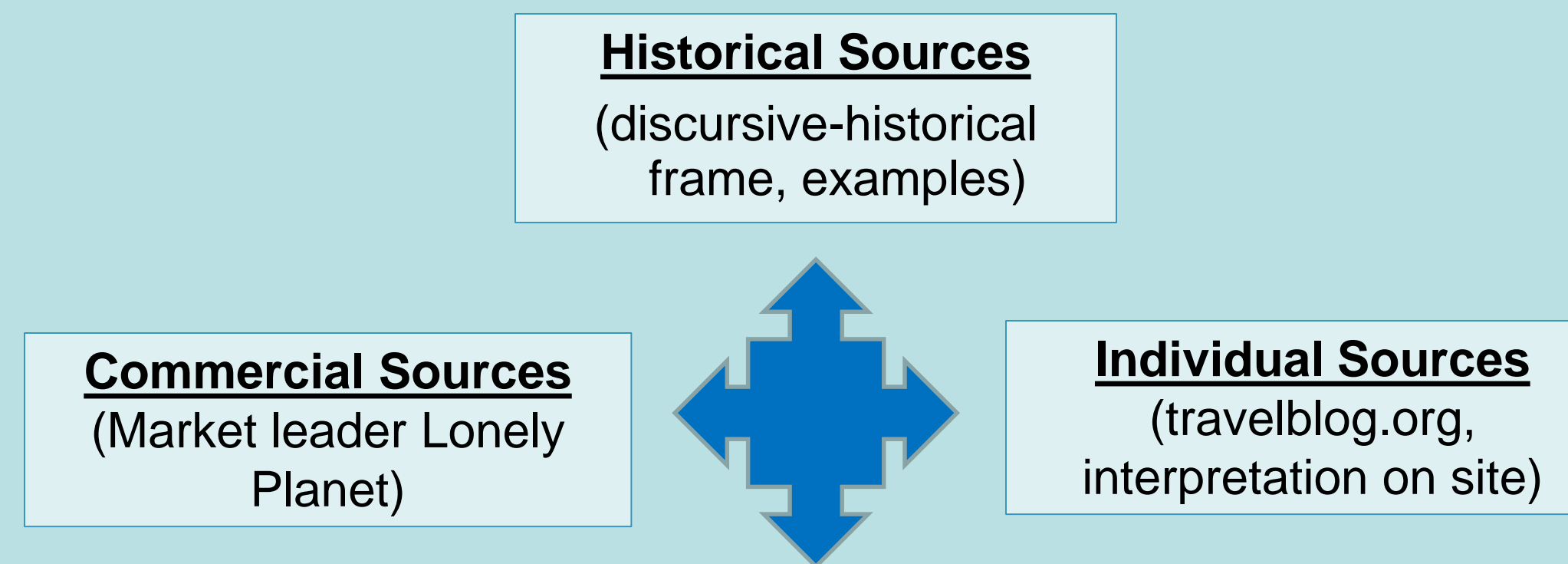
Mag. Felix Bergmeister, Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung

Introduction

Tourism can be seen as “a very literal sort of geography”. It writes the earth by inscribing meaning onto places via the communication of narratives, myths, and dreams that effectively construct the destinations tourists consume (Crang, 2014, p. 68). At the heart of this semiotic process lie “tourism imaginaries”, which are used as meaning making and world shaping devices (Salazar, 2012, p. 864). Thus, tourism constitutes a powerful cultural force that can provide a window into the cultural organization of societies and intercultural power differentials on a global scale (Wilkes, 2013, p. 33-34). This presentation is part of an ongoing dissertation project, investigating the construction of destination images in popular guidebooks and independent travel-blogs. It traces matters of power and identity in a regional Southeast Asian context.

Research Questions

How are notions of „destination“, „Western self“ and „otherness“ negotiated with regard to power and identity?



Representation

- Which discourses can be identified in „top-down“ accounts?
- Is there discursive transformation / continuation between historical und contemporary texts?

Interpretation

- Which (new) discourses emerge in experience-based accounts (Blogs), is there resistance / continuation?

Power and Identity

- Which power-relations / models of identity are privileged from what perspective?

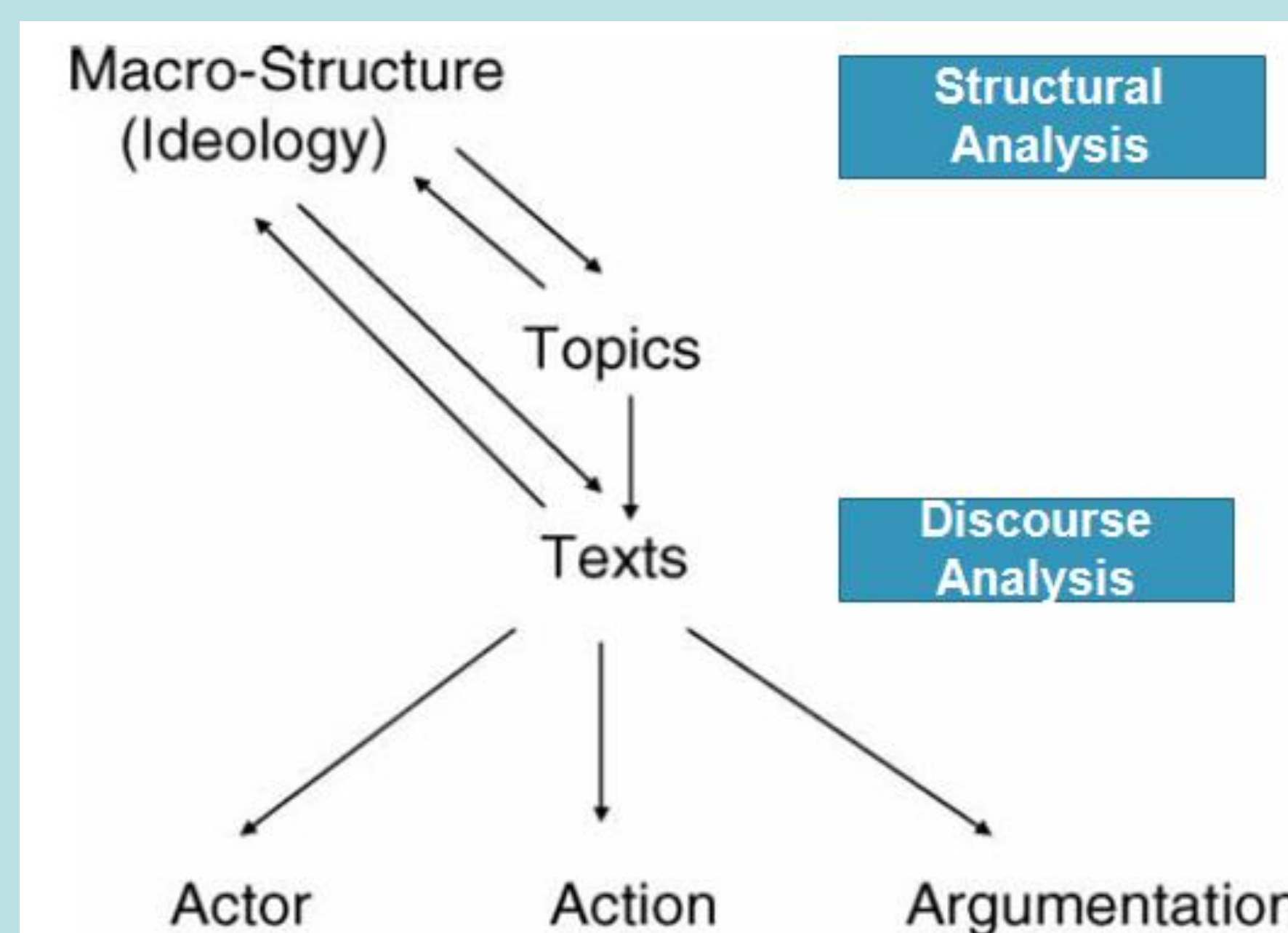
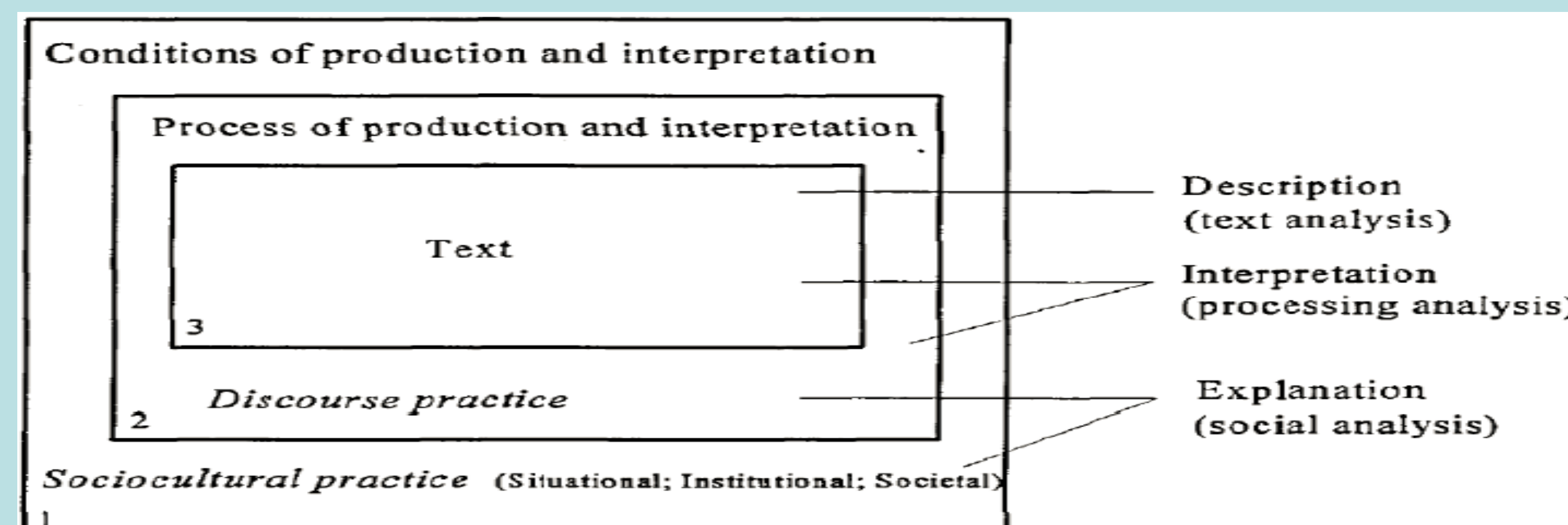
Methodology – Critical Discourse Analysis (DHA)

➤ Discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault 1972: 49).

➤ Discourses do not emerge out of nothing, they productively link historical und recent events (Jäger 2012: 149):

- present concerns are negotiated in terms of available ideas and existing cognitive anchor points;
- and are made strategically comprehensible via systems of communication (e.g. the media) to serve particular interests (Wodak & Forchtner 2005:235).

➤ Analysis is therefore possible at the interface between discourse and multimodal text (e.g. travelogues, guide books, blogs...)



Analytical Steps

Structural Analysis

Historical Sources / Lonely Planet:

Identification of **Macrostructures**, that are legitimized by discourses about power und identity (z.B. colonialism, neoliberalism, hedonism...).

Historical Sources / Lonely Planet:

Identification of **Topics** (e.g. modernisation, chaos, tradition, order, responsible travel, volunteering, exotic, crime...).

Lonely Planet:

Identification of most popular tourist hot-spots (e.g. South East Asia's Top 20).

Blogs:

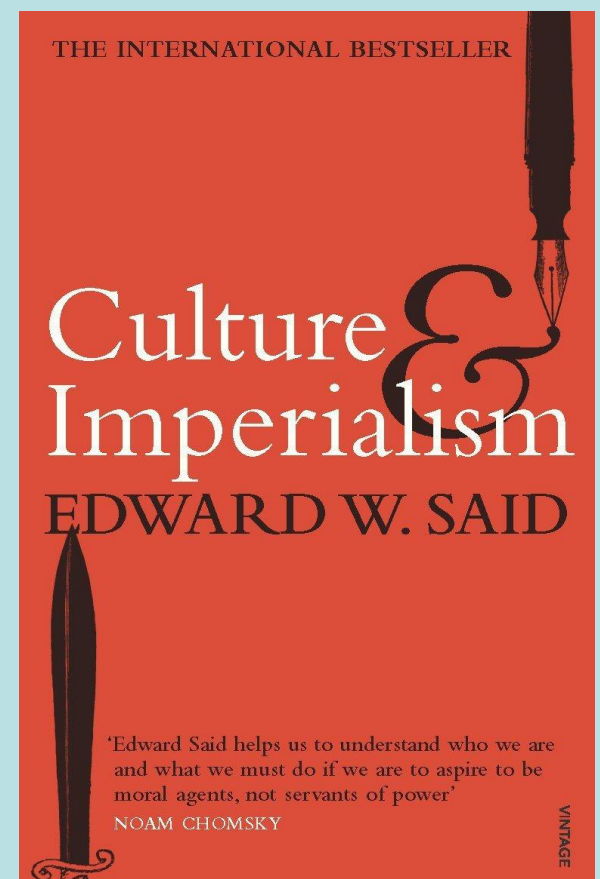
Hot- spot and topic oriented search for representative entries (qualitative Sampling → Interpretation & negotiation).

Discourse Analysis

- Which actors feature in the texts?
- What is said about these actors?
- Which practices are associated with specific actors?
- Which models of identity result?
- How does this relate to a specific macro-structure (reproduction / subversion)?

Problematic

Conflicts about the “terms of recognition“ in tourism and elsewhere (aka: How do we understand the world?)



„The earth is in effect one world, in which empty, uninhabited spaces virtually do not exist. Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings“. (Said 1993: 7)

Tourism provides a “window on how the cultural understanding of societies is organized”, so that existing power-differentials between cultures and societies can be better understood (Wilkes 2003: 33f.).

Aim of this study

Investigate issues of **power and identity** in popular Anglophone guidebooks and independent travel-blogs, focusing on a Southeast Asian regional context.

Tourism research and research gaps

➤ „Traditional“ tourism-texts influence our understanding of places „top – down“ (e.g. guidebooks, brochures, film & media, etc.) (Urry 1990; Urry & Larsen 2011; Mac Cannel 1976; Jenkins 2003; Bhattacharyya 1997).

➤ Research focuses mainly on “authorial / institutional representations” (Norton 1996).

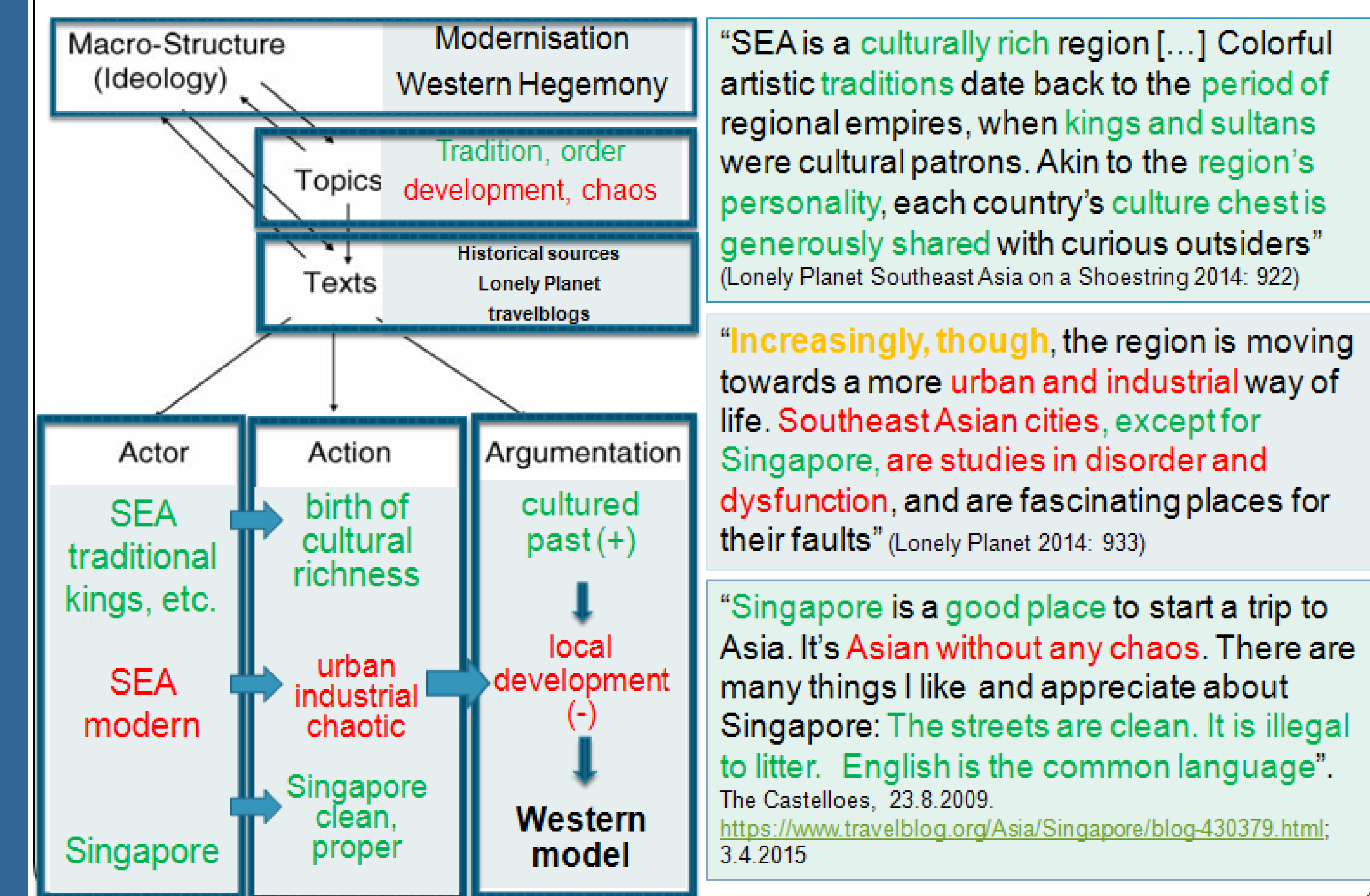
Research gaps

➤ Little understanding of **touristic interpretation** in the field (e.g. Norton 1996: 358; Crang 2014: 74).

➤ Little understanding of **how tourists use participative media systems** (e.g. web 2.0) after / during a visit and how they negotiate cultural and communicative potential as they generate their own media contents (Mansson 2011: 1640) -> “bottom – up”.



Example Analysis



Conclusion

- Partly significant discursive convergence between historical und contemporary tourism texts;
- Western perspectives dominate narrative landscape in all media under review and local voices are rarely included in these texts;
- Participative media (Blogs) offer insights into tourists' experiences that would otherwise be difficult to get;
- However, blogs appear to rather sustain than subvert hegemonic western assumptions of self and other.