



Not quite a twin city: Cross-boundary integration in Hong Kong and Shenzhen



Jianfa Shen*

Department of Geography and Resource Management, Research Centre for Urban and Regional Development, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Twin city
Cross-border region
Hong Kong
Shenzhen

The integration of cross-border regions involves at least three dimensions, i.e., economic integration, institutional integration and social integration. The relationship and the gaps among these processes of integration need detailed studies in the context of increasing number of cross-border regions. The empirical focus of this paper is the cross-boundary integration of Hong Kong and Shenzhen, two major cities that have played a pivotal role in China's urbanization, development and internationalization over the last three decades. It is revealed that economic integration prevails in the Hong Kong–Shenzhen integrated region. Economic integration has necessitated the institutional integration which in turn attempts to facilitate economic integration. But both economic and institutional integration cannot change the pace of social integration. Social integration lags significantly behind economic and institutional integration. Brunet-Jailly's main hypothesis of the theory of borderland studies is only partially valid in Hong Kong–Shenzhen region. The paper concludes that Hong Kong–Shenzhen has not yet become a twin city.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

In the age of globalization, dramatic spatial restructuring spurs the emergence of cross-border regions and new forms of regional integration (Bunnell, Muzaini, & Sidaway, 2006; Otgaar, van den Berg, van der Meer, & Speller, 2008; Perkmann, 2003; Shen, 2011). Regional integration in boundary areas is a comprehensive process involving economic, political and social dimensions of integration.

Hong Kong and Shenzhen, the Pearl River Delta (PRD) in general, have formed a dense regional production network since 1978. Political history, kinship and business ties have facilitated close economic integration in the region (Grundy-Warr, Peachey, & Perry, 1999: p. 309). The implementation of “One country two systems (OCTS)” in Hong Kong after 1997 also distinguishes this region from other cross-border regions (Shen, 2004; Sparke, Sidaway, Bunnell, & Grundy-Warr, 2004; Yeung & Shen, 2008).

Scholars have used the model of “front shop, rear factory” to describe the economic relationship between Hong Kong and the PRD (Chan, 1998; Chen, 2007; Cheung, 2006; Li, 1998; Sit, 1998). The economic integration has been driven by businessmen and

residents. But cooperation at government level was not smooth before 2001. Since then, the HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) government has become increasingly active in enhancing government-to-government cooperation with PRD. Before 1997, the Hong Kong government did not ever consider the interest of the Hong Kong-PRD as a whole city-region with little investment in the cross-border infrastructure (Cheung, 2005). But even after 1997, scholars pointed out that some HKSAR officials were concerned that close economic integration could undermine the political autonomy of the HKSAR (Rohlen, 2000). Scholars found fierce competition in ports and airports in the region (Chen, 2007; Song, 2002). Cheung (2006) argued that different perspectives in Hong Kong and Guangdong are major constraints for cross-boundary cooperation.

Previous studies on regional integration in Hong Kong-PRD region and Hong Kong–Shenzhen region mainly focused on economic cooperation (Chen, 2007; Sit, 1998; Yang, 2005). The impact of social integration and the politics of cross-border governance are largely ignored with a few exceptions (Lin & Tse, 2005; Shen, 2004).

By tracing the process of Hong Kong and Shenzhen integration during the past three decades, Luo and Shen (2012) find three stages in Hong Kong–Shenzhen regionalization, namely, the emergence of informal regional society from below, the transitional regional society and formal regional society. The changing relation between Hong Kong and Shenzhen/PRD region has also been

* Tel.: +852 3943 6469; fax: +852 2603 5006.
E-mail address: jianfa@cuhk.edu.hk.

considered in the context of rising China and internal social and economic conditions in Hong Kong (Shen & Luo, 2013). Economically, PRD and Shenzhen have become stronger with a growing service sector which has important implications to Hong Kong. But there is little study on the political and cultural differences between Hong Kong and mainland China and their impact on Hong Kong–Shenzhen integration.

This paper will use Hong Kong and Shenzhen as a case study to examine the status and relations of economic integration, institutional integration and social integration. The integration of cross-border communities which share common value and identity is considered the most advanced form of cross-border integration as economic or institutional integration can be motivated just by economic or political interest and may not ensure social integration. Thus it is used as a key criterion to assess whether Hong Kong–Shenzhen is really a twin city. Economic and trading statistics, government documents and first-hand survey data will be used in this study.

The main research questions are as follows. Are the economic, institutional and social integration processes progressing at the same pace? Have the economic and institutional integrations enhanced social integration? How do political and cultural factors and OCTS affect regional integration? Is Hong Kong–Shenzhen really a twin city?

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews the conceptual advancement in the study of borderland and the integration of cross-border regions. Next three sections examine the regional economic integration, institutional integration and integration of cross-border communities in Hong Kong–Shenzhen region. Some conclusions are reached in the final section.

Borderland and integration of cross-border regions

Significant regional economic integration has taken place in many cross-border regions, e.g., Hong Kong–PRD region, Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore growth triangle and the US–Mexico border (Bunnell et al., 2006; Chen & Ho, 1994; Grundy-Warr et al., 1999; Shen, 2003; Sparrow, 2001). Such cross-border regional integration, called sub-regionalism or micro-regionalism, is a subset of regional projects which have been examined from the popular perspective of “new regionalism”, emphasizing an open and multi-dimensional system with multiple (state and social) actors (Hettne, 2003).

Based on the literature on borders, boundaries, frontiers, and borderland regions, Brunet-Jailly (2005) suggests a comprehensive framework with four equally important analytical lenses: (1) market forces and trade flows; (2) policy activities of multiple levels of governments on adjacent borders; (3) the particular political clout of borderland communities; (4) the specific culture of borderland communities. The main hypothesis of the theory of borderland studies proposed by Brunet-Jailly is: If each analytical lens enhances or complements one another, what emerges is a borderland region that is culturally emerging and is integrating. This hypothesis has not been fully tested in previous studies. The findings from Hong Kong–Shenzhen region can shed light on the complex relations among the economic, institutional and social processes of cross-border integration.

An integrated borderland means the development of genuine transnational institutions and a more complete harmonization of regulatory systems (Grundy-Warr et al., 1999: p. 322). Brunet-Jailly (2005) pointed out that a borderland that is economically, politically and culturally emerging and integrating is an ideal case. The literature documents many cases with local tensions, despite shared infrastructures and strong economic linkages (Bunnell et al.,

2006; Otgaar et al., 2008). Grundy-Warr et al. (1999) argued that the growth triangles in Asia lag behind Europe and North America in transboundary cooperation due to lack of bottom-up initiatives and they tend to move toward “interdependent” rather than “integrated” borderland with no institutional innovation.

The economic, institutional, political and social processes of integration in cross-border regions have been studied separately although there are interactions among these processes. The concept of “cross-border regional production systems”, focusing on economic integration, has been used to describe the cross-border regions in Asia (Shen, 2003; Tsui-Auch, 1999). Such a system involves at least two countries with one well developed and the other one under-developed. The two countries have different factor endowments and the subsequent development will mainly take place in the border region of the less developed country where abundant cheap land and labor are available. A spatial division of labor will be developed (Sit, 1998). Nevertheless, regional economic integration and cooperation has never been a smooth process as each side has its own economic interest (Barter, 2006). In cross-border regions of North America, intra-metropolitan regional competition is common (Brunet-Jailly, 2004). Similar competition tension exists in the development of airports, container ports and cross-boundary infrastructure in Hong Kong–PRD region (Shen, 2008a). One functionalist explanation is that competition prevails, fostering competitiveness and distrust, as “cities have very few policy options” (Peterson, 1981: p. 111).

Recent studies have paid increasing attention to political and social dimensions of integration. The geopolitical concerns can constrain and limit the process of economic integration. In the study of Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore growth triangle, Grundy-Warr et al. (1999: p. 306) concluded that countries are not willing to compromise national sovereignty for the sake of the development of a functionally integrated cross-border economy. The growth triangle is characterized by cooperation without institutional innovation or many changes in regulatory framework, national security enhancing instead of the loss of sovereignty, and incremental intra-regional cooperation.

Another useful concept of “bi-national city” refers to urbanized borderland communities. The bi-national city is “divided” by a national border, but shares a common hinterland and whose inhabitants have a sense of belonging together (Ehlers & Buursink, 2000). The term goes beyond nationalism and creates a common cross-border identity. The concept stresses the utopian aspect of cross-border integration (Ehlers, 2001). Not many cross-border regions have reached such an ideal stage.

Bunnell et al. (2006) documented the agency and struggle in the context of Singapore’s cross-border urban expansion into adjacent parts of Indonesia. The indigenous villagers in Bintan were disrupted. Franz and Hornych (2010) examined the conditions that ease or complicate cooperation between municipalities with a case study on the “Saxony triangle”. Sparrow (2001) concluded that the relationship between San Diego and Tijuana is driven by factors of economics not trust. Following over 100 years as neighbors, the two cities are still learning to coexist with each other.

While a bi-national city involves national borders, a more general term is “twin city” which includes closely integrated cities between countries or within a country. The territorial integration of two cities can be tested by following question: What is the emotional and mental “togetherness” of the two urban communities, on the side of their politicians, administrators and residents (Buursink, 1996)?

Following the twin city model, four steps or stages in the progress of territorial integration are proposed by Sparrow: Step 1 Physical integration; Step 2 Behavioral integration; Step 3 Organizational integration; Step 4 Politico-administrative integration

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1047968>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1047968>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)