

Abstract

This paper is an investigation into the changing “openness” of the Hong Kong and Mainland China boundary, as illustrated by the emerging phenomenon of cross-border commuting. It is common for people in transborder metropolitan regions to take advantage of price and wage differentials by crossing the border frequently. In Hong Kong, however, this is a relatively recent process. In this context, the paper discusses the growing cross-boundary passenger flows and especially the even stronger increase in short distance and high frequency trips. The number of people crossing the boundary several times a week has grown by about double the general rate, more than one third in only two years 1999 to 2001.

Almost all frequent trip makers are Hong Kong residents either living in Hong Kong or living in the Mainland. Outbound commuting from Hong Kong to the Mainland prevails, but the number of inbound commuters to Hong Kong grows at a high rate, as more Hong Kong people have family and/or property in the Mainland. This paper analyses reasons behind this recent development and looks at the spatial distribution of trip origins and destinations in the Mainland. The discussion of reasons and consequences of the increasing openness of the boundary portrays Hong Kong and Shenzhen as increasingly integrated activity spaces. This observation leads to policy recommendations for Hong Kong.