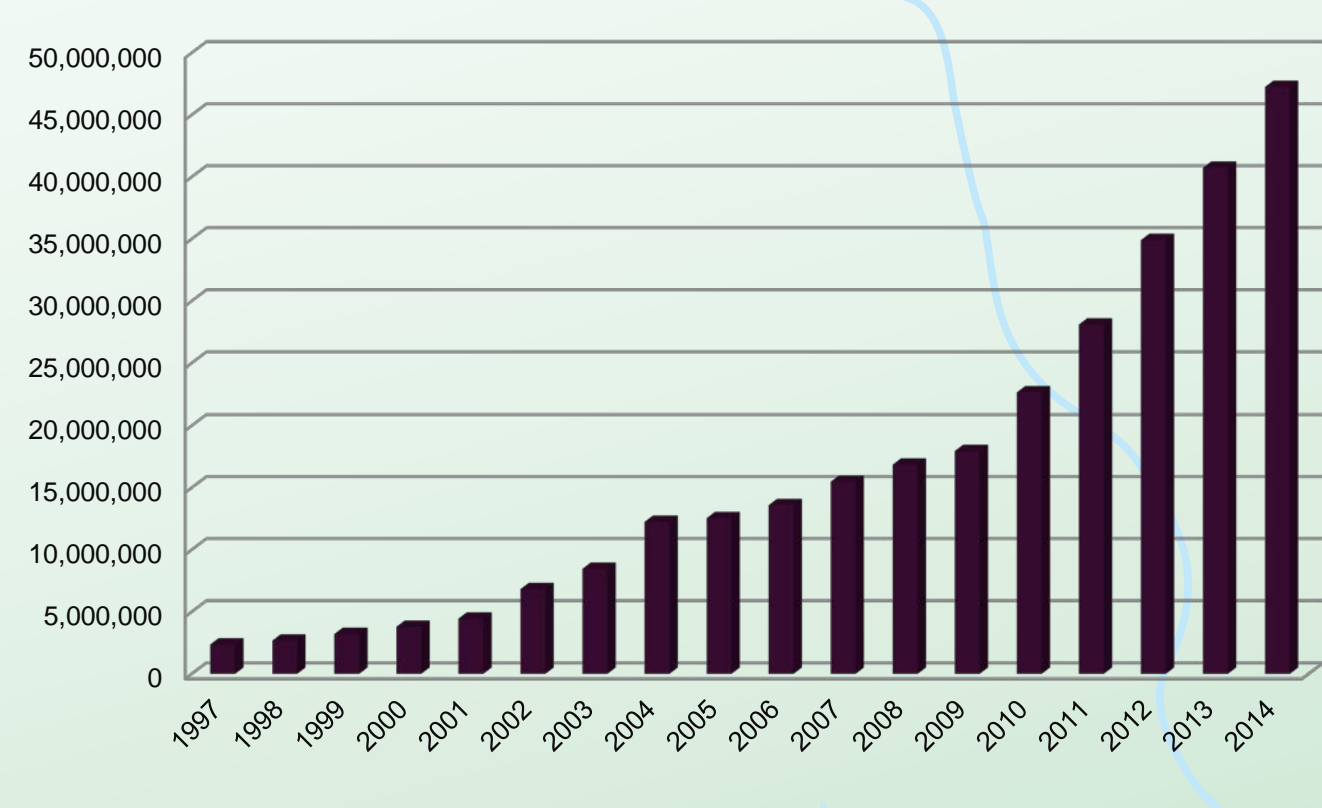




Host-guest encounters and mental borders: The case of mainland Chinese tourists in Hong Kong

Conflicts between Mainland Chinese tourists and Hong Kong locals



Mainland Chinese tourist arrivals in Hong Kong



Protesters wearing masks shout at mainland Chinese travellers during a demonstration inside a shopping mall in Hong Kong. Photo: Reuters

Paradox of host-guest encounters

Does tourism bring better relationship?

- Social exchange theory: if benefits outweigh costs, then yes.
- Social representation theory: it depends on the shared group/ culture characteristics.
- Contact hypothesis: it depends on the contact's nature.

What is missing: impact of social-political context on host-guest encounters

The higher permeability of borders increases cross-border mobility, and mobility brings contacts. But the 'sticky' mental border creates an even-stronger barrier for communication and mutual understanding.

What has been changed with the border?

| | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Political border | the border regime | from international border to intra-national boundary |
| Physical border | the dividing line in map /fences in space | not changed |
| Functional border | the management of cross-border flow | more permeable |
| Mental border | the border in people's mind | stronger feeling of difference? |

Mental border matters in tourism

Border functions in tourism (Timothy, 2002)

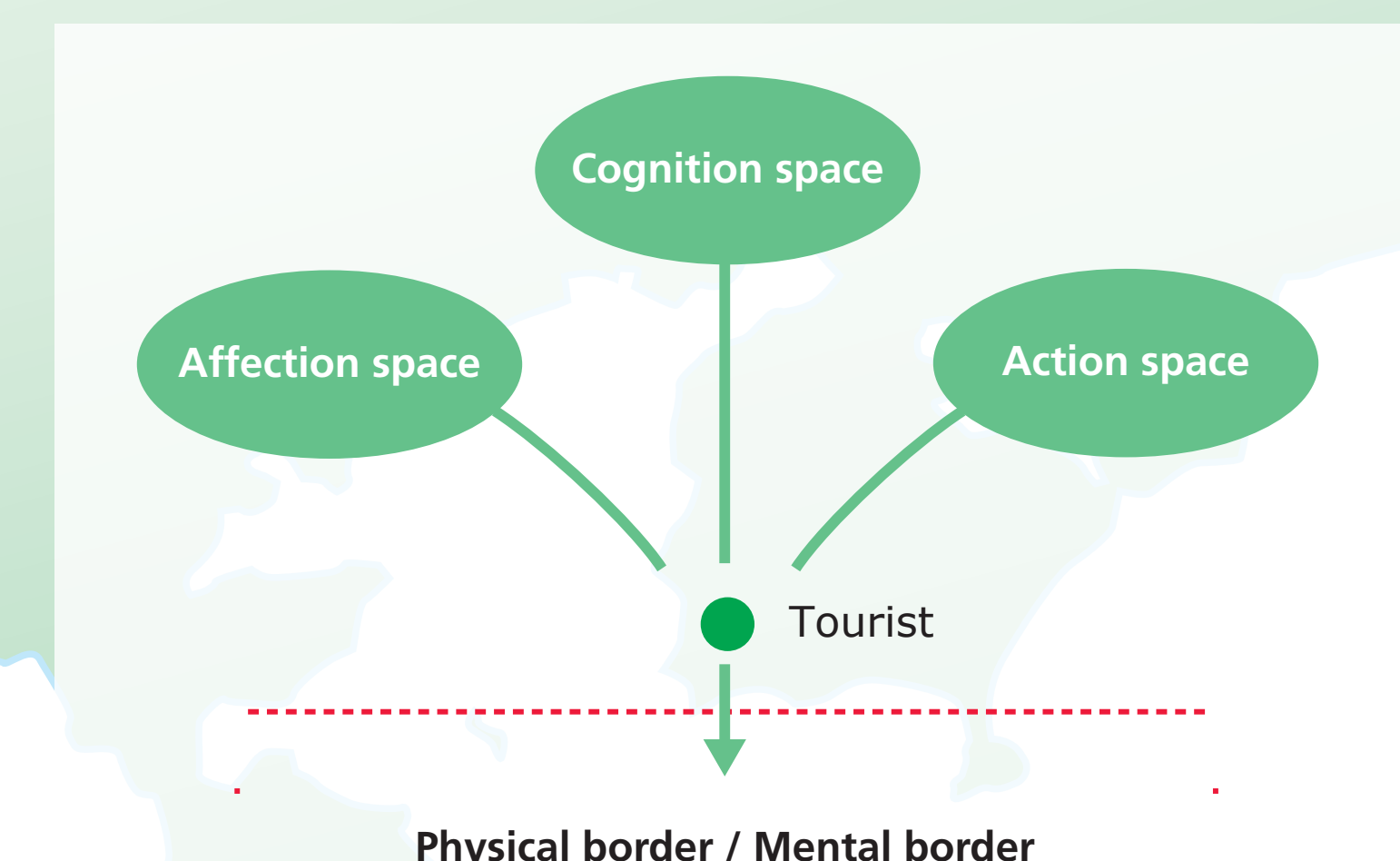
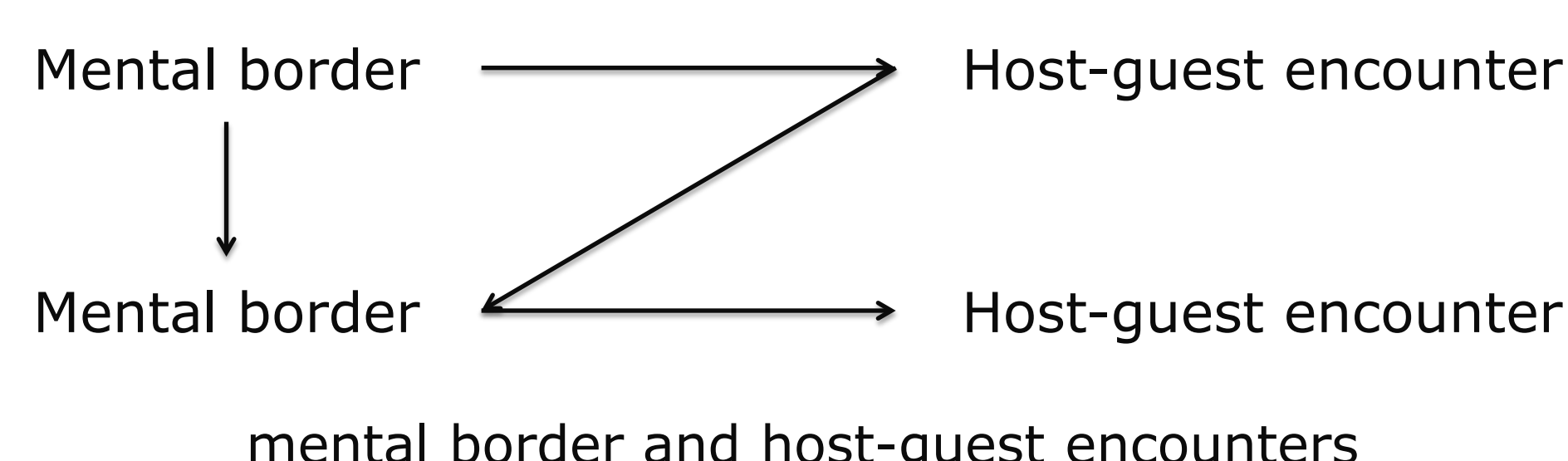
- Border as destination
- Border as a modifier of the tourism landscape
- Border as barrier

What is missing: mental border

Border is not only the line on map or institutions controlling flow, but are also "processes that exist in social cultural action and discourse" (Paasi, 1998)

Research Question

How does the mental border function in mainland tourists' host-guest encounters in Hong Kong?



Actors and cross-border interaction in affection, cognition, and action space (cf. Van Houtum, 1998)

Conceptualize mental border

1. Cognitive mental border

Cognitive distance (Van Houtum, 1998)

Border Formalities (Timothy, 2003)

Cultural difference (Timothy, 2003; Moufakkir, 2011; Reisinger & Turner, 2003)

Economic difference (Timothy, 2003)

2. Affection mental border

Identity distance (Matthews, Ma and Lui, 2007)

Sense of place: otherness/ foreignness /feeling at home (Van Houtum, 1998)

Perceived hospitality /closeness/ discrimination

Perceived difficulty level of crossing the border

3. Mental border in action

Cross-border travel times/ frequency/ length/contact level

Cross-border travel intentions in future

Initiatives in communication

Methods

Focus- Group Interviews: the shared perceptions and general issues

Semi-structured Interviews: the particular individual experience of host-guest encounters that influenced their mental border

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