Chinese immigration to Italy and economic relations with the homeland: a scalar perspective
Aims and structure

To disentangle Chinese migrants' role in China-Italy bilateral relations, with attention to territorial dimensions

a. Contextualization: literature on globalization, immigration, trade, remittances and investments

b. Contextualization: Italy's socio-economic conditions and its Chinese migration

c. Analysis of bilateral trade and remittances

d. Conclusion: hindering factors to stronger bilateral relations brokered by migrants
Destandardization of migration processes in post-Fordist economies

- New flows, new destination, increasing importance of localized vs. national processes
  - Focus on bridges among locales
  - Rescaling processes; transnationalism
  - Importance of context in assessing migration role in value chains and power relations: different roles in global, regional or downscaled gateways
The study of the role of immigrants in changing contexts, connecting locales and developing interactions is still at an early stage.

Contrary to “old” neoclassical approaches, there's evidence that trade and migration grow together.

- Migrants help filling structural holes and cut transaction costs: middlepersons important to boost trade with poor, far countries with dissimilar products.
- Role of preferences for homeland goods and growth of exotic markets.
- Few studies in Southern Europe (different regulations and migration history).
Migration helps also the development of FDI

- Especially in countries with long-lasting and high-skilled migration
- Not the case in Italy, where FDI and migrations seem disconnected: significant attraction of migration; late-comer and laggard in FDI
- Low skilled migration as a functional substitute of FDI?

Remittances, even though one-directional, have a role in keeping countries connected

- Dropped less than FDI during the crisis
b. Contextualization: the Italian case/1

... though, there's a number of conditions to be met to have a successful link between immigration, trade, investments and remittances

Trade is associated with institutional openness (clear rights; mobility); attractiveness toward high skilled migrants

Role of immigration tied with immigration policy and labour market conditions

Best condition not available in Italy?
b. Contextualization: the Italian case/2

Important effects of local clusters and their networks in ethnicization processes

- Ethnic economies as effect of intergroup relations
- Transformation of industrial districts and the role of immigration

Chinese SMEs as an interesting case of “double embeddedness” and “double rescaling”

- Acting in the intersection between repositioning of China and Italian districts in the global markets
- Reciprocal co-evolution of “origin” and “destination” areas
b. Contextualization: the Italian case/3

Chinese SMEs in Italy are included in a specific economic structure

Higher number of national SMEs than in most developed countries

High level of both national and immigrant entrepreneurship (it's not residual)

• Two forms of ethnoindustrialization
• ...but with an asymmetric model of socio-economic participation (how sustainable?)

HP: in-group and out-group fragility of Chinese business in Italy limits successful transnational links
c. Analysis of bilateral trade and remittances

Methodological choices

- Analysis of trade in “made in Italy” sectors (textile, garment, leather)
- Analysis of a single group (Chinese)
- Analysis of intranational variability: (Chinese) immigration is unevenly settled
  - How Chinese immigration and trade are differently set up in different Italian contexts?

Aware of limited quality of data on remittances

- Underestimate (informal channels; accounting threshold)
- Overestimating (“smurfing”)
c. Analysis of bilateral trade and remittances/2

Remittances

Urban hubs produce more remittances than industrial districts

Did not collapse with the crisis: even, low-cost garment and catering can be boosted by the crisis
c. Analysis of bilateral trade and remittances/3

Remittances per capita

Incidence of Chinese residents

Red values over Interquartile range
c. Analysis of bilateral trade and remittances

Trade and Intra-Industry Trade

Exploring (trade) links between Italian locales and China, and how the Chinese residents matter

Excluding outliers, Chinese settlement has a positive impact on export...

- For textile sector, also in specialization areas
- For garment sectors, but NOT in specialization areas and NOT for IIT
- Not significant for leather sector

Italian locales engage in IIT with China with no correlation with the settlement of Chinese migrants
c. Analysis of bilateral trade and remittances

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Limited economic integration between China and Italy that can be traced back to the role of migrants

Most Chinese migrants work in areas with poor exchange with China, or where exchange is not tied with their settlement

In Italy, good conditions for reciprocal success are often missing: cut-throat competition, low skills, limited social mobility => Chinese stayers are more alternative than complementary to global exchange

More success in areas with low concentration of Chinese residents (escaping extreme exploitation)!

Risk for an intergenerational scismogenesis?
Thank you for your attention

For further inquiries

Eduardo Barberis
DESP, University of Urbino Carlo Bo
eduardo.barberis@uniurb.it

Alberto Violante
Istat
albertoviol@gmail.com