

Made in Italy, by Chinese: How the Chinese Migration Changed the Industrial District in the Italian City of Prato and the Apparel Production Networks Across Europe

Speaker: Dr Tu Lan
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Chair: Dr Karen Lai, Department of Geography, NUS

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Place: Earth Lab (AS2 02-03), Department of Geography, NUS

Abstract

Since the early 1990s, more than 20,000 Chinese immigrants have moved to the city of Prato, Italy, to regenerate apparel production networks in the city. The industry now comprises over 3,000 small and medium-sized enterprises, run by Chinese entrepreneurs and hiring Chinese migrant workers.

The talk focuses on the ways in which the Chinese companies entered the city and the industry, working together to capture fast fashion markets across Europe. In contrast to the common business strategy of global outsourcing, the companies have created a particular way of insourcing, successfully retaining the apparel manufacturing in one of the most expensive industrial districts in the world.

The research also finds that the rise of the industry in Prato has been historically contingent upon a series of economic and political factors, at both local and transnational scales. As a consequence, these Chinese companies have been transforming the city space of Prato as well as ushering in new possibilities for the global production networks of textile and apparel.

About the Speaker

Tu Lan is currently a Lecturer in Geography at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he got his PhD in 2014. He is an economic geographer working on issues including global production networks, industrial districts, transnational migration, and social theory.

His most recent work focuses on the evolution of the Chinese political economy and its implications upon other countries across the world.

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