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People’s Republic of Bolzano

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Combining a statistics-based investigation and a series of qualitative interviews, the People’s Republic of Bolzano project aimed at inviting citizens to discover who the members of the Chinese community living and working in the city are, what they think of Italy, its local culture and society. Contrary to the common belief – propagated by local media – that Chinese people are “invading” the city, the project helped reveal that, while we have and are witnessing a small-scale migration of Chinese people to Bolzano, they are not creating a ghetto in the city. Rather, they are integrating within it. This project, is the result of a web based long-term journalistic enquiry. It features animated and interactive infographics, maps, and a series of qualitative interviews, which help reshape the identity of the local Chinese community through digital media, in order to contrast with the dominant and misleading narrative by the local media. Through a design project based on more transparent and balanced information, thereby allowing a broader audience to inform itself on such a complex and multifaceted issue, the project opened a local debate about the integration of the Chinese people in the city, that led the local media purveyor of the “invasion” theory to reverse its narrative.

People’s Republic of Bolzano has awarded with the Data Journalism Award 2015 (best data visualization of the year, small newsroom) and the European Design Award 2016 (Bronze, digital infographics).

You can read the whole publication below
(extract from the book Data journalism: inside the global future, isbn: 1845496639)
https://tinyurl.com/lb87nbu
People’s Republic of Bolzano

Speaking freely 随心所欲

The Westernisation of the parents

The parents, who come from Hong Kong and have lived in Italy since they were 15 years old, have been in Italy for 20 years, one of the oldest in the town. They don’t speak much Chinese, and have had a good relationship with their parents. They are now retired and live in a small town near Bolzano.

Ying-ting Chen, a young student at the University of Bolzano, arrived in Bolzano 7 years ago. She has been studying art and has been very successful. She is now working as a researcher at the university. She speaks both Chinese and Italian fluently.

Ming Chen, who has been living in Bolzano for 5 years, used to work in a factory before coming to Italy. He is now working as a chef in a restaurant. He speaks Chinese and Italian fluently.

The young couple, who have been married for 3 years, have two children. They are very happy and enjoy living in Bolzano.

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Even in terms of restaurants, the figures are far from out of the ordinary and nothing like an invasion: out of 201 local restaurants, just 32 are Chinese, i.e. 16%. Compared with other larger communities, the Chinese run retail businesses meaning they are more visible than, for example, the Romanian and Albanian citizens that work on workshops or farms.

Where and when 何时何地
The interactive map shows that there is no Chinese neighbourhood: their businesses, and therefore also their homes, of which we know little, are distributed across the city in a uniform and fragmented way.