1. Title
Does internal migration spread Covid-19?

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3. Abstract:
How do viruses spread in a country? In this paper I study the role of internal migration in spreading a virus. In Italy (as in other places), Covid-19 hit first Milan and its region, Lombardy. Since this is the economic center of the country, it has the highest number of internal immigrants. Internal immigrants tend to a particularly fragile component of the population: on a personal level, they often have part of their family left in their hometowns; on a financial level, they often engage in low skilled occupations with temporary (or no) contract. A prominent example of these activities are those bars, restaurants and cafes subject first to gradual restrictions, and later to full closure by the authorities. Hence, it seems reasonable to expect that Covid restrictions generated a negative economic shocks that was especially hard for this subgroup, which in turn might have generated problems to cover basically expenses like the rent. Covid restrictions to movement of people might also have hit internal migrants the hardest, because they are the ones with part of their families in their hometowns. Hence, we predict that Covid restrictions constitute a strong incentive for internal migrants to go back to their hometowns, at least temporarily. In turn, we speculate that such return migration might have had an important role in spreading the virus from the epicenter of the contagion to the rest of the country. This seems especially likely since a key feature of Covid-19 is to leave the majority of infected people asymptomatic. To test whether migrants really spread the virus, I am using panel data for Italian administrative units. For identification, I exploit cross-sectional variation in number of migrants to the epicenter of the contagion and time-variation in quarantine measures. Preliminary results suggests that migrants did increase contagion and deaths associated with the virus.

4. Data description
Panel at the administrative unit - day level for Italy.
Covid-19 number of deaths and infected people at the unit-day level.
Migration and various controls at the unit level.

5. JEL codes for the project
I18; R23; O15.

6. Key-words
Covid-19; internal migration; spreading of contagion; public health.