

Jonas Casper

Munich Graduate School of Economics

Primary Field:	International Trade
Secondary Fields:	Spatial/ Urban Economics
Research Topics:	Firm Heterogeneity, Productivity, Development, Competition, Agglomeration

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REFERENCES

Carsten Eckel LMU Munich Ludwigstr. 28 80539 Munich carsten.eckel@econ.lmu.de	Claudia Steinwender LMU Munich Ludwigstr. 33 80539 Munich claudia.steinwender@econ.lmu.de	Lei Li University of Goettingen Heinrich-Düker-Weg 14 37073 Goettingen lei.li@uni-goettingen.de
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EDUCATION

2021–2026 (expected)	Ph.D. Economics	LMU Munich
2019–2021	M.Sc. Economics	University of Mannheim
2015–2019	B.Sc. Economics	University of Goettingen

JOB MARKET PAPER

[Unproductive Exporters](#) latest version

Canonical trade models predict that only the most productive firms export, yet in developing economies a significant share of exporters are among the least productive. This paper shows these firms often sell almost exclusively abroad ("only-exporters"), a phenomenon that can mute or reverse expected productivity gains from trade. I establish three stylized facts using cross-country and Chinese firm-level data: (i) only-exporters comprise roughly one-fifth of all exporters; (ii) they emerge from large, low-income countries with intense domestic competition and serve smaller, richer, less competitive foreign markets; and (iii) they are among the least productive firms. A trade model with non-homothetic preferences rationalizes this with an "exporting to escape" mechanism: intense domestic competition or low local income pushes the least productive firms to serve more favorable foreign markets. Using China's WTO accession as a quasi-natural experiment, I show liberalization increased the prevalence and market share of these low-productivity firms. This reallocation toward the economy's least productive segment muted, and in some industries reversed, expected aggregate productivity gains. The findings show that trade integration's effects are conditional on country characteristics and can cause aggregate productivity and welfare to decouple.

OTHER WORKING PAPERS

[Export Induced Spatial Divergence](#)

(with [Lei Li](#) and [Jinfeng Luo](#))

How does export liberalization affect firm location choice and the spatial concentration of economic activity? We address these questions using the geo-coordinates of Chinese manufacturing firms and find that export widens inter-city and intra-city spatial disparities by reinforcing initially large industry centers. We first show that there has been an increased spatial concentration across cities in response to improved foreign market access. Only industry city pairs that were large initially increase their employment density following trade liberalization. Second, there has also been an increased spatial concentration within cities. For a given industry, districts closer to city centers are getting denser, mainly driven by the extensive margin. Third, the above effects are not exclusive to industries directly exposed to export shocks but also spill over positively to upstream and downstream industries and negatively to industries competing for the same workers locally.

WORK IN PROGRESS

From Access to Exit: Roads, Rural De-Industrialization, and Divergence

Policymakers invest in transport infrastructure to integrate lagging regions, yet empirical evidence often shows divergence, contradicting theoretical predictions. Standard Quantitative Spatial Models (QSM) predict convergence as integration weakens the main trade-dependent agglomeration force (market access), while dispersion is trade-independent. This paper introduces a "Specialization Force", a trade-dependent mechanism that strengthens agglomeration as trade costs fall. I build a two-sector QSM with manufacturing agglomeration economies. Here, falling trade costs trigger specialization, reinforcing core manufacturing agglomeration and causing peripheral reverse structural transformation. The model yields a unique spatial equilibrium. Net divergence occurs if this Specialization Force overwhelms weakening market-access benefits, an outcome dependent on relative force strengths and network structure. I test the mechanisms empirically using data on China's National Expressway System.

Scale, Efficiency, Location: The Pollution Exposure Effect of Trade

(with [Lei Li](#) and [Jinfeng Luo](#))

PRESENTATIONS

2025	23rd GEP/CEPR Annual Postgraduate Conference (Nottingham), VfS Annual Meeting (Cologne), 26th Göttingen International Economics Workshop
2024	ETSG Athens, 25th Göttingen International Economics Workshop
2023	12th European Meeting of the Urban Economics Association, 6th Workshop on International Economic Networks (WIEN), ETSG Surrey, 24th Göttingen International Economics Workshop
2022	23rd Göttingen International Economics Workshop

TEACHING

2021–2025	27 Bachelor Thesis	Supervisor
2025	Bachelor Seminar "International Trade and Labor Markets"	Teaching Assistant
2024–2025	Macroeconomics for non-econ Bachelors (GVWL2)	Teaching Assistant
2024	Bachelor Seminar "International Trade Policy"	Teaching Assistant
2024	Bachelor Seminar "International Trade & Market Power"	Teaching Assistant
2023	Bachelor Seminar "International Trade & Productivity"	Teaching Assistant
2023	Bachelor Seminar "Traders in Trade"	Teaching Assistant
2022	Bachelor Seminar "International Trade & Regional Disparities"	Teaching Assistant

WORK EXPERIENCE

2019–2021	Research Assistant, Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW), Mannheim
2018	Research Assistant, University of Goettingen, Chairs of Statistics and Econometrics
2016, 2018–2019	Teaching Assistant, University of Goettingen, Math for Economics; Econometrics

Last updated: November 2025