Abstract:
Studies on protests, demonstrations, strikes and other forms of social unrest in China overwhelmingly study the phenomenon from a micro perspective. Little is known about how protests in China are distributed temporally and spatially, which grievances they address, how many people they involve and how likely they are to meet with repression. Drawing on a dataset of 74,452 protests distributed all over China, Christian Göbel provides in this talk insights into these issues. The results show that as a tendency, protests in China are widespread, staged by (migrant) workers, and occur in waves that peak at Chinese New Year, when migrants return home. Another noteworthy phenomenon is a steep increase in protests by homeowners. This means that protests by members of the middle class are on the rise, which should worry the authorities. Protests against land grabs and evictions are less frequent than the literature on these issues suggests, and have been declining in recent years relative to protests motivated by other grievances. Environmental protests are few and far between. Most protests aim for financial compensation, but not for substantive rights, and involve less than 30 persons. Repression is especially likely where small, homogeneous groups of people are involved, examples in case being farmers, hawkers, and the victims of medical mistakes.