

**Abstract David Strömberg's presentation at the DENEb seminar series**

**on Feb. 21st, 2019**

*Social media and protests in China*

Because of lacking public information, collective action events are hard to organize in autocracies. We study whether the explosive growth of social media in China 2009-2013 affected protests and strikes. Over these years, Sina Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter grew from none to 500 million registered users. In previous work, we have shown that Sina Weibo contains millions of posts discussing protests and strikes, some with explicit calls for participation in collective action events. Here, we provide evidence that social media changed how collective action events spread across cities. Based on retweet information, we construct a network of information flows across cities. We develop a difference-in-difference methodology to estimate the impact of network interactions. We find that events start to spread across cities that are more closely connected through the social media network after the introduction of Sina Weibo. Further, we find that social media network increased the incidence of strikes and protests, using a difference-in-difference specification leveraging the gradual penetration of Weibo use across cities due to factors such as pre-existing mobile phone use.