ABOUT THE TALK
Since the neoliberal restructuration in the 1970s, the urban world has become increasingly unequal. Under the force of what Sassen calls “expulsion,” many, including Chinese rural migrants, are pushed to the urban fringes and the informal sectors. In response, resistance and life strategies in the form of occupying/squatting have risen. For example, the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011 became a strong symbolic act of reclaiming space by the disadvantaged and exploited. However, Chinese migrant workers have adopted a strategy of “venturing,” which is the opposite of occupying. In urban villages, rural migrants don’t squat and don’t see themselves as squatters. If squatting/occupying means “sedimentation” and moving in the direction of permanent settlement, then venturing signifies mobility, uncertainty and unpredictability. In mobility, rural migrants as “venturers” see possibilities for new socio-spatial relations, agencies, materiality, and even structure. This talk explores the migrant culture of venturing and the cultural logic of labor mobility in the informal sector.