

Tongzhi Solidarity under Chinese Authoritarian Government: A Case Study of the Beijing Tongzhi Center

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Introduction

Non-normative sexualities have constantly been regarded as perverse and threatening to the public order, yet they have gained global recognition since the 2000s. In 2006, human rights experts from all over the world gathered in Yogyakarta, Indonesia where the Yogyakarta Principles which apply International Human Rights Law in relation to SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) were outlined. LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) rights have thereafter been recognized as a significant part of human rights on a global scale. As if answering the call of the Yogyakarta Principles, since the late 2000s, LGBT movements proliferated not only in countries with a tradition of protecting human rights, but also in those that have long been criticized for going against human rights in Africa, East and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.

However, since LGBT as an umbrella term refers to non-normative sexual identities that are posited within discursive social structures and historical contexts, the LGBT or queer movement is constantly confronted with internal disputes that threaten its solidarity. It seems that on a global scale, LGBT activism as a form of identity movement is entering the “unavoidable stage of solidarity resolution” in social movements defined by Gitlin (1995: 159–166).

Similar development is seen in mainland China. In the Chinese speaking world, *Tongzhi* (同志), which means comrades in the Chinese language, is widely used as an umbrella term referring to all non-normative sexualities.⁽¹⁾ Although homosexuality has been regarded as a challenge to the public order in Communist China, official discourse saw significant changes in the late 1990s, with the repeal of the Hooliganism Law that criminalized male homosexual conduct in 1997, and the removal of homosexuality from the official list of mental disorders in 2001. The *Tongzhi* social movement and related social organizations have also proliferated since the 1990s.

However, like its international counterparts, the *Tongzhi* movement witnessed certain internal disputes. Toyama (2015) argues that the disputes facing the Chinese *Tongzhi* movement are centered around two debates: 1) the debate between gay activism and lesbian activism over male-centrism; and 2) the debate between feminist activists and queer activists over the ignorance of queer women in grassroots feminist activism that proliferated in the 2010s. Specifically, debates/discussion in regard to *Tong-xing-lian* (同性恋) — which means homosexuality in Chinese — in the public domain emerged in response to the government’s focus on the AIDs (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) pandemic since the early 1990s. As a con-

sequence, the leaders and most resourceful actors of the *Tongzhi* movement were mainly organizations working within and for gay communities, which led to the exclusion of lesbian activism from the male dominated gay/AIDs movement. Even after the 2010s, when local feminist activists started to gain global attention and successfully brought issues of sexuality to the public domain, the predominant focus on institutionalization and the exclusion of minority female communities (queer, bisexual, transgender and so on) led to ongoing disputes with “the institutionalists”.⁽²⁾

Unlike its globalized counterparts, and despite past and ongoing disputes among activists, the Chinese *Tongzhi* movement tolerated such turbulence relatively intact. The most illustrative example is the establishment of LGBT centers aimed at working towards a discursive and collective *Tongzhi* community since the late 2000s. The most representative of these is the first LGBT center in China, the Beijing LGBT Center (北京同志中心), which was founded in 2008 and will hereafter be referred to as the Beijing *Tongzhi* Center.⁽³⁾

This paper focuses on solidarity in Chinese *Tongzhi* activism, aiming to provide clarity in regard to its formation and background. In the 1980s, facing the outbreak of the AIDs crisis, the US government’s inaction catalyzed solidarity among gay and lesbian activists. In academia, queer studies departing from the 1990s have continuously focused on the formation of such solidarity — which transcends identity politics in the political context of the US — and its recursive resolution (Kawaguchi, 2003: 51–67; Duggan, 2003: 43–67). China also experienced a similar AIDs crisis from the late 1980s to the ’90s. However, this crisis did not contribute to solidarity in local lesbian and gay activism; instead, it caused disputes over unequal movement resource distribution amongst lesbian and gay organizations (Toyama, 2015: 170). In other words, unlike the situation in the US, instead of catalyzing a Chinese version of queer solidarity, the AIDs crisis sowed the seeds of division in the *Tongzhi* movement (ibid.). If this is the case, how and from what aspects can Chinese *Tongzhi* solidarity — e.g. the establishment of the Beijing *Tongzhi* Center — be explained? Furthermore, against the background of the drastic and rapid economic and societal changes since the 1990s, what strategies have the *Tongzhi* movement adopted?

Research has scarcely been conducted on the Chinese *Tongzhi* movement in academia.⁽⁴⁾ Therefore, to answer these questions, fieldwork and twenty semi-structural interviews were conducted. The fieldwork focused on one of the biggest community centers for the all-inclusive *Tongzhi* communities in mainland China: the Beijing *Tongzhi* Center. It was divided into three periods of fifteen-days each, from March 2016 to March 2017. Access to the field was provided by the current Center Director who preferred to be addressed by her pseudonym Xiao Tie (小铁) which she uses in activist scenes. Data collected during this fieldwork includes photographs, field notes and recordings of meetings provided with the participants’ consent. Semi-structural interviews were conducted with all of the five core staff members of the Center, four out of five founders of the Center, and five out of three-hundred volunteers who most frequently partici-

pated in the events of the Center.⁽⁵⁾ Furthermore, six activists introduced by Xiao Tie were also involved in the interviews.⁽⁶⁾ All interviews were conducted in Mandarin, and subsequently transcribed and translated into English by the author.

This paper first traces the establishment of the Center, the relationship of its five founder organizations, and the flow of movement resources within its network. The second section examines the development of the Center, focusing on the change of its movement strategies and subject. The third section analyzes the exclusion faced by the Center. The final section provides an event analysis of the Center.

1.0 A Community Space as Movement Resource

This section attempts to explain the formation of *Tongzhi* solidarity within the framework of resource mobilization theory. The first subsection traces the establishment of the Center, while the following discusses its *raison d'être* and positioning within the larger *Tongzhi* movement. The final subsection analyzes how resources were mobilized within the *Tongzhi* network in the Center's establishment.

1.1 The Establishment of a Shared Community Space

The establishment of the Center was well-planned. It was established in 2008, with the first year dedicated to preparations before its opening ceremony on Valentine's Day in 2009, that occurred together with the street action Qianmen Wedding (前门婚礼). In the event, same-sex couples showed up in one of the busiest business districts located just south of Tian'anmen Square (天安门广场), the symbol of Chinese State power, garbed in wedding dresses and suits and taking pictures with the crowds. Activists and volunteers were concurrently distributing pamphlets about same-sex marriage and sexual orientations. Independent film-makers were also involved, interviewing random people on the street and using the footage for a documentary which has since been shown in both international and domestic film festivals.⁽⁷⁾ Street advocacy for *Tongzhi* rights was barely seen before the establishment of the Center. In other words, the establishment of the Center brought with it a new era for the *Tongzhi* movement in mainland China, where non-normative sexual subjects show up in public spaces under the all-inclusive *Tongzhi* banner.

The Center was proposed due to a lack of space for *Tongzhi* gatherings and activist events. Fan Popo (范坡坡), a filmmaker who produced a documentary on the Qianmen Wedding, states that:

There were several potential *Tongzhi*-friendly spaces then [in the early 2000s] in Beijing, but most of them were commercial places like bars, cafés, and restaurants. The

difficulties of holding events in these places were negotiating with owners on the price and coming up with the number of attendees we can attract. The most troubling is having to alleviate their fears over potential risks and placating them that our events wouldn't attract negative attention from the authorities. And if we can't keep our promise, it would be unlikely that there would be a next time. ⁽⁸⁾

Even the so-called *Tongzhi*-friendly spaces were cautious about collaborating with *Tongzhi* activists. Of course, this cautious attitude does not only come from the stigma of sexual minorities in the cultural domain, but also from the traumatic historical memory of the Tian'anmen Incident in 1989 when the pro-democracy movement was bloodily oppressed (Guo, in press). ⁽⁹⁾

Luke, one of the founders of the Center, explains the motivation for its establishment, and defines the Center as a "community space":

The Center is a community space where *Tongzhi* cultural events and community services take place. When a *Tongzhi* needs help, or wants to make friends, they know that there is always a community space they can go to. In Beijing, there were the *Dongdan* Park (东单公园), the *Mudanyuan* Park (牡丹园), some casual groups and the Destination Club (目的地酒吧) for gays to gather. There were also online chatrooms. For lesbians, there was the female *Tongzhi* saloon (transliterated as *nü-Tongzhi sha long* 女同志沙龙) holding events in cafés. But there has not been a place where *Tongzhi* can gather, where cultural events about the *Tongzhi* identity could be held. We had meetings proposing the opening of the Center, and we all agreed that we needed such a space where *Tongzhi*, regardless of being gay, lesbian, or transgender can enter freely. Of course, this idea was inspired by foreign examples, like the LGBT Centers in the US. ⁽¹⁰⁾

In fact, there was no lack of gathering spaces for gays and lesbians in Beijing. However, the parks where gay males gather were constantly under surveillance by the police and surrounding public. ⁽¹¹⁾ For lesbians, the problems of laborious negotiations mentioned by Fan occur when holding events in shopping malls and cafés; and most importantly, events were not held under the broad banner of *Tongzhi*, but rather based on single identities. Therefore, the Center was established as a space where:

- 1) it's primary purpose is defined as nurturing the collective *Tongzhi* identity.
- 2) community members can safely gather. ⁽¹²⁾
- 3) *Tongzhi* organizations and activists can hold events easily and regularly.
- 4) successful foreign models are adapted to local contexts.

These four features can be further understood as follows: 1) the Center is a typical model

of new social movements, which center around a collective identity and focus on the cultural domain (Gitlin, 1995: 151–159; Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 286–289);⁽¹³⁾ 2) the most significant movement strategy of the Center is to nurture an all-inclusive *Tongzhi* community — the security of *Tongzhi* solidarity; 3) the Center was established as a solution to the lack of space for *Tongzhi* gatherings and activist events — the production and securing of a shared space resource; 4) the establishment of the Center was defined as a process of localizing foreign models — a proposal to build overseas linkages and access to overseas resources against the backdrop where local, especially financial, resources were restricted, as will be argued in the following section.



Photograph 1.1 The Community Space of the Beijing *Tongzhi* Center⁽¹⁴⁾

1.2 The Movement Resource Cartel

Tongzhi solidarity, in the case of the Center, was not only realized through obtaining the resource of space, but also through gaining financial and political resources. Though it is not widely known within the *Tongzhi* community, the interview with the Center Director, and the new staff training record, all indicate that the Center was proposed and established by five organizations from distinctive issue areas through which financial and political resources were shared.

- 1) The Beijing Aizhixing Institute of Health Education (BAIHE 北京爱知行健康教育研究所) and its leader Wan Yanhai (万延海). BAIHE was founded in 1994. It was one of the most influential AIDs organizations, obtaining the government's official recognition before Wan and BAIHE were accused of releasing information on AIDs villages to foreign media, which led to the crackdown on the organization and Wan's escape from China in 2010.⁽¹⁵⁾
- 2) The Common Language (同语) and its leader Xian (闲). The Common Language is an organization working on *Lala* (拉拉) (lesbian, bisexual and transgender women) issues, and was

founded in 2005. Its founder and leader Xian graduated with a master's degree in the US before coming back to China in the early 2000s. She used to volunteer for BAIHE before founding the Common Language. ⁽¹⁶⁾

- 3) The magazine *Les+* and one of its leaders Sam. The *Les+* is a magazine on *Lala* culture and empowerment founded in 2005. Its leader Sam is a veteran local lesbian activist. ⁽¹⁷⁾
- 4) The magazine *Gay Spot* (乐点) and its leader Luke. The *Gay Spot* is a magazine focusing on the gay community and culture started from 2007. Its leader and founder Luke used to be a full-time employee in BAIHE, and the magazine was also a project owned by BAIHE before 2008. ⁽¹⁸⁾
- 5) The Aibai Culture and Education Center (ACEC 爱白文化教育中心) and its leader Jiang Hui (江晖). It is an organization founded in 1999 as an online information platform for the gay communities and activism. It was registered in the US in 2004 for the purpose of financially supporting the domestic Chinese *Tongzhi* activism through channeling foreign resources to China.

These five organizations focus on different issue areas, but based on their movement strategies they can be sorted into two groups: 1) the issue-based AIDs activism; and 2) the identity movements (Gitlin, 1995: 159–165), or movements based on identity politics. The issue-based AIDs activism (e.g. BAIHE) has better access to governmental resources, but less autonomy in holding cultural events such as community building and anti-discrimination. Movements based on identity politics (e.g. the Common Language, *Les+*, *Gay Spot* and ACEC) focus on the cultural domain, aim at eliminating the discriminative aspects in mainstream culture, but due to their distance from AIDs issues, especially in the case of lesbian organizations, have limited or nonexistent access to official resources (Engebresten, 2015; Kam, 2013: 19–38).

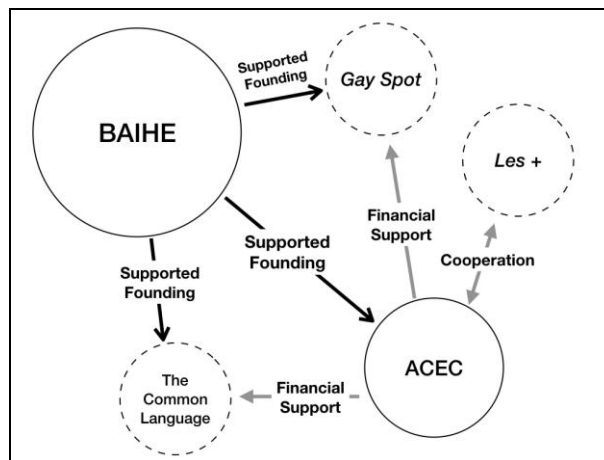


Figure 1.1 The Relationship between the Center's Founder Organizations ⁽¹⁹⁾

Therefore, in regard to movement resources, the issue-based AIDS organizations such as BAIHE have distributed the most resources and possess the most autonomy in using those resources, making BAIHE the most significant sponsor in the establishment of identity-based *Tongzhi* organizations. In fact, even among all the five founding organizations of the Center, BAIHE single-handedly supported the other four organizations (Figure 1.1).

The CPC's attitude as manifested in the civil registration system designed for social organizations explains the accumulation of movement resources to the AIDS organizations. One of the underlying factors is the Tian'anmen incident of 1989. The incident marked the start of the authorities' cautious dealings with social movements (Guo, in press). Social organizations are required to obtain civil registration (民政注册) in order to carry out public events legally.⁽²⁰⁾ Civil registration also allows social organizations to gain access to government funds, apply for state-backed projects, and even officially represent China in international conferences.

However, most social organizations are excluded from such benefits. According to Ma (2002), Hildebrandt (2013) and Li (2012), this exclusion derives from the double-bind on social organizations: every social organization must find an available affiliated institution (挂靠单位) to be eligible as an applicant for civil registration; the process is simultaneously overlooked by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA 民政局). In fact, the government's cautious attitude toward social organizations after 1989 significantly affected those affiliated institutions: no affiliated institution would risk attracting attention from the government should they take responsibility for any social organizations, especially controversial ones like *Tongzhi*, against a backdrop where grassroots social organizations are defined as being potentially destructive to social stability.

However, the outbreak of the AIDS pandemic in the early 1990s required the government to loosen regulations on gay organizations, which could be attributed to the difficulties the government encountered in reaching local gay and bisexual male communities (Hildebrandt 2013: 90–94). It was thus easier for social organizations which were not endorsed by the government, especially non-political public health organizations, to approach gay and bisexual male communities. The authorities gave these gay and bisexual male organizations more legitimacy to have better control over the disease.⁽²¹⁾ A linkage between AIDS organizations and gay organizations was thus built, and the giant AIDS organizations started to pay attention to gay issues, and to building connections with gay organizations.⁽²²⁾ BAIHE is the most influential and illustrative of such organizations.

In the early 2000s, BAIHE demonstrated its devotion to grassroots *Tongzhi* activism by channeling both governmental and overseas resources it obtained by way of its political legitimacy. With civil registration, BAIHE claims easier access to and autonomy in using resources. In contrast, the *Tongzhi* organizations that do not specialize in AIDS-related issues were denied access to such resources. Therefore, to support the founding and operation of those *Tongzhi* organizations, BAIHE actively channeled financial resources it obtained from both state-backed

and international projects.

Therefore, it is valid to state that:

- 1) Political legitimacy (i.e. civil registration) is the most significant factor affecting the viability of social organizations and activism in China.
- 2) The strategy of identity movements, identity politics, is secured by issue-based movement resources in China. In other words, BAIHE's channeling of the financial resources from the official AIDs fund — which was defined to be used only in tackling the AIDs pandemic — to the *Tongzhi*-identity based activism promoted the change of the *Tongzhi* movement's strategy toward *Tongzhi* identity politics.

1.3 Encountering Globalized LGBT Activism

Solidarity between issued-based AIDs organizations and identity-based grassroots *Tongzhi* organizations was also built on their mutual need for cooperation. As for the former, AIDs organizations were inspired by the global trend of queer solidarity; and as for the latter, grassroots identity-based *Tongzhi* organizations needed support in terms of both financial resources and experience in organization.

The scope of the AIDs movement was expanded to include *Lala* grassroots organizations after Wan attended international meetings where he encountered the trend of forming solidarity amongst LGBT communities in global AIDs activism. Luke, a former staff in BAIHE, elaborated that:

One of the most urgent and important targets for BAIHE was to promote the development of the local grassroots communities. But since BAIHE was registered as an AIDs organization, it was limited in many aspects. Wan Yanhai then decided to transfer resources to ACEC and the Common Language which were still in their infancy. Wan Yanhai made this decision also in the light of the global trend of developing LGBT grassroots groups and forming solidarity between AIDs and LGBT movements, which he saw at international conferences.⁽²³⁾

The gay and bisexual male communities and alleged MMS (male-male sexual intercourse) groups have always been associated with AIDs globally, especially in the '80s and '90s. Chinese AIDs organizations have worked with these gay organizations closely, while ignoring lesbian and transgender issues due to their comparative disinterest in AIDs issues. In fact, grassroots, identity-based *Tongzhi* organizations were clearly not a good fit for Chinese AIDs organizations against a backdrop of strict management pertaining to issue areas. However, as stated in the above interview, queer solidarity established in the US during the '80s AIDs crisis

was influential in Chinese AIDs activism, leading to their focus on the *Tongzhi* identity.

Nevertheless, without the cooperation of the *Tongzhi* identity-based organizations, especially *Lala* organizations, this solidarity would not have been realized. Xian, the leader of the Common Language, joined the lesbian movement in the US when she was abroad in the early 2000s. She approached BAIHE and became a volunteer after her experience with activism in the US, seeking to promote local Chinese lesbian activism.⁽²⁴⁾ The accumulation of resources and legitimacy within a few particular organizations provided few options for *Lala* activists, and they had little choice but to establish connections with bigger AIDs organizations. For the activists, who were not familiar with the local context in China, the hyper-visibility of BAIHE made it the only legitimate partner.

In conclusion, this section argues that the Beijing *Tongzhi* Center functions as a community space that is itself a resource shared by the various sexual minority communities and activists freely. In the case of mainland China, as stated in the introduction, queer solidarity that transcends identity politics built during the AIDs crisis in the US in the '80s did not emerge. This goes to confirm that Chinese *Tongzhi* solidarity cannot be explained by the existing frameworks of queer solidarity in queer studies. On the other hand, studies on collective action and social movements have changed focus from why such actions happen to how such actions happen (Kawakita, 2004: 55). Among all the theories explaining how such actions happen, resource mobilization theories evaluate the agency of social movement actors, arguing that social movements take place when the actors strategically calculate and mobilize various crucial resources (ibid.).

The securing of *Tongzhi* solidarity through the establishment of the Center can be explained from three aspects: 1) the lack of gathering spaces caused by the exclusive culture in society and the government's restrictive management of social organizations; 2) the resource accumulation of AIDs organizations and the channeling of such resources to grassroots organizations in line with the global trend of queer solidarity; 3) the grassroots organizations' lack of resources caused by the accumulation of resources by AIDs organizations.

2.0 The Changing Form of *Tongzhi* Solidarity

The Center has experienced crucial changes throughout its development since 2008. This section examines the changes in its subject, strategies and operation method. Through this, the section analyzes how these changes were made possible, attempting to grasp the overall trend of the *Tongzhi* movement.

The development of the Center is summarized in Table 2.1. In this table, "Strategies" refer to the movement and mobilization strategies the Center has adopted during certain periods of time; "Center Directors" and "Number of Full-Time Staff" are listed in order to look at the

change of the subject of the Center and the movement; and “Supervisor Organizations” are noted to find out how the Center was operated: independently or under the supervision of other organizations.

Year	Strategies	Center Directors	Number of Full-Time Staff	Supervisor Organization	
2008	Public advocacy, raising visibility of the community in society.	Luo Meng (骆勳) (Gay male)	Less than 3	Preparation aided by five founder organizations	
2009				Under the supervision of the Common Language	
2010	Forming oversea linkages, probing for institutionalization.				
2011					
2012					
2013		Stephan (Gay male, US citizen)		Preparation for independent operation	
2014	Mobilizing social elites, especially in academia and (mental) medication.				
2015	Forming linkages with business elites for donation, actively seeking for financial resources.	Xiao Tie (小铁) (Lala)	Around 9	Complete independence	
2016					Expanding the scope of community building
					Forming linkages with academic elites for human resources.
2017	Improve and professionalize the managerial system, stabilize community services, expanding the pool of donation.				

Table 2.1 The Development of the Center ⁽²⁵⁾

2.1 Changes in Strategies

From the perspective of resource mobilization, the change of the Center’s resource providers can be summarized as “governmental — international — local society.” At the earlier developmental stage of the Center, the movement focused on street advocacy and connections

within the broader *Tongzhi* community. For example, the Qianmen Wedding mentioned in section 1.1 aimed at raising the visibility of the *Tongzhi* community. Another example of direct negotiation is the case in which, in 2008, individual activist Fan Popo, with the help from the Beijing Tongzhi Center, sent a petition to the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (国家广播电视总局) calling for the abolishment of media censorship of homosexual movies. At this stage, the targets of mobilization were mainly the government, and resources were channeled from the government to grassroots organizations.

From 2010, the Center started to focus on forging international linkages. For example, it officially became one of the sister centers of the Los Angeles LGBT Center in 2010; a visiting program to the LA LGBT Center with LGBT Center operation training commenced since then.⁽²⁶⁾ Furthermore, the Center welcomed its first foreign director in 2013.⁽²⁷⁾

The restriction of AIDs activism in the 2010s played a crucial role in this change from dependency on channeled governmental resources to international funds. In 2010, Wan Yanhai escaped from China after a clampdown on his organization, BAIHE, by the Chinese authorities after investigations pointed out its association with human rights lawyers and the release of information on the AIDs villages in Henan Province to the international community.⁽²⁸⁾ With the crackdown on BAIHE, the channeling of financial resource from the government was thus rendered ineffective. This left the international connections built with BAIHE's help the only possible route for obtaining resources.

After 2014, the focus of advocacy has changed from establishing links with the global community to domestic academic, medical and business elites. For example, in 2014, the Center co-issued *A Report on Chinese LGBT Mental Health* with the Chinese Academy of Sciences (中国科学院) which is the CPC's official science research institute. The Center started providing lectures on sexual orientations and gender identity for numerous companies in China. Finally, it has also started to organize an end-of-year gala annually with various local companies for fundraising.

In 2017, the scope of fundraising has been expanded to the public. Tencent (腾讯), one of the most influential information technology companies in China, provided an opportunity and platform for crowd funding for social organizations to collect donations online during a three-day period between September 7 to September 9, 2017. Since Tencent didn't set any requirements for participant organizations, the Center actively joined the event, and successfully collected 157,125.33 Renminbi (around ¥2,686,299 converted by the author on October 29, 2017).⁽²⁹⁾

The return to local sites for the provision of resources could be related to the enactment of the *Law on Administration over the Activities of Overseas Non-Governmental Organizations* (境外非政府组织境内活动管理法) in 2016 and its preparation since the early 2010s. The law aims at putting overseas NGOs under the CPC's control, which had been absent from the legal system. The resource flow from international organizations to domestic ones has thus been restricted. In such an environment, actively accumulating resources from the local society is

strategically necessary for the development of the Center.

On the other hand, the changing trends of resource mobilization strategies also indicate that the focus of the movement has shifted from the issue of AIDs to the *Tongzhi* identity — from working within the government’s framework to the public cultural domain through the mobilization of social elites.

Therefore, it is concluded that the strategy change indicates:

- 1) The target of resource mobilization has shifted from official institutions to the local public — from the government and international funds to donations from the surrounding communities. This change is significant where, historically, the movement depended on institutional recognition backed by the authorities and international funds (Hildebrandt, 2013: 25–37). With the ability to actively mobilize the surrounding communities for sustainable resources, it is safe to say that the autonomy — not only from the government, but also from international funds — of the movement will be enhanced.
- 2) The focus of the movement has moved from a single issue to identity politics. This change must be understood within the post-economic reform context in China. Susan Mann (2011/2015: 110–115) argues that economic reform has promoted the proliferation of discourses regarding sexualities through the remapping of the private and the public in China. Rofel (2007: 150–156) echoes Mann’s argument, but specifically focuses on how the promotion of the market economy and cosmopolitanism values nurtured the modern gay identity in China. With the emergence of associating sexuality with one’s identity, *Tongzhi* started to be regarded as an identity issue instead of a public health issue.

2.2 Change in Movement Subjects

Studies conducted on LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) movements and activism in queer theories have mostly criticized the gay male-centrism in the movement, linking it to the recursive resolution of queer solidarity (Duggan, 2003; Engebresten, 2015; Kam, 2013). As Toyama (2015: 170) states, Chinese lesbian and gay activism has experienced similar divisive disputes. However, he focused on activism in the ’90s, when social organizations were restricted to divisive issues and *Tongzhi* identities were not widely accepted by the local society (ibid.). As a model of re-established solidarity after the ’90s dispute, the intended movement subjects of the Center changed from gay men to *Lala* and even minority groups. This disposition is demonstrated through the following (Table 2.1):

- 1) The Center Directors have changed from gay male to *Lala*.
- 2) The Center staff changed from mostly male to mostly female. Before 2014, when the Center only had three staff, two of them were male; however, in 2017, among the five on-site staff, only one of them is male.

3) The Center was under the supervision of a *Lala* organization, the Common Language, in its first four years.

In the case of the Center, the selection of leaders and staff depends on the procurement of movement resources. At an earlier stage, where AIDs organizations were the most influential and resourceful, a leader well-versed in AIDs activism — and the gay community — was expected. This also explains the foreign director who was hired to contribute to the reservation of overseas connections. After BAIHE's crackdown, and the stabilization of the AIDs pandemic, resources directed to AIDs organizations decreased, and their legitimacy was reduced. Instead, *Lala* organizations, which did not focus on AIDs issues, possessed more opportunities in regard to various social issues that are associated with the *Tongzhi* identity. The *Lala* organizations' wide connections, established as they formed solidarity with the AIDs organizations during their infancy, further added to their leading position in the movement after the 2010s.

2.3 Independency and Professionalization

The identity and philosophy of the leader plays a significant role in affecting a Chinese social organization's strategic focus (Li, 2012). The Center became independent from the Common Language in 2013, when Stephan was hired as Center Director. This was also the start of the Center's refinement of organizational management, or in other words, its professionalization (Table 2.1). Stephan had worked for an overseas NGO on environmental issues in China before joining the Center (Common Language, 2015a). His experience in a professional NGO deeply influenced its working style.

During the process of professionalization, the Center's strategic focus was developed from street advocacy like the Qianmen Wedding to routine events and services for various communities. Some events and activities have been made regular — at least once a month — to provide service and empowerment whenever it is necessary. Based on the events the Center held in the period from March 2016 to September 2017, I summarized routine activities in Table 2.2.

According to Luke, the Center was established for the purposes of community building and providing space for *Tongzhi* activism. According to Xiao Tie, however, it is still far from enough to support the community in many aspects.⁽³⁰⁾ Therefore, regular events are held for community building and mobilization. Community building provides spaces and opportunities for *Tongzhi* to gather. As Li (2012: 201–205) illustrates, nurturing a sense of belonging to the community is significant in advocacy in China. Mobilization aims at disseminating information about the movement, the sharing of experiences in the *Tongzhi* community (e.g. Dining Out), and securing connections among the *Tongzhi* organizations (e.g. Xiao Tie's Tea House) and with the local elites (LGBT-Friendly Consultant Training).

Strategy	Event Type	Event Name
Community Building	Community Gathering	Queer Talk (基姬歪歪)
		Rainbow Outdoor (彩虹户外)
		Lala House Party (拉拉别墅趴)
		Home Party for Gay (Gay 版轰趴)
		Rainbow Board Games (彩虹桌游)
		Lala's Night (拉拉之夜)
		Dance Workshop (舞动工作坊)
	Cultural Events	English Corner (英语角)
		Movie Night / Queer As Folk (电影私享会 / 同志亦凡人)
		LGBTalk (彩虹说)
		Stage Play Workshop (心理剧工作坊)
		Rainbow Saloon (彩虹沙龙)
		Rainbow Lecture (彩虹讲堂)
Mobilizations	Connection with Elites	Dining Out
		LGBT-Friendly Consultant Training (友善咨询师培训)
	Community Empowerment	Law Saloon (法律沙龙)
		Xiao Tie's Tea House (小铁茶室)
		Tongzhi Movement Weekly (同运星期)
		Rainbow Violence Shelter (彩虹暴力终结所)

Table 2.2 Routine Events Held at the Center⁽³¹⁾

As these events became more frequent, the need for manpower and administrative capacity increased, leading to the gradual increase of the number of staff from three to nine in 2014 (Table 2.1). Alongside this, the Center had three hundred volunteers in 2017.

Various departments were also founded in the 2010s. Besides the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) testing program started in 2009, the Center also founded a department for psychological counseling in 2010, and a department for transgender issues in 2015. The latter was in fact the first organized group for transgender issues in Beijing. The focus on transgender communities indicates that the Center's scope of the *Tongzhi* identity has been expanded to include minority identities.

Without professional management, the Center would not have been able to establish *Tongzhi* solidarity. Professionalization provided the Center with the ability to hold regular events and sustain independent departments. The regular events nurture the sense of belonging to the *Tongzhi* community which in turn reaffirms *Tongzhi* solidarity. Moreover, expanding the scope of outreach may provide the movement with more options and alternatives in case any of the Center's focal areas face intervention by the authorities.

In conclusion, this section traces the history of the events, activities and operation

methods of the Center since its founding. First, it is argued that the Center's strategies changed from public advocacy, mostly used in AIDs activism, to community empowerment centered on the *Tongzhi* identity. Furthermore, instead of international foundations and NGOs, resources were provided by local businesses and elites as an adaption to the overall political and economic environment. Second, the movement subject has changed from gay males to *Lala*, and this reclamation of women's agency should be evaluated within a historical context which favored—and was dominated by—gay males. Finally, the professionalization of management may provide the movement with an enhanced sustainability compared to the grassroots strategies adopted in the 1990s, which predominantly depended on AIDs-related resources that limited the autonomy of the movement.

3.0 Challenges from Social Governance

The institutional restrictions in China contributed to the formation of *Tongzhi* solidarity. However, such a heavily regulated environment is not only influenced by ambiguous law and laborious administrative procedures, but also by the surrounding society, especially after the CPC's proposal of "Social Governance (社会治理)" in 2012.

This section analyzes the negotiations between the Center and its neighbors to uncover how the *Tongzhi* space is excluded not only by the authorities but also by society.

At the time of writing, the Center is located next to the Northeast 2nd Ring Road of Beijing. It is close to where foreign embassies are located, and north of the Beijing and CPC's central government departments and offices; it is also fifteen minutes' drive away from the Central Business District. The location and surrounding areas are shown in Figure 3.1, and the building where the Center's office is located is shown in Photograph 3.1.

In fact, besides the Center, numerous social organizations and non-governmental foundations own offices in the same building. Among these are, for example, the Beijing Gender Health Education Institute (北京纪安德健康教育咨询中心) that focuses on AIDs, the gay community and queer filmmaking, as well as the *Lala* organizations, the Common Language, and Feminist Voices (女权之声), which focuses on anti-sexual harassment. The gathering of these organizations was a decision made without much strategic planning. Xiao Tie explained that the selection of the address was mainly due to the low cost in rent and comparatively convenient location.⁽³²⁾

Finding a permanent address was tedious, and the Center changed its address twice within a month between March and April 2012. Before 2012, the Center shared an office with the Common Language in the *Xin Tian Di* Apartments (新天第大厦) next to the subway *Liufang* (柳芳) station. In March 2012, Stephan decided to relocate the office in order to expand the Center. However, not long after the move, the Center staff started to receive persistent phone calls from the landlord asking for a termination of the lease contract. After negotiations, the

Center decided to move to a different apartment back in the *Xin Tian Di* Apartments. The map of the change of address is shown in Figure 3.2.

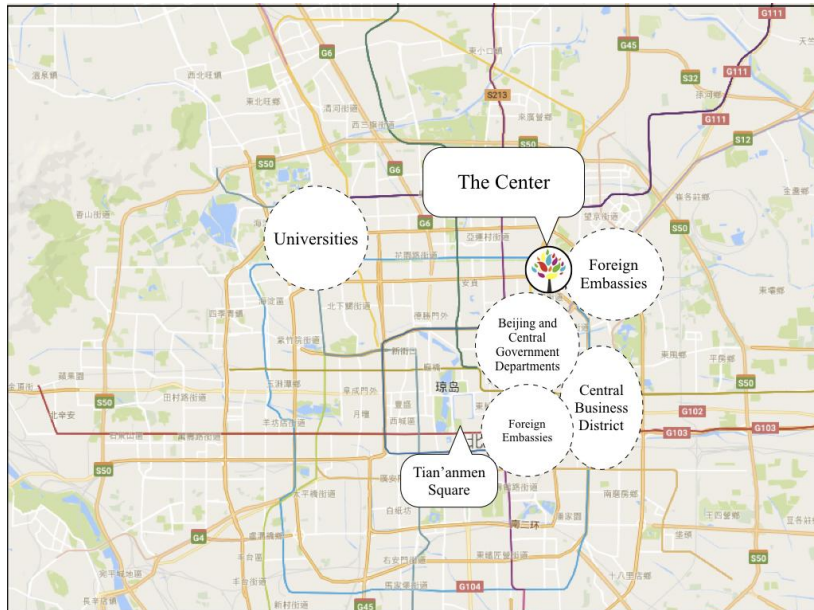
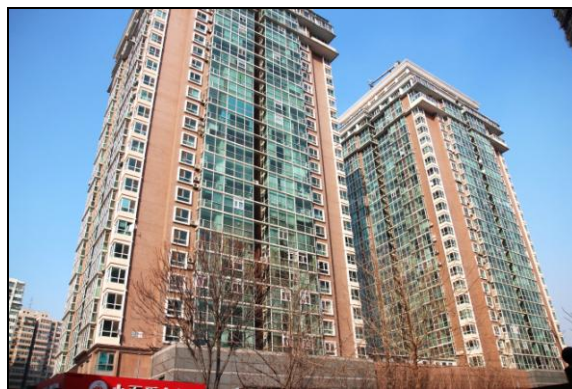


Figure 3.1 The Location of the Center and the Surrounding Areas ⁽³³⁾



Photograph 3.1 The Façade of the Building where the Center is Located ⁽³⁴⁾

Although the initial aim of the Center is to provide the community and movement with a “safe” space, this community space is not free from surveillance. In particular, the landlord sought to terminate the lease contract in March 2012 when the Center’s neighbors requested that it be relocated from their residential area claiming that the existence of a *Tongzhi* community space would be bad for the reputation of the residential area. ⁽³⁵⁾

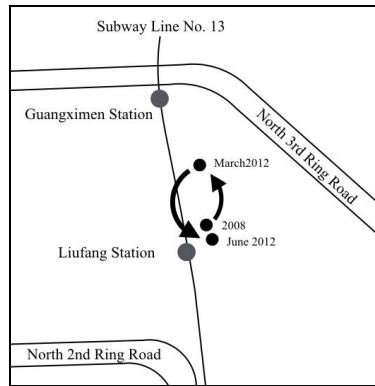


Figure 3.2 The Moving of Address of the Center⁽³⁶⁾

Although the landlord expressed that he did not mind the Center being a *Tongzhi* organization, the issue escalated. Soon after, the residential property management office, neighborhood committees and even the local police were involved. Representatives were sent to investigate the Center.

The landlord was also harassed by the neighbors for allowing the *Tongzhi* community to exist, and in one example of such behavior, they contacted the landlord's workplace after negotiations with the Center came to a standstill. Since the landlord worked for a state enterprise where such scandals were influential in determining employees' careers, the Center considered the landlord a victim in this case, thus agreeing to termination of the lease contract.

The neighbors' reasons for driving the Center away fell into three main categories: 1) that it was too noisy; 2) that it was harmful for children in the area; 3) that it was gathering too many foreigners.⁽³⁷⁾ To avoid unnecessary conflicts, the Center posts a notice asking event participants to be mindful of their volume (Photograph 3.2).



Photograph 3.2 The Sign on the Center's Door⁽³⁸⁾

When the Center received complaints, they are always represented by a third person. The

typical pattern of speech, according to Xiao Tie, is:

Someone has lodged a complaint that you are being too noisy, that you are a homosexual organization, and homosexuals mislead their children. I myself do not oppose homosexuals, but the neighbors are angry, so I think you'd better move away.⁽³⁹⁾

Although the Center does not only focus on lesbian and gay issues, the public still seems to regard them as a homosexual organization. This is due to the hyper-visibility of homosexual discourse back in the 1990s, when AIDs-related issues garnered much attention.

The emergence of these homo/transphobic neighbors needs to be understood within the shift in the CPC's governing strategy. The CPC authorities and their ambiguous laws have been criticized in studies on Chinese social organizations and censorship (Tsuchiya, 2012; Suzuki, 2017; Li, 2012: 58–66; Ma, 2002). However, the launch of Social Governance requires a rethinking of the CPC's governing strategy. One of the most significant changes brought about by Social Governance since 2012 has been the lowered requirements for social organizations' civil registration. By promoting direct registration, the need for affiliated institutions was eliminated. The CPC authorities also expressed their will to promote the recognition of social organizations.

Suzuki (2017), who conducted research analyzing legal documents, traced how these regulations and administrations were mended and newly-issued for such reforms, arguing that these changes do not actually benefit social organizations, but rather acted as further restrictions. However, he ignores that the CPC's governance does not only function through the legal system, but that mutual surveillance backed by official discourses of "moral ethics" plays a comparatively significant role in completing the governance structure. Although he argues that reformed laws and regulations in the context of Social Governance do not help the "true" proliferation of social organizations, simply placing them in opposition to the government may rationalize, or to some degree legitimize, the CPC's oppression.

Zhu (2016) reviewed and analyzed influential public events on gender and sexuality which occurred in mainland China in the 2010s, arguing that the launch of Social Governance nurtured a culture of surveillance in society where the invisible arbiters of morality police public spaces, indirectly reaffirming the legitimacy of the CPC as the voice of morality and simultaneously inspiring backlash against the gender and sexuality movement (ibid.).

In particular, the creation and legitimation of these arbiters of morality is associated with the discourse of "Moral Governance (道德治理)" that emerged in the launch of Social Governance (Zhu 2016: 123–125).⁽⁴⁰⁾ According to Xi Jinping's (习近平) speech during the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau's 37th Group Seminar (中共中央政治局第三十七次集体学习), Moral Governance refers to the securement of public morality and the encouragement of mutual surveillance to ensure that such moral standards are kept.⁽⁴¹⁾ According to Zhu (2016: 127–129), the culture of this mutual supervision was inspired by the "anti-corruption" campaign

launched on the internet, in which anonymous internet users disclose sexual scandals of CPC officials. The results were twofold: on the one hand, the CPC's swift reaction confirmed its moral and political legitimacy; on the other, the culture of mutual surveillance was, itself, given unprecedented legitimacy.

In the case of the Center, despite the fact that there is no explicit law forbidding the activities of *Tongzhi* organizations, discourses such as “mutual surveillance” and “contributing to the creation of a harmonious society” worked together to mobilize the public to participate in the maintenance of moral values, providing the Center's neighbors legitimacy to survey its activities.

In conclusion, this section attempts to explain the exclusion from the public sphere the Center faces in the context of Social Governance. The proposal of Social Governance aimed at realizing a modernized judicial system while simultaneously strengthening social mutual surveillance through appeals to the discourses of moral ethics. Although this judicial reform indeed contributed to the proliferation of social organizations, the *Tongzhi* organizations still face “moral exclusion”. In the case of the Center's failed move in 2012, it is argued that the exclusion faced by non-normative sexual subjects does not only come from the government's regulations and laws, but also from the surrounding society — namely, homo/transphobic neighbors.

4.0 Strategically Fluid *Tongzhi* Solidarity

While it is mentioned in the previous sections that *Tongzhi* solidarity has been secure despite internal disputes, the actual process by which this occurs requires more explanation. Aside from *Tongzhi*, many other terms are used in the activist scene. For example, in the Center's event advertisements on its official WeChat account, some events adopt the term *Tongzhi*, while others adopt LGBT, sexual minority, and *Tong-xing-lian* (homosexuality).⁽⁴²⁾ Without a fixed collective identity, the Center uses different terms for different events. According to Gitlin (1995: 223–238), this would render movement identity ambiguous, weakening its solidarity.

This section, therefore, examines the use of such terms in the Center's events. In particular, ninety-nine irregular and co-held events of the Center during the period from March 2016 to September 2017 will be analyzed. The advertisements on the Center's official WeChat account have been chosen to investigate the strategic purposes of each event. These events are put into different groups according to the identity terms and the strategies they adopt (Figure 4.2), as well as the target groups of mobilization. Identity terms refer to the words used by the Center to allude to the *Tongzhi* community, while target groups of mobilization refer to the target population whom the events have been designed to mobilize. For example, fundraising events such

as business networking parties for LGBT elites are designed to mobilize business elites and entrepreneurs.

4.1 The Low-Pitched Use of *Tongzhi*

All of these events, according to the identity terms they adopt, can be categorized into nine groups: Undefined, *Tongzhi* (同志), LGBT, Sexual Minority (性少数/性少数群体), Queer (酷儿), *Tong-xing-lian* (同性恋), *Lala* (拉拉), Transgender (跨性别) and Asexual (无性恋).⁽⁴³⁾ Undefined refers to those events where no specific identity is mentioned, as seen, for example, in fundraising events that need to reach out to as many people as possible. There have also been concerns that explicitly indicating a specific group of individuals may make it harder for community members who do not want to come out to join.⁽⁴⁴⁾ There are overlaps for *Lala* and *Tong-xing-lian*, since *Lala* refers to lesbian, transgender, and bisexual women while *Tong-xing-lian* includes lesbians and gays. However, the Center uses those two terms separately. *Tong-xing-lian* refers mostly to gays — mostly for events focusing on AIDs — and *Lala* focuses on lesbian women. The number of events for each group is shown in Figure 4.1.

Tongzhi is not the most frequently used term in the Center's events. Despite being included in the Center's name, the use of *Tongzhi* only ranks fourth among all terms. The most frequently used term is LGBT, followed by Undefined, *Tong-xing-lian*, *Tongzhi*, Transgender, Sexual Minority, *Lala*, Queer, and Asexual. Transgender ranks higher than Sexual Minority, and illustrates the Center's devotion to promoting minority communities, the expansion of the *Tongzhi* identity, and the pursuit of potential frameworks for activism. Only two events used Queer, and one used Asexual. It could be explained that communities such as the asexual one are still invisible or closeted. Therefore, it could be concluded that the number of events shown in Figure 4.1 is at some level reflective of the visibility of each community these identity terms refer to.

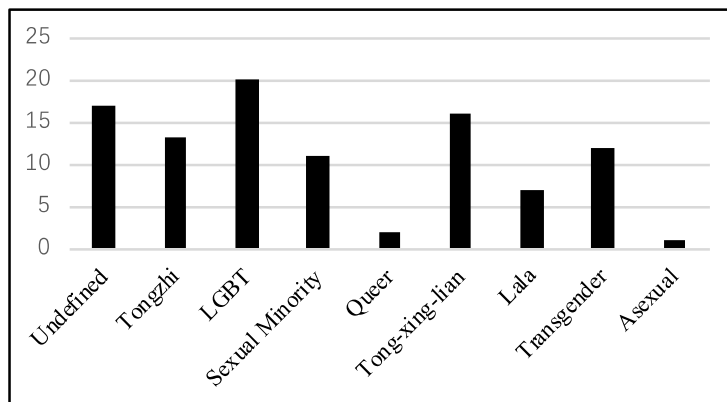


Figure 4.1 The Number of Events under Each Identity Term Group

Although LGBT, Sexual Minority, and *Tongzhi* all refer to similar demographics — non-normative sexual identities, the usage of these terms is significantly different. This raises the question: how can this mixed usage be explained from the perspective of fostering *Tongzhi* solidarity? Why are these terms used separately?

4.2 The Strategic Selection of Identity Terms

According to the strategies adopted by each event, they can be categorized into four groups:

- 1) Community Mobilization. This refers to the events aimed at fostering *Tongzhi* solidarity and mobilization targeted at the *Tongzhi* communities. For example, community gatherings, parties, and experience sharing events.
- 2) Outward Mobilization. This refers to mobilization and advocacy targeted at the broader society, such as academics, corporations, and government. Public advocacy such as the Qianmen Wedding, and collaborations with local social elites are such examples.
- 3) Movement Development. This refers to events designed to strengthen the connections among *Tongzhi* movement actors. For these *Tongzhi* movement actors, I refer only to local actors. Events held by the Center and foreign organizations are considered outward mobilization in this paper.
- 4) Organizational Operation. This refers to events held for the operation of the Center, for example fund-raising events, volunteer meetings, experience sharing events on organizational operations, and so on.

The number of events under each category is shown in Figure 4.2.

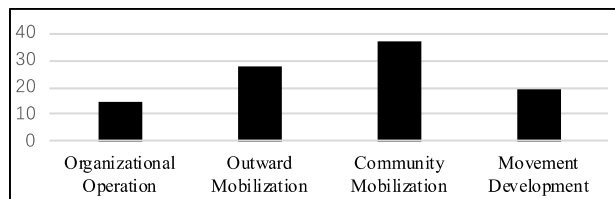


Figure 4.2 The Strategies Adopted in the Center's Irregular Events

The number of the events adopting different identities in each strategy group is shown in Figure 4.3. *Tong-xing-lian* was considered together with the three alternative terms of Sexual Minority, LGBT, and *Tongzhi*, since the Center was established on the resource accumulated by the AIDs and the *Tong-xing-lian* movements.

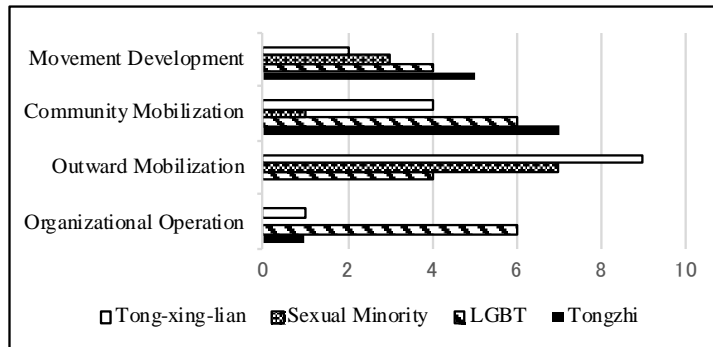


Figure 4.3 The Number of Events of Different Identity Terms Grouped According to Strategies

According to Figure 4.3, *Tongzhi* is mostly used in events for movement development and community mobilization, and not at all in those for outward mobilization. LGBT is used averagely in all strategies. *Tong-xing-lian* can be found in all four strategies, but it is the most visible in outward mobilization. The use of “Sexual Minority” in outward mobilization is significantly more prevalent than its usage in regard to any other strategy.

In other words, these identity terms are strategically used for different purposes in advocacy. “*Tongzhi*” is mostly used within the community, especially among activists; “LGBT” is used most widely throughout all strategies; “Sexual Minority” and “*Tong-xing-lian*” are used mostly in mobilizations targeted at the public.

A further look into the target group of these events can help explain these strategic uses. The ninety-nine events can be put into seven target groups: Public refers to mainstream society; Academic and Medical Elites refer to those who work in universities and medical (mental health) institutions; *Tongzhi* Community refers to the population who identify themselves as *Tongzhi*; Entrepreneurs refers to both domestic and international companies that have their bases in China; *Tongzhi* Organizations and Activists refers to the local organizations and activists focusing on sexual minority groups; Domestic Organizations and Activists refers to the local organizations and activists who do not place their dominant focus on the *Tongzhi* identity in China; and, finally, Global Society refers to the international organizations such as the United Nations, and overseas NGOs such as the LA LGBT Center. The result is shown in Figure 4.4.

The strategic purposes of using each identity term is reaffirmed in Figure 4.4:

- 1) In mobilizations targeted at the public and mainstream society, “*Tong-xing-lian*” is the most frequently used term, illustrating that gays and lesbians are the most visible among all movement subjects the Center works with. In other words, the *Tong-xing-lian* movement, started from the 1990s on the basis of the AIDs movement, has actually achieved its goal of raising the visibility of gays and lesbians.
- 2) When the mobilization is aimed at strengthening linkages with academic and medical

elites, “Sexual Minority” is the most frequently chosen term. Compared to the stigma of *Tong-xing-lian* and the political sensitivity of *Tongzhi*, “Sexual Minority” is a more neutral and professional term which is suitable for academic and professional discussions.

- 3) When it comes to referring to the *Tongzhi* community, regardless of the community members or activists, *Tongzhi* is the most frequently used term in forming solidarity. According to my interview with the Center’s volunteers, *Tongzhi*, which implies “having common will,” shows inclusivity and tolerance for anyone as long as they share something in common.⁽⁴⁵⁾
- 4) In the case where networking is needed with businesses — usually in the case of fundraising events — LGBT is the only term used. This can be attributed to the global expansion of LGBT identity politics, and the close relationship between the Chinese market economy and globalized capital.

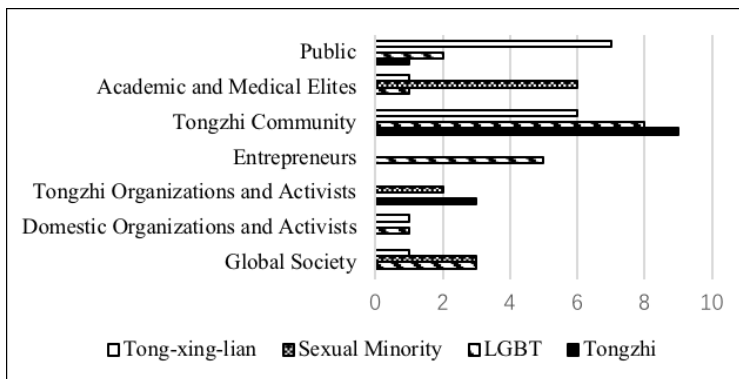


Figure 4.4 The Number of Events According to Identity Terms Grouped by Target Populations

Xiao Tie explained the difficulties in working with both international and domestic companies during our interview:

We have approached many companies, international and domestic. It is surprising that even in the case of some international companies that publicly expressed support for LGBT rights, their Chinese branches show lower interest. For example, when we approached Microsoft China, the manager who is a female didn’t even admit that there are LGBT employees in the company. On the other hand, giant local companies that care about their international branding and reputation seemed quite supportive, despite not negotiating with us during the decision-making process. For example, we co-operated with Taobao, sending seven same-sex couples to the US to get married. However, in the process of selecting couples, Taobao exclusively selected gay couples, even though we tried very hard to persuade them to include lesbian couples. It ended up with only one lesbian couple.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The *Tongzhi* movement is a projection of the complicated and intersecting power relations underlying China's prosperous image in many aspects, such as economy, politics, and culture. The case mentioned demonstrates that the Center has to negotiate constantly between international and local contexts in its mobilization. The word *Tongzhi* is historically used by the CPC to address its members with respect. The usage of this word continued into the 2010s in official media to address respected party members. It is therefore not hard to conclude that using *Tongzhi* as a way to refer to sexual minority groups is ineffective for the purpose of public mobilization. Instead, *Tong-xing-lian* which clearly refers only to lesbians and gays is easier for the public to understand.

In the field of business, especially after the proposal of the One Belt, One Road initiative (一帶一路) — through which globalization was deemed as one of the most valuable strategies —, it is necessary to choose a globally acceptable term for mobilization. As Rofel (2007: 150–156) stated, the increasing tolerance of homosexuality in the public after the Economic Reform benefits from the sense of modernity and cosmopolitanism embedded in the term *Tong-xing-lian*. This modernity and cosmopolitanism may legitimize LGBT and *Tong-xing-lian*, especially in commercial discourses.

Therefore, the differentiated use of various alternative terms for *Tongzhi* is a strategy meant to expand the discussion to various fields and contexts. Although there are multiple alternatives to *Tongzhi* in the movement, the identity term mostly used for community building and strengthening connections with activists is “*Tongzhi*”, which indicates that the solidarity of the community and activists is mostly built on the basis of the *Tongzhi* identity, instead of the terms “LGBT” and “sexual minority”. However, the contexts and implications embedded in each term indicate that the *Tongzhi* movement is established on the complicated intersectionality of the local and the globalized, the State and the society, the elites and the general public. A simply defined monolithic movement identity would not fulfill the need of negotiating these many complexities. Furthermore, the strategic negotiations between identity politics based on distinctive identity terms indicate that *Tongzhi* solidarity is fluid, and that the center of this solidarity adjusts constantly according to the overall environment.

Conclusion

Although the Chinese *Tongzhi* movement that emerged from the 1990s has experienced internal conflicts and division, a solidarity transcending identity politics, as represented by the Beijing *Tongzhi* Center, was realized in the 2000s. As mentioned in the introduction, queer solidarity in the US is associated with the AIDs crisis of the 1980s, but Chinese *Tongzhi* solidarity has to be understood within a different context: namely, the restrictive authoritative structure implemented by the CPC that strictly confined the community space so desperately

needed by the *Tongzhi* movement. In order to secure limited resources, gay and *Lala* organizations strategically formed solidarity. Against the backdrop of rapid political and economic change, instead of depending on the international community of foundations and NGOs, local society presented more potential in providing the movement with stable resources. Thus, the *Tongzhi* movement strategically changed the target and subject of its solidarity from within the all-inclusive *Tongzhi* community to giant local companies and social elites. The fluidity and strategy manifested in *Tongzhi* solidarity, which tolerates ideological disputes, can thus be considered a mark of the uniqueness of Chinese *Tongzhi* activism.

Contextually, there has been relatively little academic attention paid to the Chinese *Tongzhi* movement. The CPC-led government on the mainland has always been depicted solely as an oppressor, and the movement as a victim unable to speak out.⁽⁴⁷⁾ As I have argued in this paper, however, despite these restrictions and whether in regard to movement strategies or subjects, the *Tongzhi* movement is not a monolithic entity; it rather gropes for and practices various strategies, including solidarity, as a response to changing trends in the overall surrounding political and economic context. Furthermore, the authoritarian and oppressive government resists oversimplified characterization as an unreconcilable “enemy” of the movement, as seen in the complex sociopolitical environment in which cooperative initiatives with the government succeed in contrast to dead-end conflicts with “invisible homo/transphobic neighbors.”

Notes

- (1) I use *Tongzhi* to refer to the local Chinese non-normative sexuality communities. *Tongzhi* originally means “Comrades” in Chinese, and was used widely by the Communist Party of China (CPC) to address party members with respect, e.g. Mao Zedong *Tongzhi* (毛泽东同志 Comrade Mao Zedong). It is still widely used in official media in mainland China for addressing State leaders. The term was first used in gay and lesbian activism in the first Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in 1989. It was chosen to distance themselves from the Hong Kong mainstream society where anything from the mainland was considered backward, as well as to eliminate the risk of explicitly using the term “homosexuality”; it was later spread to the mainland (Qi, 2013).
- (2) The term “institutionalist” is widely used among queer activists in mainland China and Taiwan referring especially to the feminist activists who mobilized the public by creating a sort of collective emotion based on “social justice” against sexual crimes, which may further stigmatize sex, sexual pleasure, and female sexual agency (He, 2016; Zhu, 2016).
- (3) While the Center uses the terms LGBT in its official English name and *Tongzhi* in its Chinese counterpart, to separate the globalized LGBT movement and the local *Tongzhi* movement, in this paper, I use “the Beijing *Tongzhi* Center (the Center)” to refer to the Center in spite of its official name in English.
- (4) There have been researches conducted on the Chinese *Tongzhi* identity such as Chou (2001), on lesbian identity and communities (Kam, 2013), on public cultures such as Wei (2015), on global-

ization and the gay identity (Rofel, 2007). There have also been researches focusing on gay activism (Hildebrandt, 2013) and lesbian activism (Engbresten, 2015); but no devoted work on the all-inclusive *Tongzhi* movement and its solidarity has been conducted.

- (5) Interviews with volunteers were conducted in the Center.
- (6) Interviews with activists were conducted in their offices; for those who don't own offices, interviews were conducted in cafés.
- (7) Christine Laskowski, "Year of Gay China," December 28, 2009. Accessed on October 20, 2017, from *China Daily*, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2009-12/28/content_9236644.htm
- (8) The interview with Fan Popo, the activist queer filmmaker, was conducted on September 6, 2016 in the café-restaurant that screens the Beijing Queer Film Festival. Brackets added by the author.
- (9) The Tian'anmen Incident refers to a series of collective demonstrations where students and democrats gathered in Tian'anmen Square asking for democratization and ended up being violently oppressed by the CPC authorities. Details of this incident are introduced in Zhao (2011).
- (10) The interview was conducted in a coffee bar in Guomao, the Beijing city on September 7, 2016. The interviewee preferred to be addressed as "Luke".
- (11) Police harassment of gay gatherings in parks is frequently reported, especially during anti-pornography campaigns. For example, *China Daily* posted a report named "Homosexuals Clash with Police in Park" on its online platform on August 29, 2009.
- (12) I use the word community to describe the population that self-identifies as *Tongzhi*, LGBT, or Queer in mainland China. The word community (she-qun 社群) was used frequently by the activists I interviewed, thus I chose to adopt this particular term without unnecessary theoretical implications.
- (13) According to Gitlin (1995: 151–159) and Polletta and Jasper (2001: 286–289), unlike traditional collective actions and social movements which focus on social classes, new social movements change their focus to identity and culture.
- (14) Photograph taken by the author on February 24, 2017.
- (15) "Chinese HIV Activist Wan Yanhai Escaped to the US (中国艾滋维权人士万延海逃亡美国)." BBC Chinese (BBC 中文网), May 10, 2010. Accessed on October 20, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/china/2010/05/100510_china_aidsactivist
- (16) Based on the interview with Xian in the Common Language office on February 23, 2016, Beijing. Xian is the pseudonym she uses, which is widely known of in *Tongzhi* activism.
- (17) "Group Introduction: Les+ (小组介绍 : Les+)." Common Language (同语), February 19, 2011. Accessed on October 20, 2017, <http://www.tongyulala.org/newsshow.php?cid=54&id=64>
- (18) Interview with Luke, the founder of the magazine, for reference, see note (10).
- (19) The figure is compiled by the author from the interview with Luke. For reference, see note (10).
- (20) The structure of the Chinese civil society is associated with heated academic debate. Since the Chinese authorities require all social organizations to be registered, Li (2012: 176–189) argues that the Chinese civil society enjoys a strategically negotiated independence, disputing the denial of civil society's existence in mainland China in traditional civil society frameworks. In this paper, I avoid using the term "civil society" for I do not intend to join the civil society discussion. Instead I refer to these "civil society actors" as social organizations.
- (21) However, according to American sociologist Hildebrandt's (2013) research on Chinese AIDs and

gay organizations, their comparatively higher political legitimacy does not necessarily provide them with more autonomy in mobilization. In particular, according to the Chinese registration system, if an organization is registered within the issue area of public health, it is limited only in carrying out relative events and services. Therefore, for gay organizations whose concerns are not always associated with the disease, their viability was significantly limited.

- (22) Interview with An Ran (安然) on February 19, 2017, conducted in a café in Xi'an. An Ran is a veteran AIDs activist from the 1990s who was jailed for writing against the CPC. He is now running a medical company while continuing to provide HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) testing services for gay communities in Xi'an. HIV is the virus that causes AIDs, it attacks the human immune system and allows life-threatening opportunistic infections to thrive. It is transmitted by contact with or transfer of blood, pre-ejaculate, semen and vaginal fluids. Gay people who conduct unprotected sexual behavior, especially anal sex, are vulnerable to the infection.
- (23) This is an excerpt from the interview with Luke. See note (10) for reference.
- (24) This is an excerpt from the interview with Xian. See note (16) for reference.
- (25) The table was compiled by the author. The content is based on the new staff training conducted on March 16, 2016 and an interview with Xiao Tie (refer to note 26) in the Center. The original data was in Chinese and was translated into English by the author.
- (26) Interview with Xiao Tie (小铁) conducted on September 10, 2016 in the psychological counseling room no. 1 of the Center, Beijing. Xiao Tie is the pseudonym she uses in the activist scene. She preferred to be addressed as such.
- (27) According to Common Language (2015a), Stephan first came to China in 2007 to learn Chinese, then returned to China again for academic fieldwork. He finally decided to stay in Beijing in 2009 upon being hired by a US environmental NGO in Beijing, at which time he started to volunteer for the Center. In 2011, he was hired by the Center Director as a Project Manager, and was promoted to Center Director in 2012.
- (28) According to Shen, Liu, Han and Zhang (2004: 148–150), in the 1980s, China depended on imported blood products, but after the discovery of the first domestic AIDs patient, the Chinese government decided to develop its own blood bank by promoting paid blood donation, which soon developed into the Plasma Economy in the 1990s. The trade of plasma became a chance by which impoverished people could quickly gain money. However, given the lack of knowledge and medical support, poor provinces like Henan, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Sichuan saw villages of people infected by the virus from non-standard blood collection, known widely as AIDs Villages. Through BAIHE's exposure of the condition in those villages, the CPC authorities were pressured by global society, leading to the solution that all AIDs patients were provided with free medicine by the government.
- (29) "Popular Live Host(ress) Born in the Beijing *Tongzhi* Center?! (人气播主在北同诞生)." Official Wechat Account of the Beijing *Tongzhi* Center (北京同志中心微信公众号), October 2, 2017. Accessed on October 3, 2017, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MjM5Nzg0OTQ3Mw==&mid=2650490409&idx=1&sn=ecc2a116617ada7d984533bc3cf16589&chksm=bedc56c789abdf1b196c24588f33092d2243ec879d5ff192cc91fdf4f638a1a4f5964e388a4&scene=38#wechat_redirect
- (30) This is an excerpt from the interview with Xiao Tie. See note (26) for reference.

- (31) The table was compiled by the author in the field notes on March 22, 2016, based on the Center's events records which were provided by the Center. The original data was in Mandarin, and translated into English by the author.
- (32) This is an excerpt from the interview with Xiao Tie. See note (26) for reference.
- (33) The figure is compiled by the author based on the field note on March 15, 2016, and © Google. N.d. "Google Maps of the Beijing City." Accessed on October 20, 2017, <https://www.google.co.jp/maps/place/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E5%8C%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%B8%82/@39.9422565,116.3872668,12.17z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x35f05296e7142cb9:0xb9625620af0fa98a!8m2!3d39.9041999!4d116.4073963>
- (34) The picture was taken by the author on February 27, 2017.
- (35) This is an excerpt from the interview with Xiao Tie. See note (26) for reference.
- (36) This figure is compiled from the interview with Xiao Tie (note 26) and Common Language (2015b).
- (37) This is an excerpt from the interview with Xiao Tie. See note (26) for reference.
- (38) The picture was taken by the author on February 24, 2017. The sign says "in order not to be complained by the neighbors, please keep silent on your exit, thank you for your co-operation."
- (39) This is an excerpt from the interview with Xiao Tie. See note (26) for reference.
- (40) Although in the CPC's official translation of these governing methods, *Dezhi* (德治: 道德治理) is translated as Rule of Morality and *Fazhi* (法治) as Rule of Law, it is tricky to adopt these translations, especially in regard to the latter, since its definition requires a well-secured separation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers which is absent in mainland China. Therefore, I adopt the terms "Moral Governance" and "Legal Governance" in order to separate the Chinese system from the democratic ones.
- (41) "Xi Jinping presided the 37th group seminar of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau (习近平主持中共中央第三十七次集体学习)," China.org.cn, December 12, 2016. Accessed on March 18, 2017, <http://home.china.com.cn/fwzc/zyzjxx/2016-12-12/a1138152.shtml>
- (42) WeChat is among the most widely used SNS applications in mainland China. The official account is designed to be a platform where individuals, organizations and companies can broadcast information.
- (43) For *Tongzhi*, refer to note (1). Sexual minorities were utilized as the alternative of *Tongzhi* and LGBT, and the use of this term has been widely circulated since the 2010s. Queer originally referred to sexual perverts in accusations against non-normative sexualities. During the '80s AIDs crisis in the US, activists strategically re-appropriated the term and rebuilt an activist identity around it. The term was first seen in Chinese activist scenes in the 2000s during the second Beijing Queer Film Festival. The Chinese translation of the term (酷儿) in fact refers to "cool child" which has a more positive connotation than its English counterpart. *Lala* refers to lesbian, transgender and bisexual women. Asexual refers to people who show low or absent interest for sexual activity.
- (44) This is an excerpt from the interview with Xiao Tie. See note (26) for reference.
- (45) Interview with A Meng, who is one of the three hundred volunteers of the Center, conducted on September 11, 2016, in the community space of the Center, Beijing.
- (46) This is an excerpt from the interview with Xiao Tie. See note (26) for reference.
- (47) For example, the Sankei News (産経ニュース) in Japan posted an article named "China Strengthens Its Oppression on LGBT Communities — the Angry Calls Echoed in Matchmaking Sites: Cen-

sorship Restricted toward the Communist Party of China's Grand Meeting (LGBT 抑圧強める中国 お見合い集会に響く治安要員の怒号 共産党大会控え検閲も加速)” on August 1, 2017 (<http://www.sankei.com/world/news/170801/wor1708010039-n1.html>). The same media posted another article named “The Troubled Chinese LGBT Society of 50 Billion People: Here is also Chinese Violation on Human Rights Disguised as ‘Disturbing Orders’ (中国 5000 万人 LGBT 社会の苦悩: 「秩序乱す」ここにも中国の人権抑圧)” on August 8, 2017 (<https://www.sankei.com/premium/news/170808/prm1708080005-n1.html>). Fukunaga (2017: 212–213) analyzed the *Tongzhi*-related news articles in Taiwan, stating that the miserable condition of mainland *Tongzhi* and the CPC government's violation of their rights have been utilized to construct Taiwan's modernity in protecting human rights. Zhu (2016: 136) also calls for a careful treatment of the relationship between *Tongzhi* organizations and the CPC in academic research, revealing that depicting the government as solely the enemy of the movement may overlook the social source of the backlash.

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