

Chapter 1

Introduction

A growing influx of Chinese professionals engaged with contemporary art—artists, curators, gallerists, and art historians—is making its presence noticeable in Berlin. My interest in this phenomenon was piqued when I stumbled upon an art report discussing the emerging Chinese artist community in Berlin. Therefore, I entered the field with the intention to identify and profile this community. However, my initial enthusiasm quickly waned as the Chinese artists in the field informed me that such a community did not exist. The imagination of a thriving artistic community is alluring. In particular, for the investigation of a specific unit of population, it is easy to fall into the trap of seeking predefined attributes to validate the existence of a community. The notion of community has gained significant weight in contemporary art discourses as well, but oftentimes, the unexamined usage of the concept overlooks the atomized and divided individual experiences in society.

Determined to understand the emerging and forming mechanisms of this group of individuals, and the group's inner structure and interconnectedness, I grapple with the question: if they do not form a community, then how can we designate and characterize this population and its associated phenomenon? This study is about the individuals' perspectives on the 'Chinese artists in Berlin' group making and their social doings in the context of engaging in the art world while living as migrants. It presents the first comprehensive research on Chinese artists and art institutions in Berlin, and to my knowledge, the first in-depth ethnographic investigation into migrant Chinese artists in any major global city.

The primary objective of this research is to make explicit a small-scale social group as an interesting subject in itself. At the outset, my knowledge of Chinese contemporary artists in Germany, akin to that of most German art audiences, was confined largely to celebrated names like Ai Weiwei. As I read further on this topic, Berlin is repeatedly eulogized as a haven of creativity and freedom, often juxtaposed as an antithesis to China, perhaps due to the influence of Ai Weiwei as a

symbolic and politicized figure is tremendous. However, can Ai's story be regarded as a representative of the experiences of this population? The answer is, NO. Most Chinese artists in Germany exist away from the spotlights, their presence attracts little publicity, and their artistic output reaches only a limited audience in the host society. While on an individual level, these Chinese artists remain relatively inconspicuous to the public, as a collective, they have begun to garner growing interest from local media outlets in Berlin, signaling a burgeoning field ripe for exploration.

The exact number of Chinese artists in Berlin is difficult to count. The ambiguity surrounding the conceptual definitions of 'Chinese', 'contemporary art', and 'professional artist' resists a definitive classification. Additionally, the fluidity of artists' movements across borders further complicates an accurate tally. The geographical location confers a specific and concrete group identity on this unit of population as 'Chinese artists based in Berlin', identified as the subject group of this research. However, it would be erroneous to assume unanimous adherence to this group identity among Chinese artists, and this study exhibits the ambivalence of the individuals' attitudes toward a collective representation. Chinese migrant artists in Berlin constitute a distinct yet small subset of Chinese migrants in Germany while carrying some characteristics that can hardly be sufficiently accounted for under the general framework of Chinese migration. Understanding the nature of this social group requires insights from within.

Through this research, which focuses on social relations and group making from the individual perspective, readers will learn about the contextual backgrounds of this targeted phenomenon in Berlin; the group's sociodemographic profiles; the rationales driving their migration; the organization of transnational life framed by occupational engagement within the art world; intragroup social interactions and networking dynamics within intersecting multi-dimensional social structures; and the factors that facilitate or hinder the formation of communal bonds among Chinese artists in Berlin. This population cannot be perceived as a cohesive and homogeneous social group. It is crucial to recognize that migration exhibits site-specific characteristics, and insights derived from this research may not seamlessly translate to experiences elsewhere. Nevertheless, this research offers

an analytical framework that can be applied to understand similar emergence in other locales.

This research contributes to the anthropology of art by shifting the focus from art objects and materiality to the artists and the art world. It suggests that 'working as an artist' should be viewed as an occupation rather than a sociocultural identity that bestows a sense of uniqueness upon the artist as an individual. This study broadens the knowledge of art anthropology through analyzing artists' practices of career development, transnational mobility, networking, and organizing collective social life within specific ethnographic contexts. By situating artists and their relationships within specific social contexts, it offers valuable insights into the social networks, power relations, and structure of the art world, as well as the integration of artists into various facets of the social system. Their cross-border movements and the complex web of social relationships embody the interconnection between regional and international art scenes as well as reflect the uneven and hierarchical structure of the global art world. By intertwining occupational identity as artists, national identity as Chinese, and societal identity as migrants, the study of networks among artists demystifies the imagination of the artistic community.

Importantly, the fieldwork was conducted during a time of global emergency. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, international travel regulations severely impacted transnational movements, particularly between China and Germany. The observation of the transnational organization of social life was compromised. However, as artists remained sedentary in Berlin, this situation facilitated face-to-face communication with artists and made it easier to trace their personal networks at a fixed location. Meanwhile, the state of emergency unveiled problems that are often ignored during ordinary circumstances, such as discrimination and precariousness. The artists expressed anxiety about politico-economic uncertainties, and the repercussions on their careers. The social conditions permeated the organization of private and collective life. Although beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting that a significant influx of Chinese artists to Berlin occurred after the pandemic subsided, injecting a new dynamic into this field of investigation.

1. Key Conceptual Frameworks

1.1 The Artists and the Art World

The first challenge encountered by this empirical research lies in delineating the subject group's boundary and subsequently the selection of the individuals as participants in the fieldwork. Investigating a field without predefined boundaries, whether geographic, demographic, or conceptual, will be insurmountable. The concept of 'artist' alone brings troubles in the definition. In particular, in a city like Berlin, numerous people engaging in creative and cultural industries claim the title of artist. For example, during a visit to a Chinese artist's studio, we met a young woman specializing in crafting decorative carpets and selling wares through social media, she introduced herself as an artist. However, the Chinese artist disagreed that the carpets were artworks and did not accord the young woman the status of an artist. Therefore, we must first confront the question, "Who qualifies as an artist, and what are the criteria?". My approach is to understand the artist as a profession framed by the art world, which institutionalizes the artistic practices, validates the judgment of the aesthetical and monetary value, regulates the mechanisms for creation, distribution, and consumption, and coordinates the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders.

Arthur Danto (1964, p. 580) developed the concept of the *artworld* and surmises, "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decri—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld". In Danto's view, the use of artistic theory, which is historically developed, is what makes art possible and discriminates art from the rest. While Danto's emphasis is on the art theoretical concepts of the art world, George Dickie adopts an institutional definition of art, focusing on the artists and their public. Dickie (1984) suggests that the artworld is 'an established practice' and 'the totality of all artworld systems', which function as a framework for the presentation of an artist's artwork to an artworld public. In his recognition, as an institution, the artworld encompasses those who create, who present, and who appreciate. Meanwhile, these persons who act on behalf of the artworld confer the work the status of art. In this sense, it is the institution that decides what art is, and the institution is often inter-referential.

To answer the question "What makes art art?", Howard S. Becker (1982, p. 194) suggested that "it is the art world, rather than the individ-

ual artist, which makes the work". From the sociological perspective and with a focus on social organization, Becker challenges the tenets that regard the artist as a genius who creates noteworthy objects. Rather, the creation of a work of art requires an extensive division of labor who are entangled in elaborate cooperation. Thus, the art worlds, in Becker's understanding, refer to the networks of cooperation, assistance, and distribution, a set of norms and conventions that are historically set, as well as the mechanisms of how material and resources are mobilized in the networks. Art creation is a collective action in an extensive social system, and the art world ratifies the status of a work of art. From a socio-theoretical perspective and based on the notion that society is a system for constituting meaning, Niklas Luhmann (2000) suggests taking art as a social and perceptual system, in which communication is the basic element. In Luhmann's approach, art differentiates itself from other systems primarily because art can realize the communication of the incommunicable. However, Luhmann largely neglects how society structures enable and constrain artistic practices. Meanwhile, when the social system of art is marked by the self-organization and self-reference dynamic, then the artworks and the artists constitute a closed system.

The artists participating in this research practice various artistic mediums such as paintings, sculptures, performance arts, conceptual art, and multi-media arts. Categorizing these forms under a single rubric of visual art or fine art is problematic. Focusing on the individual artists and the social networks, the definition of the 'artist' employed to delineate the subject group aligns with Dickie's institutional theory of art and Beckers' approach to artistic production. Here, the individuals are recognized as artists less based on their intention and ability to create works of art, but predominantly due to their integration within the art world. Artists are enmeshed within expansive networks comprising suppliers of materials, distributors of artworks, fellow artists, art institutions, critics, theorists, collectors, and audiences. Briefly, it is their participation in the social fabric of contemporary artistic production, wherein they assume diverse roles and functions in the system and networks, that bestows upon them the status of artists. The art world, with which the subject group is embedded, is marked by a stratified structure in which human activities are organized and imbued with specific social positions and meanings, governed by distinct norms and beliefs that are socio-historically constructed.

The reference to the concept of the art world in this study emphasizes its inherent stratified structure. Pierre Bourdieu (1993) takes the art world as an autonomous social field that is characterized by the hierarchical struggle over multiple forms of capital—economic, symbolic, social, and cultural. In the cultural field, the producers and the cultural products are located within a space of positions and position-taking. While this study does not directly employ capital theory in its investigation, the considerations of the individual's position in the stratified structure of the art world are crucial for comprehending the artist's social actions. Within this framework, a sheer minority of artists command a disproportionate share of resources and occupy dominant positions, while the majority remain largely marginalized. The prominent position is often a convergence of various types of capital in the stratified social structure, as conceptualized by Bourdieu. To avoid the abstraction inherent in the notion of social capital, this research focuses on 'social resources', which include the social relations and diverse forms of resources embedded in the positions. The artists in higher positions have access to social networks where valuable resources are guarded, and they are capable of exerting influence and power in mobilizing resources. The structural position in the art world is a critical factor in observing the mobility and life conditions of Chinese artists in Berlin as well as the patterns of the social relations development within the subject group.

Neither solely 'living from the practice of the art' nor the formal education and creative abilities of fine arts suffice as criteria for distinguishing professional artists from amateurs. As will be further elaborated on in Chapter 4, some artists in the subject group lack formal credentials, and some hold multiple jobs to sustain their livelihood. However, this study acknowledges them as artists based on several key considerations: their exhibition experiences in art institutions (museums, galleries, art spaces, etc.), whose professional status is recognized in the contemporary art world; validation as artists by their peers; and the circulation of their works in the creation-distribution-consumption art system. This definition does not dismiss the artistic authorship or the talents of creativity, however, this study is not concerned with the aesthetic quality of artworks and the creative skills of artists. Rather, it takes the artistic practice as an embodiment of the professional identity which gives the Chinese artists legal cause to stay in guest society and differentiates them from other groups of Chinese migrants, and based

on this commonality of occupation, an identifiable small-scale social group is formed.

This study views 'being an artist' as a professionalized occupation, and the individuals in the subject group are professional contemporary artists. The art world has undergone professionalization, a process that "institutionalizes authority, high social status, and economic rewards for members of selected occupational groups" (Wyzomrski & Chang, 2023, p. 4). The defining and self-defining of the artist as a genius and supreme creator who can convey what is verbally inarticulable is perpetual. The mystery of talent and artistic vision continues to romanticize the special status of the artists in society. Professionalism and art are not a contradiction, instead, the artists need to find their professional positioning in the art field. The birth of artistic avant-garde was shaped by professionalism (Cottingham, 2022), and today, attaining the status of a professional artist typically demands specialized and systematic knowledge, enduring and intensive practices, and adherence to a defined set of professional norms.

The idea of 'artist as an occupation' indicates that the art world operates as a labor market and the artists are participants in the creative economy. Within the framework, artists are not autonomous creators. Through my fieldwork, I noticed that a notable portion of artists, particularly art students, failed to embrace the artist as an occupational identity. Instead, they maintain a romanticized belief of artists as unconventional individuals and cling to notions of artistic autonomy that reject the divisions of labor. Some artists remain antagonistic to the market as if it will denigrate the virtue of art. Taking the 'artist as an occupation' not only means that the professional career needs to be strategically planned with knowledge of the conventions and mechanism of the art system and market, but also implies that the artists need to be treated with the same respect people would treat any business, that is to pay them fairly for their works. Economic conditions are important for artists, for example, the Chinese artists in this study are concerned with the issues of renting studios, purchasing materials for art production, supporting their families, and securing sufficient income to sustain their residence permits. Strategic professional positioning in the art world can potentially improve the economic conditions of artists.

Economic anthropology has contributed extensively to the understanding of the 'market' and 'marketplace', from aspects of the embed-

dedness of economic behaviors in different social and cultural contexts, patterns of exchange relationships, decision-making models, institutional structures and governance, and the networks constructed through interactions (Geertz, 1978; Plattner, 1989; Gudeman, 2001). The market, in this study, is defined as a mechanism for people to create relationships, practice exchanges, and enable the flow of material goods, information, money, and emotions. It extends beyond the conventional notion of economic transactions where money is exchanged for goods. The market is an integrated part of the culture, and vice versa, cultural beliefs penetrate the market practices.

The ignorance of the economic aspect of art production would aggravate the artists' fragility in the stratified structure of the art world and in the condition of the increasing commodification of art. Taking art as a collective practice underscores the inseparable nature of creative and distributive aspects of the art world. The economic framework captures the intricacies of the art production process. However, I am not suggesting that market value is the fundamental determinant in the valuation of contemporary art. As pointed out by Olav Velthuis (2005, p. 8), the prices of artworks serve as a critical index of artistic value, even though the economic value is substantially contingent on cultural beliefs as well as on material practices. Rather, I propose that well-equipped knowledge of the market dynamic and recognition of artists as economic agents could help creative workers combat the income variability and the pervasive precarity in the cultural industry.

1.2 Artistic Mobility in the Contemporary Global Art World

In the art world, systematic and structural inequality manifests in various dimensions, including gender, geographical regions, and the classification of artistic genres. Historically, in the field of art history, as exemplified by Ernst Gombrich's works, fine art was dominated by Western males with a Eurocentric universality viewpoint. Scholars have pointed out that the present notion of 'fine art' is of recent origin in the eighteenth-century West, during which the contrasting lines between art and craft were made. According to Larry Schiner (2001, p. 3), "Art as we have generally understood it is a European invention barely two hundred years old". Despite the growing discourses on globalized art history and decolonization in recent decades, Western hegemonic narratives of art still dominate. The global contemporary

art world maintains a center-periphery hierarchical structure, wherein the theoretical framework and analytic methods that regulate the valuations of artistic practices, institutions governing authenticity and legitimacy, distributive and exhibition platforms, and markets are largely rooted and congregated in the West. This centralized attribute of the global art world, as will be elaborated on in Chapters 3 and 4, serves as a crucial driving force behind the migration of Chinese artists to Berlin—a Western art hub.

In tandem with the globalization of art worlds, the artists' transnational mobility becomes popular as artists migrate in quest of artistic development, travel for art projects and residencies, and aspire to a broader vision and opportunities in the international art scene (Bydler, 2004; Velthuis & Curioni, 2015). Nevertheless, the globalized circulation of artists and artworks does not inherently signify that the Euro-American dominance in global contemporary art is in essential deconstruction. The authority that validates, valorizes, and consecrates global contemporary art practices, such as the leading art museums, galleries, curators, critics, art fairs, and exhibition festivals, continues to show a centralized distribution in the Euro-American societies. Despite the increasing participation of traditionally marginalized countries like China, Brazil, and India in the global art markets and art scenes, the circulation and valuation of art from these geo-cultural regions can hardly meet the same level of appreciation outside those regions (Salemink, 2023; Sooudi, 2023). Besides, the value of non-Western contemporary art, as suggested by Iain Robertson (2018), is less constructed on aesthetic considerations than by external political events and global economic factors.

While I am skeptical about the idea of worldwide equality of contemporary art creation as suggested by Hans Belting's (2013) notion of 'global art', it is undeniable that the contemporary art worlds display a multitude of interconnections which is shaped by the forces of globalization—the contemporary art practices on local, regional, and global realms are connected rather than isolated. However, it is crucial to remain vigilant regarding the extent to which 'global art' may still be perceived through a Western lens, carrying underlying Eurocentric assumptions. Contemporary art, as in art historian Terry Smith's (2011, p. 8) definition, is the art that deals with major themes of our contemporaneous world from local perspectives, which is thus 'truly an art of the world'. Thereafter, the study of contemporary art should

be situated within local and post-colonial discourses, rejecting the old privilege of the West and linear narratives of art history. However, as the hegemonic structure persists, it would be difficult for local narratives to flourish and gain equal recognition. Analyses of the migration of Chinese contemporary artists in this research demonstrate that the hegemony of the Western way of comprehending art and narrating art history has been inspiring generations of contemporary Chinese artists' migration to the West. Moreover, the historical development of the concept of 'Chinese contemporary art' illustrates how politics and economics intervene in the regional narratives of art.

From the migration perspective, the clustering of international artists in Western art metropolises like New York, London, and Berlin attests, rather than challenges, the persisting hegemony of Euro-Americans in the global art world. To become an artist 'based in' a major global art hub where important institutional sources of validation are located is a career strategy. For example, a common feature of most internationally established Chinese artists is the education or working experiences in Western metropolitan cities of contemporary art. Residence in these cities facilitates artists' access to support systems, networks, and organizations that are crucial for artists to navigate the art world, in which the states and their policies on art also exert significant impacts (Alexander & Rueschemeyer, 2005). Aside from the resources provided by the art infrastructure and networks, this research shows that the symbolic value of the global art city further enhances the competitive advantages for artists. For many artists, migration to Berlin, while not always essential, is viewed as rewarding for career progression.

The contemporary art world has adopted a 'culture of mobility', and regular transnational migration has become a popular routine of artists (Petersen, 2018; Duester, 2021). The subject group, Chinese artists in Berlin, exemplifies the transnational migrating patterns of the global art world, which is characterized by uneven geographical dissemination, hierarchical structure, and Western hegemony. Nevertheless, despite its unique characteristics, artist migration should be viewed as a subset of the general international migration phenomenon. This research demonstrates that the Chinese artists' decisions to relocate to Berlin are motivated by a multifaceted combination of private, economic, political, and cultural considerations. As discussed in Chapter 4, family concern is a critical reason to relocate.

Migration and transnationalism are basic social backgrounds from which the subject group emerged, yet they do not constitute the central focus of my analysis. Transnationalism can be understood as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et al., 1994, p. 6). For the majority of Chinese artists involved in this research, maintaining regular and sustained social contacts across national borders is crucial for professional careers. These artists uphold transnational social networks while keeping a solid foothold in their country of origin. This study does not delve into the dynamics of cross-border movement, transnationally organized networks, and institutionalized structures, but takes them as variables that have impacts on group sociality in a fixed territorial context. Drawing from the experiences of artists, I propose that the importance of a specific locality is not eclipsed by transnational engagements. The motivation for the transnational movement sometimes stems from strategically leveraging the different advantages offered by specific locations. Moreover, since these peripatetic art professionals maintain loose ties to consistent and localized social focal points, their transnational mobility can impede the development of a close-knit social group in a specified place.

Sojourning in the host society, many artists aspire to integrate into the local art scene. To succeed, they need to adapt to Berlin’s art niche which is governed by local norms and rules. Some studies have explored the interaction and tension between immigrant artists and the institutional and political mechanisms in European multi-ethnic societies. Delhaye’s (2008) study on the artistic practices of immigrant artists in the local art scene of Amsterdam shows that the participatory practice of migrant artists discloses the closed nature of the Western art world. Immigrant artists are subject to explicit and implicit rules and mechanisms that regulate entry into the art scene which are often disadvantageous for them. Investigations of the local art system in Berlin arrayed in Chapter 3 discover that the rising conservatism and localism in Berlin deters the Chinese artists’ integration into the local mainstream art scene. The marginalized status in the host society consequently encourages them to seek collaboration with similar others—Chinese artists in Berlin—to elevate the visibility and mobilize resources for shared interests. The third part of this study will exhibit how the actions of resource mobilization and joint practices among Chinese artists shape the social network and grouping patterns.

1.3 Chinese Artists in Berlin: Networks and Social Grouping

This research takes the 'Chinese artists in Berlin' as a social group, which is continuously in the making. Scholars have defined the group from different points of view, including the awareness and consciousness of group membership, the recurrent nature of the interaction and communication, the strength of social relations among the members, emotional and sociopsychological involvement, distinctive roles and functions of members, and regulating norms of conduct (Cooley, 1983 [1902]; Homans, 1993 [1950]; Anderson & Parker, 1966; Turner et al., 1987). According to Anderson and Parker (1966, p. 102), "[t]he distinctive bond of the group is reciprocal interaction", and the people in the group influence each other psychologically. Thereafter, the group is not merely a physical aggregation of people, the connections between whom are occasional and temporary. This study regards regular and enduring interpersonal interactions between individuals as essential for group formation. More importantly, this subject group is examined considering their association with the art system that organizes the artistic practices. The occupational identity as artists is the most substantial factor that brings them together.

Groups are located in certain contexts. A social group should have boundary-making attributes, either made noticeable through socio-cultural construction or imagined, that render it an identifiable entity and distinguishable from other units. Hiller (1941, p. 189) suggests that "any culture trait or complex may become a differentiating element of a class of social groups". When discussing Chinese migrant artists in Berlin, it may be tempting to categorize them as a homogeneous ethnic group. However, as Weber (1978, p. 389) cautioned, "ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind". This unit of Chinese artists could be classified as a cultural group because they speak the same language and share similar cultural customs. However, it is important to note that cultural commonality too only facilitates, rather than constitutes, a social group. The shared attributes of ethnicity, nationality, and culture delineate boundaries to make this group of individuals distinguishable from others in the host society, but do not directly generate a united social group. Additionally, the contents of these attributes and the relationships between them are intricate and controversial.

'Chinese' entails multidimensional implications—ethnicity, nationality, culture, and language, giving challenges to defining 'Chinese

artists' and Chinese contemporary art. China is a multi-ethnic society, it would be imprecise to categorize Chinese artists into a homogeneous ethnic or cultural group. Besides, as in some cases, a few artists have changed their nationality, thus, regarding them as a homogeneous social group of a shared nationality is also inaccurate. Historian Wang Gungwu (2009) emphasizes the 'history paradigms' that both bind and unbind Chinese people to the ideas of what it means to be Chinese. According to Wang, the thoughts and actions at various levels of Chinese life are profoundly influenced by historical paradigms, shaping the understanding of their identity. Rey Chow (2000, p. 3) highlights the 'lingering, pervasive hegemony of Western culture' as the most crucial of the overdetermined series of historical factors that shape the notion of 'Chinese'. Therefore, the comprehension of what it entails to be Chinese is continually negotiated and synchronized by forces and counterforces stemming from internal dynamics and interactions with 'the other'.

This study involves discussions of how China's politics influence the artists' migration incentives, the host society's perception of China, and their ways of organizing social life living between the two countries. In these contexts, national identity becomes highly relevant in guiding their actions, such as transnational travels and protests against discrimination. At the same time, the shared language plays a crucial role in group formation, especially considering that a considerable portion of Chinese artists in this study migrated to Germany without any knowledge of the German language. Speaking the same language not only facilitates the establishment of new social relations in the foreign society but also fulfills their needs for sociality. In this context, cultural and linguistic affinity becomes most pertinent.

In his seminal text, Barth (1969, p. 15, emphasis in original) notes that there is no simple one-to-one relationship between culture and ethnicity, and it is "the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses". Ethnicity is not inherent, but relational and situational, the boundaries of which are shaped through social interactions with 'others'. The notion of 'Chinese' should also be comprehended as relational and situational. Whether it is more appropriate to characterize this social group as an ethnic, cultural, or national group depends on the specific realms of social life in which the interactions are contextualized.

The primary criteria for selecting participants of this study are based on the individual's self-identification as Chinese and their acknowledgment of deeply rooted socio-cultural bonds with China.

The self-categorization (an individual act), which includes perceptions, identity announcements, and speech acts, is the generative source of social categorization (a group act) (Turner et al., 1987). All Chinese artists associated with this fieldwork acknowledge the presence of a group of Chinese artists in Berlin, but they have not reached a consensus regarding a collective representation. Collective representation and actions can enhance their visibility and support the mobilization of resources, and collaborative activities with the reference to ‘Chinese artists’ group identity were observed in the field. The Chinese artists are either strongly or loosely identified with the group designation, and this variety becomes an endogenous factor that drives the grouping dynamics and shapes the associating patterns. Moreover, the shared occupational identity, while being juxtaposed with the migrant status in Berlin, makes the interactions among them not only possible but sometimes also inevitable, in particular with the intervention of institutional agents as analyzed in Chapters 5 and 8.

To explore the characters and properties of this social group, this study employs the social network analysis. Network analysis and the investigation of social relationships could be a good starting point for the study of small and complex societies (Hannertz, 1980). As Calhoun (1978, p. 368) pointed out, the properties and number of social ties are important for the study of community, and network analysis could provide concepts “to deal with fluid and changing social alignments”. This studied social network is featured with similarities among its members in multiple dimensions—ethnicity, culture, language, migrant status, occupation, and city of residence. Amit and Rapport (2002) suggest that we could no longer postulate social affiliations and relationships barely based on the fact of propinquity in consideration of the diverse, transient, and dense populations of large cities.

Nevertheless, this research highlights the significance of the city, as Berlin is not just any city—it is a global art hub boasting internationally renowned art infrastructure, expansive art networks, and profound symbolic significance. Being anchored to a particular locale, the urban environment permeates social interactions in the framework of proximity and similarity, sociality is tangible and physical in this context. Residing in the same city also means that individuals are exposed to similar social settings that model their life experiences. The shared life experiences subsequently become homophily effects that lead to the formation of social clusters.

In defining the social network, J. A. Barnes (1954, p. 43), one of the early theorists of this concept, noted, “[e]ach person is, as it were, in touch with a number of people, some of whom are directly in touch with each other and some of whom are not”. He proposed to take a social field of this kind as a network. The core image of the network is the lines (connections) among a set of points (actors). From the network perspective, the central focus of social organizations is on the relationships between actors (Borgatti & Ofem, 2010). The web of interpersonal relationships presents a social structure, which can be measured on attributes such as centrality, density, cohesion, and structural equivalence (Lorrain & White, 1971; Freeman, 1979; Burt, 1987). The network structure is analyzed in terms of its influence on the behavior of individuals, such as support-seeking, information diffusion, and resource mobilization. However, network analysis is criticized for denying “in practice the crucial notion that social structure, culture, and human agency presuppose one another” (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994, p. 1413). To avoid this pitfall, this research combines the qualitative inquiries of characteristics of interpersonal relationships and the network structure, giving emphasis to the individuals’ considerations and meaning-making in accordance with their positions in the structure.

Social networks are crucial for the career development of artists as well as for migrants’ integration into the host society. Various disciplines have extensively investigated the impacts of social networks on migrants and their underlying mechanisms. These studies underscore the significance of migrant social networks in accessing resources and support, mitigating disadvantages, and promoting overall well-being, among other factors. Art historians have shown that in the development of modern art history, associations and memberships in prominent and influential artist groups are beneficial for professional careers (Crane, 1987; Cottingham, 2022). Networking remains requisite for professional artists. At least, they need to ensure that professionals across different domains of the art world’s operation (production, distribution, and appreciation), in particular those of gatekeeper roles, know who they are and what they are doing. The network has come to dominate the art world and affects the interaction among art professionals and the creation of art objects, creating new networked and participatory forms of art (Relyea, 2017). Living in art capitals is advantageous for success in the art world, in which networking in person holds insurmountable importance.

The concept of social networks is not applied without skepticism. Barnes (1972) has supposed that a theory of social networks may never exist. Some argue that the idea of social networks lacks revolutionary characteristics and is more of a versatile concept that can be applied across various conceptual frames of reference. For example, Whitten and Wolfe (1974) proposed that the analysis of social networks can be adequately accommodated by traditional anthropological studies such as role theory, exchange theory, and action theory. Meanwhile, social network analysis risks abstracting and simplifying the complexity of human interactions for a structural-functional presentation.

Connections can carry particular social, material, and affective weights (Carsten, 2000), and the broad constitution of 'relatedness' is reluctant to generalization. From an anthropological perspective of relations, what comes first to mind is the individuals and their actions instead of the abstracted ties that ground the overarching structure. Recognizing the limitation of social network theory, in this study, I do not aim to test the basic assumptions together with derived theoretical propositions of social networks but to apply some core conceptual tool-kits (with reflection) to perform analyses of the dynamics and patterns of social relations by employing empirical materials from fieldwork.

This study provides a visualized network mapping of the subject group, and notably, the boundary of this social network is artificially made based on the fieldwork materials and ethnographic techniques. It is important to note that the visual representation of the network cannot exhaustively unveil the connections between the actors because, on the one hand, the data of the fieldwork have limits and biases, and on the other hand, there will always be blind spots of the observation from a third party's perspective. The individuals and their relationships cannot be adequately captured and described by nodes and links. The visual form of the network proves to be arbitrary, as pointed out by Gießmann (2009), relations are actively constructed and modeled, but the visual representation provided by the diagram makes the relations appear to be static. The simplistic network diagram is unable to explicate the sociocultural frameworks that underpin the interactive human actions, the emotions and thoughts concealed in the actions, as well as the changing nature of human relationships over time.

Instead of elaborating on the metaphor of a social network, this study focuses on the hybrid practices of relation building, the multifaceted forms of associations within the social group, and how the

artists perceive and interpret the meaning and significance of the relations. The network diagrams mapped in this work primarily aim to offer the readers a rough image of the collective connectivity of the studied social group. Instead of privileging the collectives, this study focuses on the individuals and the multi-dimensional relationships constructed through interactions as the primary fabric of sociality. The identified social network is analyzed at individual, dyadic, and group levels while reflecting the latent problems of exploring the social group with a network approach.

Individual subjectivity resists the generalization for structural and functional explanations. In this research, I take individual actions as the point of departure, the individual acts on their personal preferences and behaves in accordance with their social roles and positions in the multiplex social structures. The social network analysis reveals the dynamics of relation organizations within the studied social group: the social ties vary in terms of intimacy and closeness; the homophily effects both unite and divide members, generating internal clusters; the aggregating and organizational function of social foci; mobilization of resources and supports; and the internal counterforces and tensions that hinder the cohesion within the group. However, the Chinese artists in Berlin are connected to the expansive global art networks, but this study only examines the intra-group network.

1.4 Forming Community

Community art has emerged as a distinct and increasingly popular genre of contemporary artistic production (Crehan, 2011). Community-engaged collaborative and participatory artistic endeavors are expected to have the capacity to empower individuals, bolster community cohesion, and promote personal well-being and democratic values. A common risk of community-based art projects is the naturalization of communities at the expense of subtle identity dynamics (Bishop, 2012). This research is not concerned with the issues of community art, however, I noticed the attempt to designate the Chinese artists in Berlin as a community. Towards the end of the fieldwork, a group of Chinese artists and curators organized a group exhibition in Berlin under the title of 'forming community'.

As human beings are socially constructed and encultured, community development based on an ideal prototype may risk essential-

ization, as every culture could have its own ideal form of communal social life organization. In the last chapter, I will illustrate this matter with my own experiences. Besides, naturalizing the population of Chinese artists in Berlin as a community may impede our ability to grasp that the formation of a social group is an ongoing process, continually shaped and constrained by internal and external forces. Based on the analysis of interpersonal relationships, individual-institution associations, clustering, and grouping patterns within the subject group, I will try to answer the question of whether or not this social group can be classified as a form of community.

We should distinguish the imagination of community as a social ideal and the presence of social connections as a reality. This study is not dedicated to the exploration of the 'community' concept. The notion of community (*Gemeinschaft*), posited against the *Gesellschaft* in Ferdinand Tönnies' (1887) dichotomy, refers primarily to a social organization that focuses on family and kinship ties, close-knit neighborhoods, traditions, and in-person contacts in a co-living physical environment. C. H. Cooley (1983 [1902]) takes this form of social organization characterized by intimate face-to-face association and cooperation as a primary social group. In this type of group, members have a sense of belonging and wholeness, and the relationships among them carry emotional depth and durability. Due to the high requirement for close contact, the primary group is small in size and marked by physical proximity. The subject group, despite being small in size and residing in the same city, cannot be taken as a primary group.

Numerous scholarly works have investigated the development of the 'community' concept in historical-social contexts (see Macfarlane, 1977; Calhoun, 1980). The idea of community extends beyond political and social critique discourses developed as a response to modern industrialization and urbanization, it is practiced in everyday life and can be observed as real phenomena. While scholars may not universally agree on the definition of community, there are commonalities in identifying the characteristics a community should possess. From the perspective of inherent qualities, according to Ferdinand Tönnies (1887), the soul of *Gemeinschaft* lies in the consciousness of together-belongingness and the affirmation of the condition of mutual dependence. The *Gemeinschaft* emerges out of social interactions that are infused with emotional attachments or *Wesenwille* (natural will), the relationships are maintained based on loyalty and sentiment.

Max Weber (1920, p. 126) adopted Tönnies' dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* and suggested that the communal relationships within the community are based on either affectual or traditional subjective feelings. Thereafter, the community refers to more than the networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability and support, "values of togetherness, the warmth and security of relationships among people" (Calhoun, 1978, p. 369), should distinguish the community from other social entities. Man is expected to be involved in the community with all heart and soul, and the feelings and consensus shared by members could become motives for collective actions that defend group cohesiveness.

Aside from the emotion and affection aspect, community experiences are orchestrated on agreed-on values and beliefs. "Community begins as a moral value", as Nibset (1966, p. 18) suggested. Moral traditions are held to be essential to a community (Tönnies, 1887; Calhoun, 1980; Etzioni, 1993). Etzioni (1993) underscored the significance of the sense of obligation, the acknowledgment of responsibilities, and the promotion of shared social values and morality, in constructing both local and national communities. Moral values attune the judgments of behaviors, safeguard communal interests, establish criteria for identification, and consequently distinguish fellow members from others. By integrating into the value system, the community could provide individuals' protection from frustration, insecurity, and fear. The customs and common values serve as organizing principles of community life, and the violation of them would provoke moral sanctions.

Anthropologists have emphasized the power of external structures, such as socio-cultural frameworks and political mechanisms, in creating and shaping communities. The process of exclusion and construction of otherness are critical for forming a community (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). Globalization and increasing transnational mobility have considerable impacts on communities, as the flows across territorial boundaries become frequent and multi-directional, and the local and the global are inextricably interconnected on various scopes (Amit, 2002; Castles, 2006). A stronger sense of community might lead to better resistance against external threats, and simultaneously, the real existence or imagination of external threats could reinforce internal solidarity and contribute to a stronger group identity (Giles & Evans, 1985; Anderson, 1991). The rhetoric and discourses of the threats to the group's existence can appeal to united resistance.

I perceive communities as distinct social entities with specific qualities that allow for the construction of boundaries, rendering them independently observable. The community members, according to Carl Moore's definition (see Hyland & Bennett, 2005, p. 5), "share an identity, speak a common language, agree upon role definitions, share common values, assume some permanent membership status, and understand the social boundaries within which they operate". However, the existence of shared qualities only facilitates, not determines, community formation. From my perspective, the essence of community relies less on the existence of common beliefs and interests than on the organization of them. People in the whole society, city, village, and institutions like universities may share sets of common interests. However, knowing that we can benefit from collective actions to realize the shared interests that are advantageous for ourselves does not always motivate people to act together. Durkheim (1964) noted that in modern society, community is more developed around interests and skills than around locality. However, we cannot presume that shared occupational identity as an artist, which indicates professional interests and skills, would create a global artist community. Otherwise, the community becomes an afunctional analytical tool.

Community is a model of social organization and system, by which people manage to live together while playing different roles under the group norms (Hiller, 1941; Bates & Bacon, 1972). As an integrated social unit, the community requires the action of organizing to transform from a mere aggregation of people to a group of people that are integrated into webs of relations, rules, and commitments (Calhoun, 1978). The process of organizing necessitates authoritative agencies to carry out specific functions, and these agencies need not always be formal institutions or organizations. The community organization is a consistent process that ensures the functionality of the system, including arranging social ties into structures, identifying members and their roles, providing references for actions and values, and enlisting collective goals. The members are connected and interdependent through performing respective roles and conducting exchanges of goods and services. After that, the community is characterized by systematicity and hierarchical structures in which actors exert contingent influence on each other. The example of Chinese rural villages in the final chapter shows that in some social and cultural contexts, external organizational intervention is the most powerful force in structuring the community.

Similar to Fredrik Barth's (1969) perspective on ethnic groups and boundaries, I find that the community also entails social processes of incorporation and exclusion despite the presence of mobility, contact, and information flow. The recognition of boundaries persists in the context of social interaction and cultural diversity. The membership is characterized by self-ascription and ascription by others. Meanwhile, the boundary canalizes social life, as it "entails a frequently quite complex organization of behavior and social relations" (Barth, 1969, p. 15). Through the boundary-making process, social fabrics are made concrete and identifiable. R. Halperin (1998, p. 5) proposed that community is not just a place, but "a series of day to day, ongoing, often invisible practices". The shared group identity as 'Chinese artists in Berlin', embodied by social practices and interactions, functions as a signifier demarcating boundaries that render the existence of this subject group discernible. In the following analysis, I suggest taking the community as a processual social phenomenon that is forming and transforming through unfolding social interactions motivated by and also targeting the sense of commonality and common goals. Social network analysis, pointing to a set of socially relevant members tied by various types of relations with an emphasis on structured interactions, offers an applicable tool for studying community formation.

2. Ethnographic Methodology

2.1 Sampling and Accessing Participants of the Fieldwork

Duration of this fieldwork spans one and a half years, from July 2021 to January 2023. Finding a suitable sample of the 'unit of analysis' (Bernard, 2011) poses conceptual and technical challenges for this research. As discussed previously, the definitions of 'Chinese' and 'artist' are ambiguous. Noteworthy is the observation that one informant, despite her repetitive involvement in the contemporary art system, hesitated to label herself as an artist. Besides, the Chinese artists in Berlin do not congregate in geographically demarcated neighborhoods or enclaves, and no organization serves as an official or formal gathering point for all Chinese artists in the city.

The identification of informants follows two approaches, attribute-based and relation-based. These two approaches are complementary. The attributes include self-identification as Chinese, professional

artistic production of contemporary art, and long-term residence in Berlin. Based on the relation-based approach, this study identifies the subject group by following their practices because practices point to interaction, communication, and networking, where the individual and collective realms are juxtaposed. The subject group, consisting of thirty-two participants (details in Appendix), is sampled and collected in three main ways: 1) information online; 2) tracing down the network; and 3) participating in events.

The first method was applied during the initial phase of fieldwork when I had limited contact with potential participants. As I later learned from the artists, the art world remains a relatively closed society. However, the specific characteristics of this population opened up other avenues for exploration. There are no 'universalistic rules of method' of doing fieldwork (Okely, 2012), methods need to be devised anew according to the characteristics of the studied subject. Since artists often rely on media for publicity, before entering the field, I searched the keyword 'Chinese artists in Berlin' and read online articles on this topic. Through this, I was able to identify several artists of interest. Besides, as the artists usually have personal websites and social media accounts for promoting their activities, I found their contacts through these channels and wrote e-mails or left messages. Once the first contact was established, the next became easier. Gradually, as I have gained reliable connections within the field, the second method had snowball effects. During the interviews, artists provided me with new names who could be potentially included in the group, and at times they were willing to intermediate the contacts.

Through the link-tracing sample design (Spreen, 1992), interviewees gradually brought up other persons and introduced me to a broader network. Social network forms the foundation of tracing down a specific population, and as Portes and Bach (1985, p. 10) suggested, migration "can be conceptualized as a process of network building". But admittedly, this method has limitations in sampling because it depends heavily on the network and "presupposes the existence of structure in the population data collection" (Spreen, *ibid.*, p. 35), the inherent bias and diversity of samples generated in this way are rendered problematic. This research mitigates the methodological bias by incorporating Chinese artists who are largely disconnected from others in the subject group and positioning Chinese contemporary art institutions, commercial galleries, public art museums, and associations as the social foci for

networking. These artists occupying marginal positions in the studied social network were sampled through the attribute-based approach.

Moreover, chance encounters can enrich the compositional variance of informants. I actively participated in various events organized by institutions, such as exhibition openings and workshops, where I anticipated that many Chinese artists would be present. For instance, once on the way to UdK Rundgang, I overheard two Chinese discussing art and I approached them and asked whether they were engaged in contemporary art, one of them later became a correspondent for this study. This artist reminded me that the Chinese artists I was acquainted with in the field are primarily market-orientated, while a significant number of their counterparts in Berlin prefer a more 'reclusive' existence, abstaining from commercial art scenes and collective activities organized toward the art market. These people are hiding in the blind spot of this research. At these events, I met professionals in contemporary art from diverse cultural backgrounds, and the conversations with them contributed to understanding this subject matter from more diversified viewpoints.

2.2 Collecting Data

When approaching the artists, I disclosed my identity as a researcher and clarified my intention as well as the brief topic of my research. Besides, my cultural and national background as a Chinese facilitated the communication. During the formal interviews, recording techniques were used, and I got informed consent from participants in advance and informed them about the further utilization of the materials. The recorded interviews are transcribed and qualitatively analyzed in field notes. Ethics form the basis of methods. Interviews and conversations were conducted in various social surroundings, including visits to artists' studios, homes, and institutions associated with this research; attending exhibitions together with artists; and at coffee shops and parks. The diversity of settings enabled me to gain insights from different perspectives. There is no best or standard ethnographic method that could be applied to all research subjects, instead, the field gives a space for researchers to strategically practice and learn while exploring a range of methods.

This study employs mixed methods of ethnography. Participant observation is a foundational and strategic method for ethnographic

research (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012; Bernard, 2011). According to the participant observation method, the observation is carried out when I play “an established participant role in the scene studied” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998, p. 248). The priority of the enacted role as an observer or a participant shifts contingent on the situation. For example, when I joined in the group conversation of several artists discussing their common concerns and shared experiences, I chose to participate less actively in the conversation and instead focused on observing their behaviours and interactions. Thereafter, the priority to observe or to participate more depends on the subjective judgment of the nature of activities, the setting, and personal orientation. The observation is not limited to the happenings in the natural physical environment, but also the interactions online, such as how they commented on each other’s posts on social media. I took photos of some events as a visual recall for writing field notes. The participant observation did not cease with the end of my fieldwork, as I still kept contact with the participants and met them on various occasions after leaving the field.

My approach is not to take the artists as objects from which I could collect information but to learn about individuals as concrete human beings, highlighting their personal experiences and thoughts. The interviews were designed in a person-centered manner, which enables the investigation of intricate interrelationships between individuals and the social, material, and symbolic contexts that frame their behaviors (Levy & Hollan, 1998). I acquire knowledge of their individualistic life experiences, the hints concealed in the complexities of daily life provide new visions to understand the field and prevent imaging of this unit of people as a homogeneous entity.

The interviews are semi-structured and open-ended. Several pre-determined key questions are designed for everyone in the sample, but the interviews unfold further depending on the information and variables disclosed in responses. Starting from the key questions, the interviews lead to focused discourses of different domains depending on the preferences of the participants, some elaborate on the art market and artistic practices, and some are inclined to discuss politics and private life matters. The person-centered approach can better stimulate the actors’ emotions, making spaces for exploring some intricate matters that may not be easily articulated.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty-nine artists in the subject group and in-depth formal conversations with four insti-

tutional actors. Additionally, I had informal and unstructured conversations with over fifty individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds who are involved in the China-related contemporary art scene in Berlin. Conversations can be a convenient qualitative investigation instrument in natural everyday environments (Swain & King, 2022). Conversations took place in public (e.g., encounters at exhibition opening events) and private (e.g., dining and parties) settings. Meanwhile, occasionally I guided the conversations with purposes concerned with this study, aiming to diversify the opinion on subject matters and deepen understanding of the field. These people remain anonymous in the text. Furthermore, to obtain insights from institutional perspectives, I had a job interview with the director of one institution associated with this study. Through this interview, I learned about the organization's mission, its personnel composition, operational orientation, as well as established contact for further inquiries. The basic principle of ethnographic fieldwork methods, in my point of view, is to 'remember one's purpose, and be flexible'.

2.3 Gaining Insights

The following practices are not incorporated in the conventional ethnographic methods, but they are critical for sharpening the vision while looking into the field and the subject group. Although this research is not concerned with artistic practices, knowledge of contemporary art and the art world is crucial for interpreting the data and building trust from the artists. Research related to contemporary artists cannot be conducted in ignorance of art and the operation of the art world. The knowledge acquired from visiting art exhibitions and fairs, reading academic and popular books on the contemporary art scene and market, listening to podcasts, and staying updated with the art news later became useful materials in our interviews and conversations. Although this knowledge may not directly contribute to this present research, it demonstrates my professionalism and dedication to taking the art seriously to the correspondents. Sometimes, I visited exhibitions with artists, they explained to me how they gaze at the artworks. Sharing my opinion on artworks and the art world could stimulate the artists to actively engage in the interviews and consolidate my relationships with them.

My profile as a researcher of anthropology also contributed a lot to the access to potential participants. The transdisciplinary collabo-

ration between anthropology and contemporary art has become popular, and artists increasingly seek anthropological backbones in art text writing and project designs. During the fieldwork, several artists suggested that we could do something together, including writing art texts for them and providing theoretical ideas for the artworks alike. I took a short-term part-time job as an assistant to an artist, helping him to 'brainstorm' the project, correspond with institutions, and write analytical texts based on interviews with the persons involved in his project. This experience enriched my understanding of the artistic creation and how the artist navigates in the art world and also connected me to other correspondents in the field. In addition, in the invitation from the curator, I collaborated with an artist to hold a project-oriented artist talk in an art museum. I also conceived an artist talk for a correspondent's solo exhibition at a gallery in Tokyo. My professional background in anthropology plays a critical role in obtaining opportunities to engage directly in the art world and gaining the trust of the artists.

3. Book Structure

The field of anthropology study is a convergence of 'place, people, identity and culture' (Amit, 2002, p. 15). Following the introduction, Part II will provide a profiling of the field, including the historical development of the Chinese artists' migration to Germany and the theoretical frameworks, the urban city milieus, the heterogeneous individual artists composing this social group, and institutional agents related to the studied field. With a focus on artistic mobility, discussions in Chapter 2 demonstrate that the artist migration represents a small facet of international Chinese migration, it shares general characteristics with broader Chinese migration while exhibiting distinctive patterns and dynamics, underscoring the non-homogeneous nature of the migratory practices. The historical perspective of this phenomenon broadens our insight into how transnational mobility operates differently in peculiar contexts of time and space and how it is framed in the shifting political, social, and economic conditions, both domestically and internationally.

The analysis of the relationship between Chinese contemporary art development and artists' emigration will illuminate the intricate interplay between art, politics, and the market on national and global scales. Migration and diaspora are popular themes in contemporary art discourses, and contemporary art is an important facilitator of transcul-

tural connectivity. Transnational mobility opens up opportunities for career development but also introduces challenges for artists, who need to conquer the constraints posed by cultural banner of ethnicity, and confront systematic marginalization and discrimination prevalent in the global art system and the host society. This chapter offers a general framework to comprehend the emergence of this social group in the grand backgrounds of Chinese migration and increasing mobility in the art world.

Chapter 3 investigates the urban city context in which this group is socially and spatially embedded. 'Based in Berlin' is a cardinal tag, the 'based place' is an indispensable element in the artist's professional profile. The study takes a multifaceted approach, including aspects such as the urban 'creative city' planning, cultural and migration policies, the local infrastructure and network of contemporary art, the economic conditions of the city, and the city's gentrification and conservatism problems as perceived by the artists. The analysis underlines Berlin's symbolic value as a global art capital within the hierarchically structured art world, illustrating that the choice of 'based place' is a crucial strategy in planning a professional artist career through which they might gain access to more lucrative social networks and positions in the art world.

Meanwhile, the sluggish art market and thwarted access to the local art system in Berlin are compelling Chinese artists in Berlin to explore transnational strategies, particularly through frequent travel between Germany and China to tap into the thriving art market in China. The analysis reveals that the decision of artists to continue residing in Berlin is often an outcome of a calculated equilibrium between merits and drawbacks in the given social circumstances. The investigations of the urban city setting explain why this particular social group is emerging in Berlin rather than in another location.

Based on quantitative data analysis and the qualitative interpretation of ethnographic materials, Chapter 4 presents the population composition and sociodemographic characteristics of the group of Chinese artists in Berlin, encompassing aspects such as age, gender, family status, educational background, career stage, practiced art forms, and migratory practices. The categorization of the group into subsets based on various attributes manifests internal diversities, which prevents imagining the subject group as a homogeneous entity. This heterogeneous nature is the base for understanding the relationships between

artists and the structure of the social group, such as the connectivity, clusters, and segmentations which will be analyzed in later chapters.

Although this research is not dedicated to migration, it regards migration not as an instantaneous action, but as a continuous state of being. The motivation for migration is triggered by the consideration of multiple factors, intermingling personal inclination and external constraints, rather than being ascribed to a single independent cause. By positioning the household as a core unit of decision-making for migration in some cases, this study emphasizes the role of the family in shaping migratory motivation, routes and destinations, transnational organization of life, and artists' professional careers. By doing this, it presents the artists as concrete and multi-dimensional human beings, rather than essentializing them to the occupational identity. The consideration of family life provides a unique lens to check into migratory practices and transnational coordination of private and professional life courses.

Chapter 5 shifts the attention to the five institutional agents associated with the studied field—commercial galleries, non-profit museums, and alternative platforms. These institutions, each with its own operational and cultural orientations, function as sites for face-to-face interactions between Chinese artists in the city and serve bridging roles in the group-making process. Chinese-operated art institutions overseas are sensitive to the uncertainty engendered by domestic and international politics, diplomatic relations between the homeland and the host country, and socio-economic conditions. As the identity of 'Chinese' invites suspicion in the host society, the institutions often opt to adopt international self-identification and replace the controversial national identity with a less contentious geopolitical identity. The closure of one of the institutions signifies the challenges confronted by international art institutions straddling both local and global social contexts simultaneously. Besides, minor jobs undertaken by people whose credits are often neglected by the public are indispensable for the institutions' operation, and the extensive networks between Chinese art professionals and cultural workers are crucial for sustaining the scene of Chinese contemporary art in the city. However, the unpaid work and 'help out' practices noticed during the fieldwork raise the question of precarity in the creative industries.

With the knowledge of the heterogeneous composition of the subject group and the social settings that enclose the group's life experiences, Part III embarks on the analysis of the social relationships,

networking patterns, and structure within the group. Chapter 6 presents a micro-level analysis of interpersonal relations using the social network analysis approach, demonstrating how these Chinese artists organize intra-group relationships in the intersected contexts of migration and engagement in the art world. Most of the relationships in this social network are characterized by infrequent contact and lack of emotional attachment. By applying one of the most classical concepts of social network study, 'the strength of ties' crafted by Granovetter, I will propound the theoretical and methodological limitations of dichotomizing human relationships into strong and weak ties in exploring intricate life practices.

It further investigates how social resources are mobilized through different types of relationships, showing that the success of resource mobilization builds upon various factors, including the types and value of resources, the properties of relations, and the actor's position-taking in the given field. There have been many debates on whether strong or weak ties are more efficient in mobilizing social resources. I point out that a comprehensive examination of the social field is imperative, particularly considering how honors, rewards, and prestige are delineated and conceptualized within the reference framework. It is crucial to recognize that effectiveness of resource mobilization is not solely contingent on the willingness to take action; it is equally, if not more, dependent on the ability or power to do so. The subjective motivations of the actors and the structural configuration are both essential in shaping individual actions and determining the efficacy of those actions.

Chapter 7 levels to the clustering pattern of different sets of artists, exemplified by the homophily effects which create boundaries and somewhat segmented internal fabrics within the social group. The intragroup clustering-segregating tendency is driven by the relatively frequent interactions and contacts between actors who share some common characteristics. Age, career stage, and the shared social foci are identified as the most important elements that shape the collective socializing patterns, artists who are similar in these attributes are prone to produce higher connectivity. Nevertheless, actors who are divergent in one attribute might intersect in another. Thus, clustering is an indeterminate phenomenon, the artists do not divide into clear-cut and consistent segments.

Moreover, some actors opt not to associate with these 'similar others', citing disagreements in values and interests. However, this agency

is constrained by the overall structure of the network and the paradigm of the contemporary art world, as individuals need to act following a set of predispositions and generative schemas shaped by the structural configuration. Findings from the investigations in Chapters 6 and 7 disclose that, despite sharing the same cultural and occupational identity and speaking the same language, the Chinese artists exhibit complicated, and at times contradictory, attitudes toward the group identity. The divergent attitudes toward the collective presentation as a social group and the multifarious socializing patterns conspicuously hinder the makings of a more cohesive group.

Chapter 8 deepens the exploration of the grouping mechanism with a focus on the intervention of social foci. The institutions associated with the studied field, as presented in Chapter 5, differ largely in terms of organizational identities, cultural backgrounds, resources, and structural status. The intermediating function of the institutions can link dispersed artists in the group and boost the overall network connectivity. Their respective characteristics find resonance in the divergent forms of relationships between individuals and institutions and manifest in their practical roles as social foci for joint interactions. The knotting power of the institutions hinges upon their organizational nature, and their structural positions and possessed resources in the art world. One function shared by all the institutions is the physical space they provide for social interactions, but none of them assumes the responsibilities of systematically organizing the relationships between Chinese artists. The unrepeated event-based social encounters can hardly give rise to united social grouping, and the transient collaborations among artists facilitated by these foci were infrequent and not consolidated by persistent shared goals. Even if the connections within the subject group are strengthened by institutional intervention, the solidarity remains centered around a small set of actors rather than transcend to the group as a whole.

According to the above findings, this research concludes that it is premature to designate a cohesive social group of Chinese artists in Berlin, and the prospect of developing this small unit of population into a community appears unpromising. Chapter 9 revisits the concept of community, drawing from my personal upbringing in a rural Chinese village. It sheds light on the nuanced interplay between historical and cultural contexts that shape our understanding of community. The discussion emphasizes the potential efficacy of organizing interven-

tions to unite loosely connected individuals around shared concerns. By synthesizing the multifaceted investigations presented throughout this study, the conclusion elucidates the reasons why the subject group confronts challenges to develop a more unified form.

The obstacles impeding this development arise both from within and externally. Not all artists involved in this study embrace the idea of being included in a collective representation under the designation of 'Chinese artists in Berlin'. The identity as a 'Chinese artist' is frequently met with skepticism, the negative perception of this identity can compound intra-group distrust and escalate internal division. Meanwhile, this study does not advocate the necessity for the Chinese artists in Berlin to adopt a communal lifestyle, as it is not desired by the artists themselves. In the year following the conclusion of my fieldwork, I observed a rapid population growth of Chinese artists in Berlin, and the connectivity among the original group members multiplied. This peculiar social group has developed a more complex and intricate structure within a short time, with its social networks becoming denser. With the expanding participation of diverse actors, this field will take on new dynamics that call for attention from various disciplinary scopes.

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