
*Resisting Chinese Transnational Repression:
Emotional Power. The emotional
sustainability of Chinese diaspora activists in
the Netherlands*



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1. Introduction

The issue of China's treatment of political activists has been in the media. In the following, I present several relevant headlines that appeared in two months.

On the 10th of December, an article in *the daily guardian* appeared titled: "Protests against China held in Europe to mark International Human Rights Day", and with it, a picture of people protesting on the Dam Square in Amsterdam. According to a statement by the U.S. Ambassador (Nicholas Burns), these people "call on the PRC (People's Republic of China) to stop its ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity...and its global campaign of transnational repression." (The daily guardian, 2022).

A few months before, a BBC news article listed the headline: "*China Accused of illegal police stations in the Netherlands.*" The article stated that the NGO Safeguard Defenders did an investigation following a report titled Chinese Transnational Policing gone wild. According to the organisation, various security bureaus from two Chinese provinces had established 54 "overseas police service centres" that claimed to help the local Chinese with administrative duties. However, according to Safeguard Defenders, these overseas police service centres are more part of the persuasion operations aimed at coercing those suspected of speaking out against the Chinese regime to return home (BBC, 2022).

Furthermore, coincidentally a day before this news headline, a Dutch broadcasting agency broadcasted a story about a Chinese refugee. The story titled: *gevlucht uit China, maar ook in Nederland niet veilig: "Waarom wil je me doden?"* (in a free translation: fled from China, but also not safe in the Netherlands: why do you want to kill me?) included a Chinese resident who had to flee the country because of his sympathetic words online towards the Hong Kong activists back in 2019—referring to the Hong Kong umbrella protesters against the Chinese regime (RTL Nieuws, 2022). This Chinese resident fled to the Netherlands, where he thought to be safe, only – according to himself – to be threatened, haunted on the streets and even framed for murder.

The issue of how the Chinese government treats its diasporic activists appeared multiple times in the media in 2022. These news articles all have in common that they cover a government (the Chinese government) *crossing borders* to intimidate, threaten and harass its diasporic activists. Crossing borders to take repressional action against citizens is called transnational repression (Tsourapas, 2021), and it forms a serious threat to the freedom of diasporic activists – defined by Moss (2020) as any émigré, exile, refugee or emigrant advocating for social economic, and political change in their country of origin (p.14.). the following section will elaborate further.

Diaspora hold an essential position on the world political stage. A diaspora, a term described by Adamson and Demitriou (2007), "can be identified as a social collectivity that exists across state borders and that has succeeded over time to 1) sustain a collective national, cultural or religious identity through a sense of internal cohesion and sustained ties with a real or imagined homeland and 2) display an ability to address the collective interests of members of the social collectivity through a developed internal organisational framework and transnational links (Adamson & Demitriou, 2007, p. 497, see also Koinova, 2014). Their migrant remittances either strengthen or destabilise authoritarian regimes. Diaspora activists

can create awareness around regime abuses, launch protests, pursue justice, demand that their host-country change its political strategy to put pressure on their home country, empower diaspora communities, and assist dissidents working on the ground (Moss, 2020). Furthermore, their influence is especially significant in political conflict, as concluded by a study done by the world bank in 2003: "...by far the strongest effect of war on the risk of subsequent war works through diasporas" (Shain & Barth, 2003, p. 449). The role of diaspora, specifically diaspora activism, is therefore vital when dissidents face an oppressing authoritarian regime. Moving against an authoritarian regime can be enhanced by diaspora activism and motivating uprisings within authoritarian borders (Tofangsazi, 2023). However, transnational repression impedes diaspora activism in various ways, especially the transnational repressional action that the Chinese regime uses—effectively working against the influence of diaspora activists.

As concluded by Moss (2020), Adamson and Tsourapas (2020), Michaelsen (2020) and Furstenberg, Perlec and Heathershaw (2020), regimes are widely guilty of repressional action such as proxy punishment, surveilling and monitoring, withdrawing student scholarships and passports and even assassinate and kidnap opponents abroad. These acts instil fear in diaspora activists, effectively stopping them from engaging in any activity (Moss, 2020). According to Moss (2020), the activists "...become reluctant to join organisations promoting progressive change." (p.16) because of this fear. Fear also creates mistrust among diaspora activists, as there has been mounting evidence of individuals (from China) who have been coerced into spying on their co-nationals in a host country (Moss, 2020). Spying on their co-nationals can lead to self-censorship, leading to victims of transnational repression avoiding alerting local law enforcement about their personal situations. Fear appears to have a substantial effect on diaspora activism, as Moss demonstrates; "So while diaspora activism has the potential to flourish in democracies, transnational repression can suppress the ability for an anti-regime community to work as a force of change." (Moss, 2020, p.17).

As demonstrated above, fear can affect an activist's emotional sustainability, the capacity for "sustaining the necessary levels of emotional energy required for long-term social change." (Brown & Pickerill, 2009, p. 26). Emotions, therefore, are essential in mobilising social movement and activism and are not an incidental aspect of activism. It is an emotion that shapes an individual's preferred organisational forms and movement tactics, as well as their responses to events and the goals of actions (Brown & Pickerill, 2009). Brown and Pickerill (2009) describe that it is necessary to understand feelings generated by particular activities as the awareness of these emotions can help generate more sustainable forms of activism. Connecting their findings to the interest of this research shows why it is necessary to understand the feelings connected to transnational repressional action taken on the diaspora activists as they might show how to help the diaspora activists create a sustainable form of activism.

Moreover, the perceived safety of a diaspora inside a host country can counter the effects of transnational repression. Host countries are obligated under Human Rights Law to protect their citizens' freedom of speech, the right to peaceful assembly, the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy inside their borders, and thus for the people residing in its borders, that includes its immigrant activists (Anstis & Barnett, 2022).

However, the transnational repression that the Chinese government imposes on its diaspora activists has been mentioned by several authors (Moss, 2020; Adamson & Tsourapas, 2020; Adamson & Demitriou, 2007; Kainova, 2024; Michaelsen, 2020), including some incidents in the Netherlands; Adamson and Tsourapas (2020) mentioned that an Uyghur factory

worker had received a phone call from his brother, who was presumably forced to ask for his return as well as provide the Chinese police with information about the Uyghurs in the Netherlands. Moss (2020) used the example of the Uyghur activists in the Netherlands that have been harassed and received death threats from people who were suspected of working with Chinese intelligence services to display that transnational repression is creating a high-risk activity out of simple public demonstrations. The mentioning of the Netherlands by these authors displays that transnational repression by the Chinese government takes place in the liberal democratic country of the Netherlands. This is part of the justification for focusing on the case of the Netherlands and its Chinese diaspora activists, which I will continue in the section below.

However, the relationship between a host country and a diaspora can assist a great deal in achieving the diasporic activists' agenda (Tellanders & Horst, 2019). According to Tellanders and Horst (2019), certain factors facilitate or hinder the lobbying success of diaspora in their effort to change the host-countries strategy towards the country of origin. A government that might be incentivised by lobbying efforts must have a permeable political structure, granting easy access to the locus of decision-making and a supportive or indifferent wider public. The Dutch government provides a relatively permeable political structure and a supportive or indifferent wider public. It is a liberal democracy; however, it does not support congruence between the diasporic activists' interests and its own (Freedom House, 2023). This might complicate matters for the Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands. The Dutch government is a valuable economic partner to China and the other way around. China is the Netherlands' largest trading partner in Asia, accounting for 12,8 bn euros in goods exports and 43 bn euros in goods imports into the Netherlands. At the same time, the Netherlands is invariably China's second or third-largest trading partner in Europe (Timmers, 2022). Though it does not necessarily agree with specific policies and has been reported to condemn the human rights violations of China, it remains vital to uphold good diplomatic relations with the Dutch government (Ministry of foreign affairs, 2019). Considering that transnational repression also threatens state sovereignty and international human rights norms (Moss D. M., 2020) and that the Netherlands is a democratic country that values human rights and freedom of speech as essential and delicate issues in Dutch politics (Timmers, 2022). With a relatively large Chinese diaspora group, according to the CBS (central bureau for Statistics) of the Netherlands. The Chinese population is the eighth largest ethnic population in the Netherlands, counting around 36,5 thousand inhabitants (CBS rapport, 2022). The Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands make a compelling and relevant case for this research.

The articles mentioned at the beginning displayed that despite being targeted by the Chinese government, these activists continued to protest, defying the aim of the Transnational repressional action taken by the Chinese government and posing questions about the response of transnational repression that the theory of Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022) failed to acknowledge. Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022) described the way that diaspora activists react to transnational repression as dependent on the degree of their commitment to engaging in political activism and their relative degree of social capital in the host country, meaning the social status and organisational affiliations that provided public, institutional, and political support for activism (Moss, Michaelsen, & Kennedy, 2022). Depending on whether these degrees were weak or strong, the activists would choose between (1) going silent, (2) fighting back, and (3) navigating between principled and protective action by signalling, cutting ties, or

self-censoring. However, this research builds upon that theory by adding emotion as another factor influencing diaspora activists' responses to transnational repression. Because as described above, emotions enhance the sustainability of activism, which is necessary to achieve the long-term social change the activists aim for (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Sirriyeh, 2023). Failing to acknowledge this, in theory, creates a knowledge gap as it does not explain why and how diaspora activism remains sustainable. The importance of sustainable diaspora activism lies in the motivational effect that is created. By actively and continuously naming and shaming, the Chinese diaspora activists can show the world and the Chinese activists residing in China that their authoritarian regime is vulnerable, which is necessary if they want to topple the regime (Tofangsazi, 2023). It is essential to understand the emotional effect of Chinese transnational repression on its diaspora activists living in the Netherlands because it might cause emotional burn-out, which has a negative effect on the sustainability of the Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands (Cox, 2011). Considering that the Netherlands is a liberal democracy and should be able to protect its citizens according to Human rights law, one might consider that this creates the space necessary for the diaspora activists to continue protesting. However, the articles mentioned at the beginning of this introduction explain that the opposite is true, endangering the continuing protest from the Chinese diaspora activists. Most literature on Transnational repression has focused on the obstacles diaspora activism face (Moss, Michealsen & Kennedy, 2022; Tsourapas, 2020; Adamson & Tsourapas, 2020; Michaelson; 2020; Furstenberg, Perlec & Heathershaw, 2020; Moss, 2020). Therefore, this research explores the emotional motivators for the Chinese diaspora activists living in the Netherlands to continue protesting despite the transnational repressional actions taken by the Chinese government. It is, therefore, that this research asks the question of what these emotions are. Concretely the main question this research asks is formulated as follows:

What are the emotional motivations that sustain Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands in their activism despite the presence of transnational repression?

As Moss, Michaelson, and Kennedy (2022) have described, diaspora activists are subjected to multiple forms of transnational repression. Depending on the type of transnational repression and the severity of it, subjects might respond differently in terms of emotions. Therefore, It is necessary to answer the subquestion: *What type of transnational repression are the Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands experiencing?* In addition to the central question of this research.

Moreover, according to Brown and Pickerill (2009), there might be a significant linkage between the reasoning behind the Chinese diaspora activist's continuation of protesting despite transnational repression and their emotions, primarily as they might act as motivators. The subquestion of *How do the Chinese diaspora activists cope with the emotions imposed on them through transnational repression?* It aids in understanding what lies behind the motivation.

Following the description of emotions from Brown and Pickerill (2009, p.26.), I recognise that although our naming and understanding of emotions is a social and cultural process, the feelings themselves are physical, biological impulses. I understand that emotions are complexes and shared meanings arising from human relations. Because emotions are socially embedded and highly personal, personal qualitative data is necessary to answer this research's central question. Using an inductive approach, I aim to develop a general

(preliminary) conclusion based on my observation of the lack of research on emotions linked to diasporic activism under transnational repression. Diaspora activists experience transnational repression individually; this research aims at understanding the reasoning behind the continuation of activism despite the hazards of transnational repression through emotion. In order to do so, a phenomenological approach is selected, meaning that it focuses on the experiences of a subject. Following transcendental phenomenology as defined by Edmund Husserl, this research focuses on understanding a phenomenon's reality by understating it as a person lives it. As he described, the critical question of a phenomenological investigation is "What is it for an individual to know or to be conscious of a phenomenon?" (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019).

This thesis is structured as follows: firstly, I introduce the case using a background chapter. I highlight the background to which the Chinese diaspora activists are situated in the Netherlands by elaborating on the Chinese governmental regime form. Secondly, the theoretical framework is used to bring the theory of transnational repression into the discussion of the emotional sustainability of activism. By discussing how diaspora activism is mobilised using the theory of collective mobilisation, I show how transnational repression acts as an obstacle for diaspora activists to keep engaging in activism. I then explain how emotional sustainability aids in surpassing the challenges transnational repression brings to diaspora activism. By displaying the effect of emotions on protesting, it becomes clear that it might feel freeing to continue with activism. The case of the Chinese diaspora in the Netherlands will be used as examples throughout the theoretical framework chapter.

Following the theoretical framework is the method section, in which I explain and describe the choices made for this research. The data section after that displays the findings of this research, followed by a discussion in which I bring the data of this research in line with the theory from the theoretical framework. This research is concluded by a discussion and conclusion chapter.

2. Chinese authoritarianism

This chapter provides the background on which this research is focused. It provides more information on the workings and motives for transnational repression taken by the Chinese government and elaborates on the ways of Chinese authoritarianism to enhance its grip on its subjects. The reasoning behind the choices made by the Chinese government might give insight into the preferred strategies as well as future decision makings. Understanding the background and ways Chinese authoritarianism operates, therefore, aids in understanding what the diaspora communities endure. China aims to increase its influential power worldwide by targeting its diaspora communities with (threatening of) transnational repression, such as proxy punishment, and influencing its public opinion overseas to create favourable policies from foreign governments (Sloss, 2023). China uses various strategies to create this influence which will be discussed below.

Most protests started in China before the Chinese diaspora activists had to leave in order to keep protesting. Reasons for this might vary. However, a study done by Ong and Han (2019) concluded that Chinese citizens are less likely to move to the streets when they perceive to be able to bring personal benefits. Moreover, according to the study, citizens are even less likely to move to protest if this is against the government. Effectively because moving against such a powerful entity forms more risks. Staying active as a protester against the powerful government of China is therefore considered rare (Ong & Han, 2019).

Despite the findings of the study done by Ong and Han (2019), another study concluded that there are trends visible within Chinese society to move to protest. Moreover, this trend, despite the protests being disorganized, dispersed and short-lived, shows the vulnerability of the Chinese government (Chen, 2020). According to Chen (2020), a rapid increase can be seen in collective protests in China over the past two decades due to the state's authority having limited capacity to demobilize the aggrieved. Additionally, those that are moved to protest are usually “those whose rights and interests have been harmed during institutional transformation and market transition processes.” (Chen, 2020, p. 643). However, under Xi Jinping's rule, the lack or limited capacity to demobilize the aggrieved has made a turning point in 2013. Under his rule, the government has been more committed to taking down collective protests. The party has strengthened its control over the media, internet censorship and civil society. The severe and comprehensive crackdowns with which the Chinese government responded to protests are the reason why mass protests have been shrinking in China since the mid-2010s.

Nevertheless, the Chinese diaspora activists attempt to maintain their voices by actively participating in protests. Furthermore, this trend (to establish multiple revolutionary groups overseas) can date back to the late Qing dynasty, according to Zhao (2021). Since the Qing dynasty, diaspora activism has been maintained throughout the 20th century, adapting to each historical event by creating a new diaspora cohort. In order to maintain this momentum, it appears vital to be able to adapt; according to Zhao (2021), adaptation to the modern way of activism also includes digitalizing. This is because online activism inevitably spills over into mainland China's forums and can spur fierce political debates, decimate online magazines and discuss social and political issues. However, these online diaspora activists are up against a mighty enemy: the Chinese government and its fierce leader Xi Jinping who will go to great lengths to protect state security and maintain its power.

Under Xi Jinping, the party aims to become “a global leader in terms of composite national strength and international influence.” (Kenia, 2018). To achieve this goal, China has been investing heavily in not only its hard power in the form of its economic and military capabilities but also its soft power. China has been embarking on a global “charm offensive” since 2007. This strategy has been dubbed the most potent weapon in Beijing’s foreign policy arsenal” and has had the focus on its media and propaganda. The Chinese government is estimated to invest around 10 billion dollars annually (Kenia, 2018). Xi Jinping has stressed the importance of telling a good China story and spreading China’s voice well. He aims to construct an external discourse system and enhance its global power. Here, a discourse system refers to how media and propaganda are enabled to influence shaping and redefining China’s image internally and externally (Kenia, 2018).

The number of autocracies exceeded the number of democracies in 2021 for the first time since 2000 (Sloss, 2023). This trend is defined by Sloss (2023) as autocratization and is something that China has promoted. According to him, China is attempting to create “...a sphere of influence comprising not just their country’s immediately contiguous region but also the entire emerging, non-Western, and largely non-democratic world – the global South” (Sloss, 2023, p. 4). One way of creating this sphere of influence is through discourse power, described by Kania (2018) “...as the capability to influence global values, governance, and even day-to-day discussions on the world stage”. Discourse power has been central to the Chinese Communist Party’s quest to dominate thought and narrative. It is of strategic and national security importance for the party to control the media, culture and narrative. However, this form of power is hard to measure, yet according to Sloss (2023), a large body of anecdotal evidence suggests that China’s discourse power has grown substantially over the past ten or fifteen years (p.1).

China's authoritarian power is becoming what Hoffmann (2022) calls a "tech-enhanced authoritarian regime", using emerging technologies to bend the world to accommodate its authoritarianism. Technologies are used as *sharp power*, which, unlike soft power, can penetrate the political and information environments in the targeted countries and centres around distraction and manipulation rather than attraction and persuasion. With the help of technology, *sharp power* works as a smart way to influence and better understand its audiences. According to Hoffmann (2022), Beijing harnesses these technologies to enhance its international social management, a term used to describe the attempts of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to shape, manage and control society. Furthermore, under Xi Jinping, the CCP attempts to assert a similar level of control globally. The CCP prioritises state security in a way that is not about protecting the people of China but focuses on protecting the CCP rule above all else (Hoffman 2022). From their standpoint, the everyday provision of traffic safety, violent crime prevention, and the projection of authoritarian power, including suppressing dissent, can be fused. The concept of social management blends these two while prioritising regime security over the rights of the public (Hoffmann, 2022). The CCP then aims to shape, manage and control the international environment so that public sentiment is favourable to its interests (the party's interest, not the people of China). To achieve this aim, China has invented ways of monitoring its people through *smart cities*. These cities are linked to two ongoing public security projects: Skynet and Sharp Eyes. Skynet is a video surveillance system that uses technologies to improve real-time monitoring and information recording; sharp eyes is a more advanced version of Skynet and installs

government platforms in urban areas for sharing video-image information and establishing streamlined ways for government services. For the utilisers and customers, these projects enhance their everyday life; for the police, the data from these projects enables them to detect "abnormal" behaviour that could lead to "illegal" gatherings (Hoffmann, 2022).

According to Jiang (2021), it is widely acknowledged that under Xi Jinping's control, surveillance has been intensified tremendously. However, this also leads to an additional mode of surveillance because as the Chinese intend to create an atmosphere of fear in the Chinese society, it fuels distrust amongst the society. Ultimately creating a self-controlling prison as the Chinese government has "eyes and ears everywhere." Therefore, fear plays a significant role in how the Chinese authoritarian regime is currently ruling. Fear also aids in governing subjects through their autonomy (Vuori & Paltmaa 2015).

The tech-enhanced authoritarian regime of China forms a direct threat to its diaspora as it enables the regime to monitor its expatriates more closely. Countries form deals with the People's Republic of China (PRC) to enhance their technologies and networks. Moreover, in turn, it aids in developing a more advanced AI system in China. So did Zimbabwe agree to a deal with the Chinese company Cloudwalk to build a national facial-recognition database and monitor system. Facial recognition technology grows more accurate when trained with more extensive databases and greater diversities. Part of this deal was that Zimbabwe would send its data to the PRC to improve Cloudwalk's ability to recognise faces interracially, ultimately making the company globally competitive (Hoffmann, 2022). Hoffmann (2022) stresses the importance of investing in and protecting liberal democratic values as China's tech-enhanced authoritarianism does not only form a threat to its diaspora but also to the countries in which these targeted diasporas live. China's tech giants are meeting international standards (that they helped to set up) and have a significant role in privacy information management systems (PIMS), rendering them trustworthy. However, a Chinese-certified facial-recognition and traffic monitoring software called YITU has been reported to have code to identify Uyghurs from public surveillance videos (Hoffmann, 2022).

Additionally, authoritarian regimes are fully aware of the power of social media and aim to limit its influence with various methods. It is well documented by political scientists in both authoritarian and democratic regimes that social media can move citizens to participate in political protests. Enabling citizens to coordinate social protest, provide long-term support for civil society and facilitate the downfall of the authoritarian state (Hu & Zheng, 2019). The Chinese government is no exception as they monitor the internet and induce censorship on search engines and social media platforms such as WeChat and Weibo (Hu & Zheng, 2019). According to Hu and Zheng (2019), China sees anything that challenges the legitimacy of the Party-state as intolerable.

The way China surveys its citizens through the programs mentioned above and limits freedom of speech through its intense censorship of social media and propaganda creates grievances for the public. It incentivises them to protest and display "undesirable elements in the social order" (Kong & Su, 2022, p. 1192). According to Kong and Su (2022), the rise of containment on the public of China creates more grievances, resulting in an even more robust containment from the government and ultimately creating a deadlock. Diaspora activists, therefore, can escape this deadlock and use their freedom to continue their protests. It makes sense that the Chinese government tries to silence these protests overseas by using transnational repression.

The next chapter will provide an overview of theories linked to transnational repression, diaspora protests and the importance of emotional sustainability within protesting.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter elaborates on the theory of transnational repression in light of diaspora activism. I then bring the theory of sustaining activism through emotions into the debate around social movement in light of transnational repression. According to the social movement theory, transnational repression is an obstacle to dissidents' motivation and prevents them from moving into action. The effects of transnational repression point towards a recipe for burn-out. However, as I bring emotions into this debate, it becomes clear that emotions can counter transnational repression's effects by creating strong emotional motivations to prevent burn-out, which aligns with the theory of emotional sustainability.

3.1 Diaspora activism

The theory around "the Collective Action Dilemma" sheds some light on when and who will move to protest. The dilemma in the Collective Action Dilemma theory is that "Protest is a way of influencing political outcomes that entails more costs for participants than other forms of political participation." (Inguanzo et al., 2022, p. 429). This is why people protest relatively infrequently than via institutionalised forms of participation, such as voting. It also matters who is protesting as specific sociodemographic characteristics and motivations can lower the barriers to protest. For example, young people who experience a higher risk tolerance are more likely to protest. As well as men as opposed to women, the latter are more risk averted (Inguanzo et al., 2022).

Grievances lie at the heart of every protest, be they the experience of illegitimate inequality, feelings of relative deprivation or feelings of injustice. However, there is more to it than grievances alone. Grievances are abundant, yet some people are mobilised to protest while others do not. According to social psychological research, this is because of efficacy. Efficacy refers to "...the individual's expectation that it is possible to alter conditions or policies through protest." (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). Here we can distinguish two types of efficacies;

- 1) Group efficacy is the conviction that group efforts can solve group-related problems.
- 2) Political efficacy: the belief that political actions can impact the political process. Within political efficacy, one can find two dimensions: internal efficacy: the extent to which an individual understands politics and engages in it, and external efficacy: the faith and trust citizens have in the government (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013.)

To cite van Stekelenburg and Klandermans in a summarising statement: "Efficacious and inefficacious people take different routes to social change through while normative forms of protest like petitioning and demonstrations tend to attract highly efficacious people, non-normative forms of protest are more likely to attract low efficacious people." (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 889).

Tarrow's theory of the cycle of contention (2022) explains that protesting is part of a cycle; this cycle of contention is defined as follows; a phase of heightened conflict across the social system: with a rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilised to less mobilised sectors; a rapid pace of innovation in the form of contention; the creation of new or transformed collective action frames; a combination of organised and unorganised participation; and sequences of intensified information flow and interaction between challengers and authorities (Tarrow, 2022, p. 194). Building upon this theory to explain the emergence of diaspora

movements, Quinsaat (2016) suggests adding the concept of 'initiator movements'. According to Tarrow (2022), the critical political organisation context in which later movements develop is supplied by initiator movements. These initiator movements are early rises of demonstrations that encourage protests because early protest signals the potential vulnerability of elites to challenges (Tarrow, 2022). However, multiple studies have argued that activism originated not only through early rises but also with increased rates of protests and increases in the density of social movement organisations (Minkoff, 1997; Moss, 2019; Psimitis, 2011). Therefore, the answer to why people protest consists of multiple theories that all seem to lack the broader perspective needed to explain diaspora activism. The section below will explain the transnational complexity of diaspora activism.

3.1.2. Transnational protesting

The act of protesting has taken a transnational turn since globalisation started to increase in volume and speed. Enabling people, ideas and goods to transcend borders and create a more connected world (Moss, 2019). This created opportunities for social movements and diaspora activism to facilitate contention in states where activists themselves do not live by creating international networks and aiming their movements towards organisations that regulate the behaviour of states and other authorities such as Civil Rights Defenders, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International (Moss, 2019). This transnational turn in social movements has caused scholars to turn their attention to how diasporas form social movements on behalf of political causes at home, and according to Moss (2019), these studies have found that diaspora movements tend to be dominated by first and second migrants with relatively strong ties towards their homeland. Furthermore, the diaspora members move to transnational activism "...when conflicts at home align with their biographies, ties, interests, identities, and values..." (Moss, 2019, p. 1671).

The social movement theory sheds a broader light on how and when diaspora activism emerges and has been used as a framework for understanding the nature of diaspora to the background of transnational 'imagined community', which is central to the formation of diasporas (Quinsaat, 2016). According to Quinsaat (2016), diaspora mobilisation is, in essence, a transnational political project that stems from the interplay of opportunities in the political system, resources in the community, and strategic deployment of ideologies and identities (Quinsaat, 2016, p. 1016).

Shain and Barth (2003) argue three motives for diaspora activism to emerge. The first one would be that the diaspora activists view the homeland's foreign policy as having an impact on the interest of "the people", the entire kin community inside and outside the homeland. Second, diaspora activists might have a decisive role in how the homelands' foreign policy affects the homelands' future; for the persistence of their homeland, diaspora activists are primarily active in this domain. This also leads to diaspora activists wanting to influence the host lands foreign policies in order to maintain a strong homeland to which they ultimately can return or to uphold the homeland's "mythical standing" as a country that helps to uphold their fading ethnic identity (Shain & Barth, 2003). The third motive the diaspora activists hold is that they might view the homelands' foreign policy as affecting the interest of a specific community. If these interests are almost existential, they can include the diaspora's security, image and standing in the host land (Shain & Barth, 2003).

However, Shain and Barth (2003) fail to mention the broader field of agents, mechanisms and processes that enable and create diaspora mobilisation. Application of the theory of political processes shows that external and internal factors are at play for a diaspora to mobilise. Here external factors (also referred to as political opportunity structures) include elites' party affiliations and alliances, existing laws and policies, regime type and relations among states. Internal factors include collective identity, ideology, financial resources, leadership and organisational structure (Quinsaat, 2016, p. 1016). If these factors are commendatory, then a movement will likely develop. The external factors or political opportunity structures are relatively in favour of the Chinese diaspora, as the Dutch political system is categorized as relatively permeable (Igarashi, Nakai, & Ono, 2023). However, the relationship among states, when looking at the bonds between the Netherlands and the Chinese, does not favour the Chinese diaspora activists as the Dutch are more likely to uphold good international relations with China (Timmers, 2022). Furthermore, the organisational structure is limited in the Netherlands, few organisations are found, and those that do organise protests do so for a wider public, such as the “*Stichting Tibbet Support Group Nederland*”.

Tarrow's (2022) theory of initiator movements adds another layer to the origin of protesting from diaspora movements. This is because the early protesting organisations create structures that help shape movements in the future. They do this by creating networks, a toolkit of goals and tactics and a collective identity that justifies the opposition. So, the early movements or initiator movements also create a legitimate base to build their (the diaspora) own movement organically until the political conjuncture allows for mobilisation to erupt (Quinsaat, 2016, p. 1017).

Placing the Chinese diaspora over the social movement theory sheds light on how the Chinese diaspora activist moved to protest. The following section will elaborate further on Chinese diaspora activism.

3.2 Chinese diaspora activism

Various media sources worldwide have portrayed members of the Chinese diaspora as either dissidents against an authoritarian state or loyal trumpeters for a totalitarian government, and both as victims. However, the former is framed more positively (Zhao, 2020). This portrayal neglects the diversity of the modes of (political) activism this diaspora takes, which according to Zhao (2020), overlooks 'the potential contributions to social movements in democracies, both intellectually and practically' (Zhao, 2020, p. 98). This highlights the importance of examining the complexity of the Chinese diaspora activists as the image around the world remains inaccurate—ultimately neglecting the importance of recognition needed for the diaspora activists to remain motivated. I will discuss motivation within diaspora activism in a later section.

According to Shi (2005), the Chinese diaspora is a diverse migration group consisting of multiple subgroups and diverse cultural dimensions, and because of this, they are not bound to fall into activism naturally (Shi, 2005). According to Shi (2005), these differences and contractions within the Chinese diaspora create passiveness over activism, which means there is a lack of group efficacy necessary for the diaspora to protest. Shi (2005) suggests that in order to achieve activism, one needs continuous efforts across boundaries. The key to this finding is the word continuous. As described in the introduction, continuing to protest thrives through emotional sustainability (Brown & Pickerill, 2009).

The emotional condition of the Chinese diaspora activists is under pressure, according to Zhao (2020). In recent years, the development of the Chinese state to tighten its grip on activism as well as the worsening relationship with China and countries like the U.S. and the Netherlands, caused the diaspora members to be caught between two empires demanding loyalty from their own citizens (Zhao, 2020). The situation of the Chinese diaspora activists has put them in a condition of exile, both physically as well as emotionally. According to Zhao (2020), the activists express deep anxiety over the crisis and their personal safety on both sides (China and the U.S.) (Zhao, 2020).

According to Zhao (2021), studies have found that there has been a trend in that Chinese diaspora engagements rarely participate in progressive social movements in democracies. However, this trend has been reversed in recent years because younger activists tend to have a more critical take on global capitalism and are eager to participate in the progressive social movements of their host countries (Zhao, 2021). This can be attributed to several factors. So did the younger activist witness a China that has been expanding its global market, have there been massive urbanisation trends, including the connection of these smart cities (as mentioned in the background chapter), and has there been a rise in social inequality that spurs younger activists in social justice activism. Due to the background of these younger activists, there are more similarities with Millennial activists in liberal democracies (Zhao, 2021). Furthermore, thanks to the recent increase in protests and the visibility of it through social media platforms, it becomes increasingly more complicated for Chinese diaspora activists to 'sweep aside the surging grassroots resistance' (Zhao, 2021, p. 286).

Another factor that characterises the Chinese diaspora activists is that their activism takes place under authoritarianism from the Chinese government. The mobilisation from any local activists or the diaspora needs to be done with great caution. The Chinese government is well known for its strict surveillance, and any form of critique will be viewed as a threat to public order (Wang, 2018; Hoffman, 2022). According to Wang (2018), the activist's first priority is to invest in a secure network relationship both inside as well as outside China; this means that local activists attempt to align with outside standards, norms and actions tactically. These networks ultimately lead to everyday resistance. However, this has proven to remain challenging as, according to Wang (2018): 'a repressive regime will almost inevitably discover what is going on.' (p.561).

Furthermore, the Chinese diaspora activists play an essential role in this network, which is much needed to sustain their resistance, as they take place in an alternative learning process called 'negative learning' (Zhao, 2020). Here Zhao (2020) refers to the act of learning from the diverse social movements in a global setting. This knowledge will then be implemented in their movement in their home country. Which enables them to protest more sufficiently (Zhao, 2020).

One continuous form of negative learning happens in a space separated from national borders. The virtual space is a space where activism has flourished despite the heavy censorship that the Chinese employ (Zhang, 2021). Due to their creativity, they are able to navigate through the surveillance in order to get a message through (Zhang, 2021). Moreover, this happened globally as diaspora activists learn from the social movements in their host countries and can communicate this to their dissidents inside the Chinese borders (Zhao, 2020).

The act of creating a network through which Chinese diaspora activists can transcend their knowledge to the people inside China's borders creates not only more effective ways of protesting in China but also contributes to the protest activity in general, which in turn motivates

the continuation of protesting against China both within and outside the Chinese borders. Diaspora activism shows they can diminish the government's repressional activity by naming and shaming its behaviour (Tofangsazi, 2023). Often, diaspora activism happens on the international stage, which boosts confidence in the activists as a regime is less likely to resort to repression and violence under international attention. This creates the perception of political opportunity for dissidents inside China's borders and therefore aids in boosting protests under authoritarian regimes. (Tofangsazi, 2023). However, transnational repression works as an obstacle to diaspora activism. The following section will elaborate further.

3.3 Transnational repression

'Any effort to prevent acts of political dissent against an authoritarian state by targeting one or more existing or potential members of its emigrant or diaspora communities' (p. 618) is what Tsourapas (2021) conceptualises as transnational repression. These efforts can be distinguished as indirect and direct modes of control. Indirect modes of control are surveillance, coercion of the activists into returning to the homeland and the use of consulates, embassies and other government actors to gather intelligence on their citizens abroad (Adamson, 2020). An example of this can be found in the action taken by the Egyptian government on behalf of the Chinese government in 2019, arresting hundreds of Uyghurs to hand them over to Chinese authorities (Tsourapas, 2021). Examples of more direct modes of transnational repression used by authoritarian regimes are intimidation and deterring opposition groups in the diaspora, which involves attempted assassinations, threats (verbal or written warnings), exile (banishment from the country), withdrawing scholarships or other forms of financial assistance; and proxy punishment (harassment of or harm to relatives in the home country) (Moss D. M., 2016, p. 485).

The transnational repressional method of proxy punishment has proven to be an effective way of making diaspora activism a high-risk, high-cost activity for individuals (Moss, Michaelsen, & Kennedy, 2022). Proxy punishment comes in different forms that range in severity, ranging from physical violence and incarceration to verbal threats and travel bans. However, the concept remains the same in that it is used as a form of intimidation. Examples include calls from anonymous regime agents threatening the activist's family at home to ultimately force the individual to report at their consulates or embassies to be apprehended or to fly back to their country of origin. Chinese authorities also have been reported to hold family members of Uyghurs studying abroad hostage until these students return home ((Tsourapas, 2021). Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022) identified five types of proxy punishment. The first category Moss and Kennedy (2022) identified is *physical harm and confinement of activists' relatives in the home country*. This is done by either kidnapping, torturing or killing a relative. The second type is *verbal threats and in-person harassment* of family members by regime agents. A third category was *forced participation in regime propaganda and slander*. This is done by pressuring relatives to confess (for example) on national television about their disapproval of activism. Resource deprivation is categorised as the fourth category, which includes terminating family members' employment, seizing their assets, or denying work permits. The fifth and final type that authoritarian regimes might use is *travel bans issued against relatives at home*, which renders them immobile and blocks them from reuniting with their family abroad (Moss, Michaelsen & Kennedy, 2022). The response of the diasporic activists towards these ways of proxy punishment depends on their commitment to political activism and their host country's social capital. Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022) then continue to distinguish three ways of responding; Suppose the activists had a weak commitment

to political activism (their engagement in principled, politicised action) and their social capital is weak (the public, institutional, and political support for activism) the activists will resort to going silent. Here going silent refers to stopping protesting and not engaging in any activism. However, if the commitment to political activism is strong and their social capital is in the host country, activists are more likely to fight back. Fighting back is, according to Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022), to become more active and to openly challenge the threatening regime. If the commitment to political activism is strong, but their social capital in the host country is weak, activists will resort to navigating between principled and protective action. Principled and protective action means that the activists will resort to signalling, cutting ties, or self-censoring.

Globalism has helped to make proxy punishment an increasingly more accessible transnational repression tool for authoritarian regimes to use against their diaspora activists. It is because the diaspora activists attempt to publicly name and shame regimes on internet-based platforms that the same platforms alert the governments to their opponent's identities, whereabouts, and actions—effectively providing the intel the governments need in order to 'punish' their diaspora (Tsourapas, 2021). Transnational repression through online means especially has a negative effect on diaspora activism. According to Moss (2018), the effect of the presence of pro-regime agents online cause 'network erosion', which means that the activists fear for the safety of their family and, therefore, sever their bonds with family and friends in their home country. This fear causes the diaspora activists to fail in their communication through online means. This is a very effective way of dampening the 'voice' of the diaspora activists, as this leads to self-censorship (Moss, 2018). The real and perceived presence of pro-regime agents causes many members of the diaspora to hide their identities. Ultimately creating a problem for their fellow activists in the local communities in their home countries who sought support anonymously because if they decide to, they might risk exposure by their fellow activists to the online monitors of the pro-regime. Therefore, a globalised reach of the regime constrains many members of the diaspora to act on their free speech in their host countries. Consequently, creating a high-risk act of dissent out of online diaspora activism and tightening the grip of transnational repression on any activism rendered by the diaspora.

China has launched a global campaign of transnational repression as it has roughly 10 million Chinese-born persons living outside China as well as approximately 35 million second- or later-generation descendants (Waldinger & Shams, 2023). China's transnational repression is characterised as 'the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign' (Waldinger & Shams, 2023, p. 4.14). The transnational repression campaign of the Chinese is an effective way of creating hesitance and fear amongst its dissidents as it has not only been monitoring its diaspora activist but also placing students as foot soldiers in the countries of where Chinese diaspora activists live. Doing so creates suspicion from the host state and thus creates a repressional stemming from both proximate and distal sources, rendering Chinese diaspora activism as a high-risk act (Waldinger & Shams, 2023). This is also the case for the Chinese diaspora in the Netherlands, as Dutch broadcasting agencies have reported that Chinese spies reside in Dutch universities (van Enk, 2022). The fear that the high risk of protesting instals acts as a blockage to continue protesting. Fear, therefore, has an emotional impact on the sustainability of protesting (Brown & Pickerill, 2009). The following section will elaborate further.

3.4 Emotional Sustainability in Activism

According to Brown and Pickerill (2009), emotions shape and inspire activism in a way that individuals choose their organisational forms and movement tactics based on their perceived emotions. Emotions can be used to shape public opinions and thus play a role in the motivation of protests. Strategic use of emotional reaction helps in the motivational effect of protesting.

Brown and Pickerill (2009) provide an example of the strategic use of emotional reaction in the difference between protesting in a big crowd with people with a (perceived) common cause and protesting in a smaller group or band where one is more isolated and exposed to being part of a resistance. The latter will ultimately cost more emotional motivation to continue, whereas the first-mentioned example will add to emotional motivation as one can feel the pressing physical co-presence of others (Brown & Pickerill, 2009). 'Organisational structures and processes enable activists to transform personal emotions such as anger and hopelessness into a collective defined sense of injustice' (Brown & Pickerill, 2009, p. 27). This helps to manage the anxiety often associated with the high risk of participating in protesting. Therefore, Protesting through collective action helps create 'pleasurable dimensions' and makes it more secure for activists to sustain their involvement. According to Brown and Pickerill (2009), it is necessary to connect emotional reflexivity with emotional sustainability. Emotional reflexivity refers to activists being able to reflect on their emotional needs and commitments and to be able to negotiate these alongside ongoing resistance and involvement in protests. If activists experience the space for the emotions in activism, one is able to sustain activism (Brown & Pickerill, 2009). Failing to pay attention to emotional reflexivity will eventually cause burn-out (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Cox, 2011).

Burn-out can be described as 'a state of mental and physical exhaustion brought on by over-work or trauma' (Brown & Pickerill, 2009, p. 28). Cox (2011) elaborates further on the burn-out as it has an effect on the physical and mental sustainability to proceed in protesting. He states that trauma causes stress and that oppression is generically traumatising. Continuous forms of stress eventually cause the physical body to become unable to adjust to new sources of stress and seize its allostatic responses for various physical reasons. In other words, it seizes its bodily function to alter its gear for sleep, fight/flight, eating etc. A burn-out is then characterised by three key elements; (I) exhaustion, the inability to recharge in physical and mental rest, (II) Cynicism, a negative or excessively detached response to various aspects of work, like the work that belongs to activism and (III) inefficacy, the feeling of lack of achievement which eventually causes self-doubt and questions about self-worth. However, strong social ties support against stress and, ultimately, a burn-out (Cox, 2011).

However, a helpful way of preventing burn-out is the experience of being able to resist. According to Cox (2011), moving to protest is a healthy, logical response to stressful or traumatic situations because it aids in the feeling of doing something to make the world more peaceful and becoming politically active has the potential to reduce stress in general (Cox, 2011). He suggests that naming the source of stress and trauma in the lives of activists and addressing this collectively that it creates cognitive and emotional liberation. Moving to protest as a collective community and with a sense of making real achievements can therefore be empowering and life-affirming. Furthermore, activism enhances well-being by connecting with, supporting, and building community goals. This is due to the participants being able to connect to their social group or community through activism (Velez, Baranowski, & Manosalvas, 2022). It is, therefore, crucial to bear the emotional effects in mind when exploring the motivational engine behind activism, as this theory counters the theory of social movement and diaspora mobilisation under transnational repression. The theory of social movement and diaspora mobilisation under transnational repression displays a recipe for burn-out and demobilisation which ultimately will lead to the loss of one's voice. However, the theory mentioned by Cox (2011) counters this and claims that activists will gain motivation from the emotional stress imposed on them, therefore maintaining their voice. This is helpful as it elaborates on the theory of transnational repression and displays what actions can be undertaken to prevent the loss of diaspora activists' voices. As previously mentioned, maintaining the diaspora activists' voice is vital for continuing protesting inside the Chinese borders.

Coping with repressional action taken against diaspora activism can be described as the 'ways in which individuals respond to or regulate themselves in the face of aversive or challenging events' (Velez, Baranowski, & Manosalvas, 2022, p. 1100). According to Velez,

Baranowski and Manosalvas (2022), activists cope with their challenges by caring for their basic needs and paying attention to their emotions. Furthermore, reorienting themselves to the positive aspects of their work is perceived as an important factor in avoiding yielding to the stress imposed on them. Another finding of the research done by Velez, Baranowski and Manosalvas (2022) was that they found significant importance in the boundary set by the activists who participated in their research. This was done by disconnecting from their phones and periodically taking breaks from activism when it became emotionally overwhelming (Velez, Baranowski, & Manosalvas, 2022). In addition, a 'working utopia' acts like a place and space where members can replenish their emotional energies and beliefs in the movement's aim. This is necessary for the activists as the renewal provides an illusion or the avoidance of disillusionment that is needed for continued action (Millward & Takhar, 2019, p. NP6). Another factor that aids in countering the effects of transnational repression is the globalised setting in which diaspora mobilisation works. Due to the globalised, decentralised and multiheaded swarm of movements, it has succeeded in educating and radicalising a generation of activists around the world. They are effectively aiding in the continuation of protests as this makes a movement resilient to the effect of burn-out in protesting (Millward & Takhar, 2019).

3.5 Sustaining diaspora activism through host-country security

The relationship between a host country and a diaspora can assist a great deal in achieving the diasporic activists' agenda (Tellanders & Horst, 2019). However, transnational repression also threatens diaspora activists by violating the host state's sovereignty in that it 'constitutes extraterritorial enforcement jurisdiction: interferes with open debate and national self-determination; impedes the host state's adherence to fundamental norms of international humanitarian law; and undermines host state authority, domestic sovereignty, and integrative capacities' (Michaelsen & Thumfart, 2023, p. 151). The countries the diaspora resides in are often subjected to digital threats and attacks. An example is given by Michaelsen and Thumfart (2023) about the abuse of a powerful surveillance tool by authoritarian governments that was directed and used as threats against individual dissidents but also threatened the security of the broader host society as it was used to target not only their own nationals at home and abroad but also foreign targets, like journalists, lawyers and high-ranking politicians. Furthermore, in summarisation, Michaelsen and Thumfart (2023) make the following statement: "Any challenge by another state to the host state's ability to guarantee the safety and rights of political exiles on its territory also signifies a challenge to its ability to maintain domestic sovereignty which refers to the organisation of public authority within a state and to the level of effective control exercised by those holding authority" (p. 163).

Host countries can and should be able to protect the rights of freedom of speech, the right to peaceful assembly, the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy inside their borders, and thus for the people residing in its borders, that includes its immigrant activists (Anstis & Barnett, 2022). Therefore, failing in interventions to stop transnational repression will grant authoritarian states more power to continue to repress democratic debate and human rights, further tightening their control over their nationals both at home and abroad (Anstis & Barnett, 2022). Furthermore, according to Anstis and Barnett (2022), it is an obligation under International Human Rights Law to pursue the protection of freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, expression and the right to privacy.

Another factor by which host countries can facilitate diaspora activism is altering their foreign strategy towards the country of origin. Indeed, diasporas, especially those in liberal-democratic societies, influence their host lands foreign policy vis-à-vis their homelands for either the benefit or detriment of their homeland (Shain & Barth, 2003). However, in order to succeed in these lobbying efforts, the government needs to meet certain factors.

As the Netherlands is a country that scores high on Human rights and is tolerant towards integration policies, the country could be a safe space for diaspora activists to reside (Igarashi, Nakai & Ono, 2023). Moreover, the study by Igarashi, Nakai and Ono (2023) stated that if

opposition is found towards human rights in the Netherlands, the situation could be worse in other countries with lower scores on human rights. The study found that Dutch citizens are willing to protect human rights from immigrants. Thus, for this thesis, I hypothesise that the Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands might have strong feelings of safety and, therefore, can continue their protests. In addition, and as an example to justify my hypotheses, an article in the *NLTimes* (2023) mentioned that the Dutch government had demanded an explanation when a Dutch journalist had been threatened by the Chinese government (as mentioned in the introduction). The Ministry of foreign affairs claimed that the "cabinet is committed to the safety of journalists and human rights defenders worldwide and firmly opposes all forms of unwanted foreign interference. This intimidation taking place in the Netherlands is unacceptable.

However, responding to transnational repression as a host country, especially the digital form, has proven to be complex as there is a wide range of techniques used to facilitate digital transnational repression (Anstis & Barnett, 2022). Therefore, Anstis and Barnett address three-pronged approaches that states might consider to meet international human rights law obligations. A host state can target private companies and foreign actors that engage in (digital) transnational repression by employing criminal law, export law, and sanctions regimes. Second, when a host country trains the dissidents and activists in exile, they can better protect themselves against digital threats. Lastly, engaging with intermediary companies clarifies how authoritarian regimes use these companies to facilitate certain forms of (digital) transnational repression.

In sum, I hypothesise that the diaspora activists are able to create emotional motivators due to the safety provided by the Netherlands, as described in this chapter. The Chinese diaspora activists will perceive a sense of security and therefore experience the needed emotional reflexivity in order to be able to move against the transnational repression imposed by China on them. The ability to do something aids in creating emotional relief and therefore prevents emotional burn-out in the Chinese diaspora activists living in the Netherlands. In order to test this hypothesis, the following section will elaborate on the method I used.

Methodology

3.1 Research design

To better understand the perspective and experiences of the Chinese diasporic activists in the Netherlands, the goal was to interview at least six people. The first participants were collected at a demonstration on the Dam in Amsterdam during Human Rights Day at the beginning of December. Here 6 participants agreed to an interview. This was done by using Google Translate with my phone and asking them two questions to determine whether they were suitable participants for the interview. I asked them where they were born and where they live now; if the answer was that they were born in China and now live in the Netherlands, I asked them to participate. Unfortunately, upon contacting these participants again to agree for a time, three decided against it. In order to still collect more people, the snowball effect was used after the first interviews; this involved asking the participants if they knew more protesting Chinese people living in the Netherlands.

A total of 6 interviews were held for this research as Guest et al. (2006) describe that data saturation will be evident with six interviews. Moreover, the interview participants often felt distrust, making finding willing to open up difficult. Finding six people to interview has been a particularly challenging part of this research. Five of the interviewees were male, and only one was female. Regarding the literature, it made sense that the Chinese activists willing to talk were male, as they are statistically more likely to demonstrate, whereas women tend to be more risk-averse (Inguazo et al. 2022).

The interviews were semi-structured to allow for questions to be answered and new data to be collected during the interview. The interviews were conducted online using Google Meet. This was chosen as a convenience for both the interviewee, translator and researcher as it did not involve travelling from any of us. Another addition to the online interviews was that the participants could talk comfortably in their room or familiar place, aiding in a relaxed atmosphere. Because most participants did not speak English or Dutch, I was obligated to use a translator. An acquaintance spoke Chinese and English and translated live during my interview. She translated per sentence of both the interviewee and me. There was one participant who spoke English. The interview was recorded using a mobile phone, and additional notes were taken in a notebook. I estimated an hour for each interview. The interviews took place over a period of two months in 2023. The snowballing method used to recruit participants made the evolved participants act as intermediaries. Agreeing on a date when the translator, participant and myself were available was another challenge and did not aid in speeding up this research.

The interviews were transcribed manually. Due to the mixture of languages, the audio recordings were unsuitable for transcribing programs; please note that as I did not speak Chinese, I skipped the Chinese translations and only transcribed the English parts of the interview. This meant that only the interaction between the translator and me, with additional notes about the stature of my interviewee, was used for data analyses.

Analyses of the interviews were done directly after the interview by discussing the perspectives with my translator to subtract any information missed during the interview. Later the program of Atlas.Ti was used to analyse the data. This was done by coding the data according to the questions this research focused on. A total of 20 codes were made. However,

relevant codes were used upon writing the results chapter, whilst others were discarded. Codes were deemed relevant if they served to answer the sub-questions. An example of a discarded code is: “life in China”. This was coded because the background of the respondents seemed essential to me as if it might have given insights into why the respondents decided to move to the Netherlands; however, this did not provide sufficient data for examining transnational repression as that takes place outside the borders of China and I did not examine the motivation for moving. An example of a valid code that elicited over 44 samples was “emotions related to transnational repression”. Other additional findings were also coded if they seemed relevant to me. Codes deemed additional were: “Why are they oppressed” this elicited around 9 relevant samples.

3.2 Research type

Because this research is focused on the experience of the Chinese diasporic activists, a phenomenological approach was selected. This meant that this research focuses on finding the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it by describing it in two ways, what was experienced and how it was experienced (Neubauer et al. 2019).

Phenomenological research collects qualitative data as it focuses on the experiences of a subject. Following transcendental phenomenology as defined by Edmund Husserl, this research focuses on understanding a phenomenon's reality by understating it as a person lives it. As he described, the critical question of a phenomenological investigation is “What is it for an individual to know or to be conscious of a phenomenon?” (Neubauer et al., 2019).

To understand this, Husserl advises suspending the researchers’ attitudes, beliefs and superstitions to focus on the participant’s experience of the phenomenon. To achieve this, a special section in this chapter will be dedicated to the researcher’s bias and preconceptions. Here the researcher will describe the previous understandings, past knowledge and assumptions about Transnational repression.

3.3 Researcher Bias

As the theoretical framework describes, transnational repression happens in many forms. Due to the complexity of this phenomenon and the relative novelty of myself as a researcher, I might not be able to detect all transnational repressional methods that a government might use. Furthermore, most of my knowledge stems from knowledge institutions from the global North. My beliefs, therefore, are biased in the sense that authoritarian regimes are in their entirety wrong. As the Dutch media stations have reported little transnational repression, I feel a sense of disbelief might influence the data. I might be tempted to discard certain statements and claims the participants make because I feel they are untrue or exaggerated. This might cause some difficulty in genuinely understanding the dissident's experience.

Results

This chapter will show the results per sub-question. Quotes will be used to illustrate specific findings. As well as additional findings or claims that the respondents made.

The six interviewed respondents varied in age and years as an active protester. The graphic below displays an overview of the background of the respondents.

Respondent number	Gender	Age	Years active as a protester
1	Male	66	For 40 years
2	Male	54	Around 15 years
3	Male	48	He claimed to be protesting for “a very long time.”
4	Male	21	For 4 years
5	Female	42	For 19 years
6	Male	Did not specify	Around 20 years

4.1 What kind of transnational repression are the Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands experiencing?

As discussed in the theoretical framework, many forms of repression are taken by an autocratic regime that reaches beyond national borders. In order to gather as much information as possible about what methods of transnational repression the activists were experiencing, I opted for a broad question. Taken that proxy punishment and surveillance has been repeatedly mentioned in the literature for this research, I expected the respondents’ answers to align with this description. All interviewed respondents mentioned some form of obstacle that they had to overcome when they set out to protest. Four respondents mentioned that their family in China is being watched, and the degree to which their family or friends were watched varied.

Where respondent Two mentioned that his family was stopped at the border:

“And now I’m here in the Netherlands but my wife and daughter are still in China and we can not get reunited. My wife she got stopped at the passport control in the airport and my son in law, my daughters husband, he also got threatened, by his employee.”

Respondent Three mentioned that he received a call that the Chinese police knew his daughter was still in China and was being watched:

“In the phone call he doesn’t really ahm...threaten him, they only say: oh your parents are still in China, your daughter is still in China, so when do you come back? There wasn’t really threatening but more how they say it. Your parents are still here so...you never know.”

As did respondent Six:

“Yeah, his family back home, they are also being contacted by the police. Asking things about him, what he is doing, when is he coming back, yeah, his family is also being watched.”

Responded five was the only responded who explained that the Chinese police harassed her family. In such a way that they asked her family to contact her and ask for her return. Below is her description:

“...Her husband back in China does have contact with the police. The police were asking her husband what she was doing in Holland. What is happening? The police are also contacting her mom. And her mom is complaining to her that she has to stop doing stupid things. The last time the police contacted her mom was after her mom’s surgery. They just busted into her house and talked to her about what her daughter is doing in Western countries. And her mom contacted her and complained to her after that. She does not have contact with her mom anymore.”

Moss and Kennedy (2022) distinguished these proxy punishment variants in their research. It appeared that the respondents interviewed did experience what Moss and Kennedy categorised as: “verbal threats and in-person harassment of family members by regime agents” as well as “travel bans” mentioned by respondent two.

Proxy punishment in the way that Moss and Kennedy had identified did appear in the results given by the respondents I interviewed. However, a form that was not mentioned by Moss and Kennedy (2022) was the calls from government officials and/or police officers. This was how police officers or government officials sought contact with the diasporic activists either through phone calls or messages on their social media posts. All respondents that were interviewed described some way that the police contacted them in order to persuade them to go back or to stop what they were doing.

Respondent Six:

“...He publishes things on social media, and the government or the police always comment on it: stop commenting bad things, don’t come back to China, if you come back to China we’ll do stuff to you. And he’s smiling, and saying oh I am not going back.”

Respondent Four also talked about how the police officers or government officials used his number differently:

“I don’t know how they know my number. I mean the Dutch number and my address. But they booked a taxi, you know, to come to my apartment, harassing me. So, I can’t even sleep yeah.”

Another form the police used his personal information he described as follows:

“So Dutch police already arrest the Chinese agents because they wanted to kill me or they want to do some crazy things. But in the beginning of 2022, they (Chinese police) used my name and sent an email to (Inaudible) or Dutch police, saying I have a bomb and plan to go to the international court. It happened a lot of times that the police come to my apartment.”

The other respondents did not mention that this happened to them.

One respondent (respondent One) who did not have family or friends living in China mentioned a variation to a Chinese government official or police calling the police of the Netherlands to create obstacles for protests. He said:

“The Chinese ambassadors call the police, saying that protesters are here, that they are terrorists. The police will always come and pick them up and search them for bombs, weapons and ID’s. If they protest in front of the embassy.”

Another and from the Chinese diasporic activists experience transnational repression is a form of surveillance. As mentioned by Hoffmann (2022), surveillance is a well-known method the Chinese government uses to keep track of the activities of its citizens inside the Chinese Borders. However, surveillance outside its borders is only mentioned as the software for facial recognition has been sold to many countries and in return, the surveillance software of China has become more intelligent as it learned to distinguish faces interracially. Surveillance in the form mentioned by the respondents interviewed for this research was a new finding. Here respondents mention that the Chinese also keep an eye on real estate. Respondent Three says the following about this:

“Right now, in Holland, he does not have any pressure from China, but by phone, he still has a house in China, and every month the Chinese police will visit him once or twice (the house in China). He has a camera outside his house so he can see who is around his house. So he says Chinese police will visit his house once or twice per month to see if there is anything happening.”

Whether or not it is linked with a form of oppression is hard to say, however, as this was the answer to the question, “Does China or the Chinese government make your life harder here in the Netherlands? And do you have any examples?” it might imply that the way this respondent perceived it. It is making his life harder here in the Netherlands.

4.2. How do the Chinese cope with the emotions imposed on them through transnational repression?

Transnational repression aims to stop and neutralise any protest or threat to the national security order. One of the main goals is to cultivate an atmosphere of fear in the society of China to fuel destruct among citizens so that authoritarian control is facilitated (Jian, 2020). Therefore, Emotions of fear are expected from respondents subjected to transnational repression. And indeed, upon interviewing the participants, it became clear that there were emotions of fear laced throughout their protesting. Four out of the six interviewed participants expressed some form of fear. Three of those expressed it because their relatives were being watched, threatened or harassed by the Chinese policemen or government officials. Respondent Three claimed the following about his fear:

“Yes, he is afraid of the Chinese government. But, he is above it, his parents are still in China, he has two children in China, his Wife is still in China and it doesn’t mean that he isn’t afraid of the Chinese government having his parents and children and wife because he want’s to do

more. Because his fear for the Chinese government, he still wants to do more. It doesn't mean he doesn't love his family, but everything is above that. Above that fear. The fear is motivating him"

And when I asked respondent Four about how he moved out of China, I implied that it must have been terrifying to which respondent four heavily agreed. When asked if he could elaborate more about his current feelings during the protesting, respondent four provided an elaborate answer:

"Actually I feel its really, I don't know what can I say. Actually I feel very bad. Sometimes I think this is very funny because I can't believe Chinese authority in Netherlands they send police station. And they send oversees police in Dutch territory. Herrasing dissidents. But also you know, I feel, I don't know how to say like, I also asked Dutch government why? The Dutch government they didn't do anything like before. They already know the Chinese oversees police station, they alreedy know like one year ago. They already know this. but they didn't do anything, until, a lot of media asked them questions and they shut down this police station. So yeah. Totally I think this is very bad. It's not just because of Chinese authority. Its also about the Dutch government, I think this is not right. This is very wrong."

And upon asking respondent Five about her feelings towards protesting and China she respondent vaguely which implied that there was a lot of ground for her fear:

"Everything that happened in China is being watched, everyone is watched. If you do something wrong, if you say something wrong you will be punished. Eh. So younger people don't even know what is happening in China. Everyone is thinking that hey have a great economy in China right now. That is not true. That is not true."

Further down the interview, respondent Five mentioned how she still experiences control by the Chinese government whilst still living in the Netherlands:

"At some point everything in her life was being controlled by the police. Her mom back home is also being controlled. Being watched. So if, at a point she was sitting at her house and was hearing footsteps she though to herself, where is the footsteps coming from, who does the footsteps mean to? She is living in fear."

When I asked further about her fear, it also became clear that her fear is not limited to the threats of Chinese government officials but also to the Chinese people living here:

"...She says in Holland, in Holland we have let's say, in China we have a lot of different kind of people, in Holland we have a lot of people looking. We have in China a lot o different type of people and that is also the aim of the police. That's how they are watching us. The little organizations, the little groups, so they are everywhere in Holland."

I then asked how she feels about that and she replied as follows:

“she is afraid, of course she is afraid.”

However, when asked further about the reasons why she experienced feelings of fear, respondent Five explained that it was due to her family:

“She isn’t afraid of her own safety because she’s living in Holland and her safety is okay. But she’s afraid for the safety of her family in China. So every time she’s going to a protest she’s wondering, what’s going to happen to her family in China.”

Along with respondent six:

“Yeah, he is afraid for his family back home, but he said, I’m afraid but if I don’t do anything, nothing will change. I have to.”

Respondent Four claimed he felt “unsafe” and described that it was a direct effect of the Chinese transnational repression:

“Oh no, no, no, I feel, actually, I feel unsafe yeah. You know the Chinese authority they know my number, they know my address, they know my everything even though I changed it a lot of times, even I cannot remember my number, but Chinese authority they know... They don’t care about the laws, even international law, they don’t care even. Otherwise, they will not open a police station.”

The respondents also mentioned other emotions, feelings of sickness, sadness, anger and disbelief. Only one respondent (respondent One) described a feeling of sickness when we discussed his limitations:

“He thinks that Chinese Communist Party is a terrorist party. That they don’t have ethical regimes, they don’t have humanity, there is a lot of wrong doing in China, the environment, the mountains, the water, the food, everything is polluted. There Is no room to live anymore. And he is really, really sick because of it. Chinese communist party is a terrorist party.”

Furthermore, sadness was mentioned by two respondents. Respondent Three explained that his following response was to the feeling of sadness.

“He is sad, sad about it. But he said he is fortunate to be able to do something. He is fortunate to be alive. He will do everything in his power for the people in China. And every day he tries to do a little more. So yeah, he is sad, but because his sadness he will do more”

Respondent Five explained her response to sadness similarly.

“She’s sad about it, you can see it too (respondent had been crying), but yeah, still she understands. She has a strong will and can sustain it. But the pressure from the Chinese government is okay. You can go above that. But the pressure for her family is hard. That’s what’s hard for her.”

Then two respondents also mentioned anger; respondents Three and Six clarified that they felt very frustrated. However, respondent Three mentioned that he was above that anger:

“Yeah, of course he was angry, the first time he got captured he was very angry. But ahm, he is a good Christian. He believes in God and God always says turn your other cheek. Be kind to people, also to enemies. So he’s believing that. He is beng kind to every one. He is above his anger.”

Respondent Six explained this feeling to a follow-up question. We had discussed the Chinese people losing their voices if they (the activists) do not keep protesting; when I asked why this was so important, respondent Six replied as follows:

“In his heart he feels the anger, of oppression in China by the government, by the party. So if he don’t do anything against it he will feel a lot of anger.”

Throughout these six interviews, almost all of them explained that they were experiencing feelings of distress due to the (transnational) repression the Chinese government imposed on them. Some respondents admitted that they suffer from feelings such as insomnia and even paranoia (as we can read from respondent’s Five explanation about footsteps in her house). Two respondents mentioned insomnia. According to respondent Three, insomnia started because of his torture in China, and it did not stop since he moved to the Netherlands:

“He doesn’t sleep a lot, he only sleeps four hours a day. Beause he has a mental illness from the torture in China. So he only sleeps four hours and the rest of the day he does his life, is this. do what he can do.”

The “*this*” in his response referred to the previously discussed dedication of the respondent since he claimed to stop the persons doing bad things every day.

Respondent Four mentioned that he does not even sleep anymore as a direct consequence of transnational repression. He explained it as follows:

“...I don’t know how they know my number. I mean the Dutch number and my address. So then booked a taxi, you know like uber eats, you know everything like only 40 or 50 tons come to my apartment, harassing me. So I can’t even sleep yeah, so, this is the situation now.”

Having established the respondents' feelings, I asked how they tried to cope with these emotions. A coping mechanism that I expect, given the background information for the diaspora position in the Netherlands, is that the diasporic activists reside to go silent, as described by Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022). However, upon questioning how they feel about specific actions taken against them by the Chinese government, the respondents mentioned that they feel incentivised to move against the Chinese regime because of this fear. Moreover, choose various ways of activism to move. The following data describes their ways of reacting and protesting against the Chinese regime.

Respondent Six said the following about his way of protesting:

“Yeah, in Holland he is feeling quite safe and he publishes things on social media”

So explained respondent Three that after he received a phone call from the Chinese police saying that they knew about the whereabouts of his family, his way of dealing with it:

“The same night he didn’t sleep. He thought about it a lot. And he posted on Facebook about it on the internet with the story and the policeman who called him and saying what city he was from, what policestation he reported to. And he said that if something happened to me, that that is the policeman who called me. So, he published it online”

When I asked if this action felt like a relief, respondent Three indeed confirmed:

“He said, yeah it does help a little, he thinks hat the person who called him wil feel attacked.”

Respondent Three also mentioned other ways that he uses to protest:

“He is doing three things right now, number one is he follows a lot of Chinese imprisoned people. The second one, he’s supporting people to break down the firewall in China so that the social media will go to China but also the other way around. And number three he has a list, he is making it everyday. A list of the bad people in China. The persons who are doing bad things and he is sending this list to other people so that they can call them or email them to stop. Tell them to stop doing bad things. So everyday he has a top ten. Top then of bad people.”

Respondent Four, along with respondents Three and One, mentioned that he was protesting in the forms of talking, telling their stories and doing interviews:

“I am with another media, making a documentary about the Chinese overseas police station.”

Then respondent Five, along with Six mentioned that she went to protests. I encountered respondents One and Two during a protest in Amsterdam and therefore. Respondents Five and Six mentioned the following:

“Well, her (inaudible) and WeChat do not work anymore. She can not host anything anymore. Byt every protest, she went to every protest in Holland and Europe. She just goes to that.”

Respondent Six said the following about his protests in the Netherlands:

“Yes, he does, if there is a demonstration in Amsterdam, Den Hague, he will be there.”

I would like to add that I encountered respondent One and Two during a protest in Amsterdam, indicating that both respondent One and Two also go to protests.

Respondent Six was the only respondent who also mentioned a form of art as a means of protesting:

“Right now he does everything in he can in his power. He does not have that much power to change everything. It is protesting or doing his artwork that he can mangle in his own power.”

Furthermore, their motivation for these types of protests stems from the same emotions that could incentivize them to reside to go silent. It is in line with the theory of Cox (2011) as he describes that expressing their emotions through protests acts as a form of release. Moreover, respondent Three directly explained that the fear motivates him to protest. Additionally, the respondents mentioned a feeling of obligation or no choice. If they stop, no one will know how they feel about the Chinese regime. What they felt about the Chinese government was strongly linked to their explanation of continuing the protests. The respondents all had their opinion about the Chinese regime. Some called it a nazi regime or terrorist regime, and others said that the regime was anti-human rights. Respondent Four elaborated on why he had no choice but to continue his protests. I asked him if I understood him correctly that he indeed has the feeling that he has to do this, to which he responded;

“Yeah, of course. Actually, if I stop it will change yeah. They will stop harrasing me or threaten me but they will think this plan works. And they want to use the system en then use the same ways to harras other dissident, this is very terrible.”

Along with respondent’s Three answer that he feels he is obligated to continue for the Chinese people:

“And when he got out he still was doing everything he could for the Chinese people, for the people there. And he doesn’t want to give up his free life, his freedom. So that is why he kept doing everything. But afther three times in jail I think he was, he still want’s to do everything for the Chinese people...but his freedom, he really wanted to get his freedom to help the people and for the little girl (his daughter). He says, if you are an enemy of the state, China will do anything to destroy you. To contact his family, his daughter...”

Similarly, respondent Five also mentioned that if they stopped, the government would continue:

“She says actually she’s not thinking about it. She’s just doing it. If we don’t step up the government will continue to harras everyone, also her family back in China will be a victim of it. She doesn’t even thinkg about it she just does it (protesting)”

And again, respondent Six claimed that if he stops, nothing will change:

“Yeah, he is afraid for his family back home, but he said; I’m afraid but if I don’t do anything nothing will change. I have to...He says, he just have to. It is just something he has to do it for the honour he feels, for the country, for the people. It is just something he has to do.”

Additionally, respondent Six also mentioned that if he will not be able to do anything, he will have a lot of anger:

“So if he don’t do anything against it he will feel a lot of anger. It will be too much if he doesn’t do anything.”

Here the answer provided by respondent Six indeed corresponds with the theory of Cox (2011) and Velez, Baranowski and Manosalvas (2022) used for this research. By expressing his anger, he senses a form of emotional relief which might aid in the continuation of his protests.

Furthermore, respondents One, Two and Five also mentioned that it was part of who they were and that that is the reason for their continuation despite the dangers that transnational oppression imposes on them. They live for it and do not know how to express their feelings about the Chinese government other than through protesting. They dedicate their whole life to it because it is a fundamental part of their identity. Below is how they described their dedication to protesting:

Respondent One:

“We are who we are, we want to help the world to see what communist are, and we are doing anything for it so we are not afraid of it.”

Respondent Two:

“As I said, that I identify myself as a Chinese political opponent, I don’t see myself do anything else except this. within that Chinese regime and I cannot do anything else.”

Respondent Five:

“from the pressure from home. Her family say, if you just don’t say anything, just be normal, then you’ll be okay. But she says, this is what she’s living for. Some people like to dance, some people like to sing, and this is what she wants to do. This is her life. She does not want to give it up”

Respondents Three, Five and Six had similar answers as they explained some form of feeling obligated to the people of China and claiming that they are doing it for a better China. For the people in China. However, another part of why they still continue to protest despite the hazards they are facing with transnational repression was explained by respondents Four and Six. Both stated that if they stopped protesting, the people of China would lose their voice. They feel that it is their responsibility to prevent that. Respondent Four provided an elaborate explanation:

“Like just how I say it. Because we are out of China right. We can protest. We just want to do something to help the Chinese people who live in China. Because they cannot do anything in China, they can not protest. It’s a really big problem, and we can help, so we want to help them to do something. Because I’m in a democratic country and doing legal things, it should not be a problem. But the Chinese authority threatens and harass me, some even want to kill me or arrest me here. So this is my responsibility. I must move against that. Other ways they will continue to harass and threaten me. If I say, okay I will stop, I will never talk about my beliefs or about the Chinese government, they (The Chinese government) will say: this is working. And in the future they will probably do more and more of this. to me or other residents. In my opinion; I can’t accept this. because this is the Netherlands, I’m doing totally legal things.

Beijing and Amsterdam are very far from each other. I don't accept that they come here, so I must move against this."

Respondent Six's answer was similar:

"If they stop protesting, the Chinese people will lose their voice. Then the Chinese government can do anything, everything they want. Oppressing people and do bad things. So if they stop, people will lose their voices, they will lose their point of saying, we (the Chinese activists) know what you (the Chinese government) are doing."

Respondent Three also said that he feels obligated to protest and show the world that he is against China as follows, despite his being captured and tortured in jail:

"And the last time he went back to jail was in 2002 and he was tortured. He wasn't getting food and he starved himself for 15 days. When he got out, he still was doing everything he could for the Chinese people, for the people there. And he does not want to give up his free life, his freedom. So that is why he kept doing everything. It doesn't matter if it helps or not. If it's only a little drop in a bucket. He still wants to show the people in China and all over the world that they are doing something. That they fight to help. It doesn't matter if there is no end. He will still do it."

Moreover, respondent Six mentioned the same feeling of obligation:

"He says, he just has to. It's just something he has to do for the honour he feels, for the country, for the people. It's just something he has to do. He wants to do everything he can that is in his power. He doesn't have much power to change. But through protesting or doing his art work he feels that that is the one thing he can do in his own power."

Respondent Five explained it as follows:

"China is trying to make western countries like China. Exactly like how it is in China. She says that Chinese regime is even worse than Hitler, than a Nazi regime. She wants the western people to see what China really is, she wants to let the Chinese people know that they are not alone. Every free time they have. Every possible thing she can do, she's doing it for them, to let them know: you are not alone."

Other motivations can be found in the goals mentioned by the respondents. They varied in their answer to the question of their protesting goal. However, there appeared to be two reoccurring themes in the respondents' answers. One is that they hope that more people will be moved to protest by showing that they continue protesting against China, and another goal is to show the world or "Western countries" what is happening in China. Additionally, all respondents mentioned the same ideal outcome of their protests: China would be free and ideally become like Europe, a Western country and/or the Netherlands.

Four out of the six participants mentioned wanting China, the Netherlands and/or the rest of the world to see that they protest and aim to express their attitude. Respondent Two mentioned it as follows:

“Through protesting we simply aim to express our attitude, that we don’t accept the way they rule, we should not accept this. We want to express our attitude to the Chinese government.”

Respondent One was the only participant that mentioned a goal towards the Dutch government:

“China is very close to Holland, and trying a lot of things to oppress the Chinese people in Holland. But he wants to tell the Dutch government that China is a terrorist organisation. Don’t work with them. He’s willing to send a paper, anything around to say stop working with China to the Dutch government, but he still hasn’t done it.”

Respondent Three said that he wanted to show the Western people what was happening in the Chinese regime because he wanted people to realise that the people in China also suffer. According to him, the news always covers Taiwan and Hongkong, but not the oppressed people in China;

“Western people must realise that Chinese people are different from the Chinese regime so we’re Chinese but we’re not communist...”

Respondent Three also directed his goal towards the Western governments and said he aims to make Western governments stop communicating with China.

“The western governments have to stop communicating with China above the human rights so Human rights is more important than financial business. Western people have to stop doing this to China.”

As mentioned initially, all respondents wanted the same outcome from China. Their ideal China looked like any Western or European country or the Netherlands. All respondents mentioned that they wanted China to be free. To have freedom of speech. Some specified more by explaining that they wanted China to protect human rights, have laws and stop being a terrorist organisation; others added that they wanted China to release all political prisoners. However, their answers all seemed very similar to each other. The first respondent said what all the other respondents said, so I will use him as an example to which (with slight variations) the rest of the respondents had the same answer.

“He wants China to be like Europa, like Western countries, to be free. To have laws for the people so that they can live a free life and to not fall under a terrorist regime anymore.”

4.3 Safety in the Netherlands

As the theory used for this research also focused on possible feelings of safety due to the host countries policy, I asked if they felt safe in the Netherlands. Apart from one, all

respondents expressed that they felt safe to some degree in the Netherlands. Only respondent One did not connect it to the Netherlands.

“He says it doesn’t matter where he is. In holland or China, he will still do the same as right here. He has been protesting in China, he has been locked up for almost 11 years an he will still do it. He is aware of the police, that they are in Holland. He’s aware of it but he is not afraid of it.”

Others claimed they felt safe because the Netherlands was a free democratic country and that their personal security was guaranteed. The fear they expressed mainly was linked to the fear for the security and safety of their family but not for themselves—the reasoning behind why was their position of being in a different country.

Respondent two:

“Now here in the Netherlands, in a relatively free country, I don’t have the fear here so I can keep doing this... It is kind of also risky and not easy for them (The Chinese police men) to achieve their agenda. As long as he does not go to dangerous countries such as Thailand or Vietnam.”

Respondent Three was obvious that he felt confidently safe in the Netherlands:

“In holland he doesn’t have any pressure from China. He in person.”

Respondent Four thought he would be safe here in the Netherlands, but according to him, that was not true:

“Actually, when I arrived in the Netherlands, I think I must be very safe. Because this is European Union country. But unfortunately, it is not. I mean the Chinese authority in CCP, the Chinese Communist Party keep threatening me. Actually, you know, I thing the Dutch police take this very seriously because in 2022 the Dutch foreign minister, I don’t know his name, Hoekstra? I don’t know, he told the media that the Dutch police is making a plan to protect us. But until now the Dutch police told me they really want to do something but they cannot do anything because they cannot go to China and arrest people.”

Additionally, respondent Four also mentioned that the media, including the Dutch media, is reporting a lot about his situation and that it aids in his feelings of safety:

“In Europa, I’m a little bit famous. I mean, the Chinese dissidents so if there is a problem, or I need any help its probably within 24 hours big news. A lot of media make a documentary like BBC or the Netherlands, NOS and social media. You know recently, everyday, I have to film yeah because they want to make a documentary and release it in probably like a month.”

Then respondent Five mentioned her feelings of safety in the Netherlands as follows:

“She say’s she’s safe here. She can do everything she wants to do. She feels safe, but it doesn’t matter if she feels safe or not. She will continue to protest.”

And so did respondent Six when asked the question if he feels safe to protest in the Netherlands:

“In Holland he feels safe, in China not so. In Holland he is feeling quite safe to publish things on social media. But the Chinese government or police are always commenting on it.”

Further into the interview, respondent Six elaborated:

“Actually, right now there won’t be a bad thing that can happen to him because he is in Holland. The worst thing that can happen is back home to his family. That they are getting punished. Actually he can’t think of anything worse than that.”

Moreover, respondent Four said that he hopes that the Dutch government can keep its country safe:

“Yeah, I just hope that the Dutch government can keep the Netherlands safe, they can do something for this country safety like shut down this police station or arrest Chinese spies. Just do that. For this country own safety.”

Discussion and conclusion

5.1. Conclusion

The research problem this thesis focussed on was described as follows; Transnational Repressional action taken by the Chinese government on the Dutch Chinese diaspora activist puts pressure on the emotional sustainability needed to continue their protests. The research done by Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022) has identified two variables by which the commitment to engage in political activism is influenced but failed to incorporate the importance of emotions in their research. Brown and Pickerill (2009) argue the significant influence of emotions that determine the actions of activists and that a lack of recognition of emotions may cause emotional burnout. Which eventually will lead to the activists quitting their protests. Furthermore, if the protesters quit their protesting, the movement will lose momentum and a chance of change (Tarrow, 2022). Therefore, this research focussed on the emotional motivators that reside in the Chinese diaspora activists living in the Netherlands. The main question this research focussed on was:

What are the emotional motivations that sustain Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands in their activism despite the presence of transnational repression?

To answer this question, I first answer the sub-question: *What type of transnational repression are the Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands experiencing?*

The interviews with six active Chinese born protesters in the Netherlands who are part of the Chinese diaspora and the news articles used at the beginning of this research confirm that these dissidents are experiencing transnational repression. As shown in the results chapter, all participants mentioned some form of transnational repression. The one method that appeared to be used the most among these participants was proxy punishment. The participants supported the findings of Moss, Michaelsen, and Kennedy's (2022) research as the described types of proxy punishment were the following: *verbal threats and in-person harassment of family members by regime agents* and *travel bans issued against relatives at home*. The first mentioned category was mainly used on the participant's relatives, as demonstrated by Participant Three when he was explaining that he received phone calls from Chinese government officials. *"In the phone call, he doesn't really ahm...threaten him, they only say: oh your parents are still in China, your daughter is still in China, so when do you come back? There wasn't really threatening but more how they say it. Your parents are still here so...you never know."* Participant Two explained that his family got stopped at the airport when they tried to reunite, effectively confirming the second type of proxy punishment as described by Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2020): *"And now I'm here in the Netherlands but my wife and daughter are still in China and we can not get reunited. My wife she got stopped at the passport control in the airport and my son in law, my daughters husband, he also got threatened by his employee."*

The participants also displayed that they were targeted digitally and through phone calls. They either received phone calls from government officials threatening them or messages online asking them to stop protesting. This is not a form of proxy punishment. However, it is a more direct method of transnational repression, as Tsourapas (2021) explained. Having determined that the six participants indeed experienced transnational repression, the inquiry of how they experienced this was made by asking about the emotions they experienced. Here the participants explained that their emotions and feelings varied between; fear, anger and sadness. However,

when asking about the emotions linked to the proxy punishment the participants endured, they connected fear to that the most. Fear was not linked to their personal experience; instead, the participants connected their fear to the well-being of their relatives. Participant Five displayed it in the results: *“She isn’t afraid of her own safety because she’s living in Holland and her safety is okay. But she’s afraid for the safety of her family in China. So every time she’s going to a protest she’s wondering, what’s going to happen to her family in China.”* As well as the fear of doing nothing. If they do nothing, nothing will change, and that is not an option according to the interviewed participants.

The data provided by the participants suggests that, indeed, the emotions experienced by the Chinese diaspora activists are highly likely to sever the chances of emotional burn-out, as suggested by the research of Cox (2011). The forms of proxy punishment can elicit either of the three ways of responding, as determined by Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022). Following their theory and looking at the participant's commitment to political activism and their social capital, it seemed highly likely that the participants would navigate between principled and protective action. Meaning that the participants will resort to signalling, cutting ties, or self-censoring (Moss, Michaelsen, & Kennedy, 2022). And for the most part, this seemed to be the case when asking the participants how they dealt with their experiences. So did participant Five mention that she cut off any contact with her mother for her and her mother's safety. And did Respondents One, Three, Four and Six mentioned that they go to social media platforms to report about their situations or actions taken against them by the Chinese regime. However, participating in demonstrations was not characterised as navigating between principled and protective action. Instead, actively participating in demonstrations is more linked to how Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2020) describe the response of fighting back. According to them, this response will be chosen if both the commitment of the diaspora activists to political activism and the social capital in the host country is strong. Placing this theory over the data provided by the participants, I argue that the participants for this research did not depend on the latter. Based on the data, the participants did not mention feelings of public, institutional and or political support. According to them, they felt motivated to continue and fight back because of fear, anger and sadness.

The emotions of fear, anger and sadness appeared to drive the participants into action and thus influence them significantly; the majority felt a solid connection to protesting as a part of their identity and dedicated their whole lives to it. The participants mentioned various reasons why they needed to continue and how their feelings spurred them into different actions. So, to answer the second sub-question, *How do the Chinese diaspora activists cope with the emotions imposed on them through transnational repression?* The following section will head into that.

Fear seemed to aid them in the feeling of obligation; all participants who expressed the feeling of fear also explained that they had a feeling of moral obligation to give hope and to uphold the voice of the people in China.

Those who experienced anger did not have congruent data, as respondents Three and Six mentioned feelings of anger. Their answer to the question of why they continued differed. Respondent Three claimed he felt the need to create awareness and show the people in China that there are still people fighting. Respondent Six mentioned his concern for the people of China and believed that if they stopped protesting, the Chinese people would lose their voice. He did not stress to show the world what was happening and create awareness, though he did

mention that he was protesting through art, indicating that he might want people to see his art and therefore become aware of what is happening in China.

Two respondents mentioned the feeling of sadness and how this aided in their feeling of obligation to give hope. One respondent even mentioned that he is sad but fortunate to be able to do something. This might imply that the feeling of being able to do something aids in coping with the feeling of sadness. Because the respondent felt fortunate to be able to do something like giving hope to the people who reside in China, he might feel the needed emotional relief, as explained by the theory of Cox (2011) that allows him to deal with his emotions.

Furthermore, most respondents claimed they experienced freedom to move against the Chinese regime and expressed their gratitude for that in some manner. Here we might find a connection to the feelings of safety the Netherlands provides. I will head into this subject further in the conclusion.

Below is a list of three motives that I distinguish from the respondents' answers regarding why they continue protesting. I will elaborate on each motive by linking them to the experienced feelings.

1. To create awareness: Four out of the six participants said they needed to show the world what type of regime China was and what was happening in China.
2. To give hope: Three respondents said that they felt a moral obligation for the people of China to show them that they are not alone and that people are still fighting for their freedom.
3. To uphold the voice of the People of China: two respondents claimed that if they stop protesting, the people of China will lose their voice.

5.1.1. Create awareness

As most participants claimed they felt obligated to tell the world what is happening in China, it might suggest that the diasporic activists feel unheard by the world. According to the participants, they felt that the governments of Western countries continue to uphold a relationship with China despite China having violated several human rights.

The “Collective Action Dilemma” theory describes that the protest influences political outcomes with more costs for participants than any other form (Inguanzo et al., 2022). This is in line with the findings of this research, as the participants involved were subjected to transnational repression. The claim that the Chinese diasporic activists want to show the world what is happening could also be related to the relative deprivation theory, in which this feeling stems from comparing one’s situation to another standard (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). Indeed, this might imply that the Chinese diasporic activist feels, as described by van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013), that they have high efficacy, which means that they expect a strong possibility of altered conditions or policies through protest. In addition, the respondents who expressed this feeling of obligation also said they had no choice—often saying that this (protesting) is the only thing they can do within their power. This is in line with the theory of Cox (2011), who claims that if the protesters can name and shame the governments and actively participate, it aids in the feeling of being able to do something, thus preventing emotional burnout. The four participants who claimed this feeling of obligation as part of their motivator to continue also expressed a feeling of fear. Respondent Six directly claimed that he

is more afraid that if they do nothing, nothing will change. Respondent Five also confirmed that she is more afraid that if they do nothing, nothing will change, and it will eventually bring her family in more danger. Since most of the interviewed participants had similar responses, it might suggest that fear is a strong emotional motivator for the participants to continue protesting.

5.1.2. Give hope

Half of the participants explained that they felt morally obligated to show the Chinese people that they were not alone and were still fighting for their freedom. This implies that (part of) the Chinese diasporic activists hope to reach out to the people living in China who are too afraid to protest—tapping into the research done by Tofangsazi (2023), who examined that this creates a desired effect. Meaning that protesting done by the diaspora contributes to the protesting activity in the home country as it displays that their government is vulnerable. This also aids in the diminishing of government repressional actions (Tofangsazi, 2023).

Furthermore, upon researching if this indeed had the desired effect mentioned by Tofangsazi (2023), the data provided by the Human Rights Watch (2023) showed a recent increase in protests in the PRC. This can be seen in the protests that spurred after the corona pandemic near the end of 2022. Though the protests were mainly incentivised by the draconian anti-Covid lockdowns, some were also because of the government's continued violation of human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Whether this is linked to the protesting by the Chinese diasporic activist in the Netherlands is yet to be determined and requires more research.

As the participants claimed that the reasoning behind their continuing with protesting relied on the notion of the idea that they give hope to the people protesting within the Chinese borders, their data also aligns with the theory of Brown and Pickerill (2009), who state that emotions can be used to shape public opinions and thus play a role in the motivation of protests. Whether the participants noticed the spur in protests happening in China was not determined. However, Brown and Pickerill (2009) describe that the physical co-presence of others makes it easier and costs less emotional motivation to continue, making protesting in a larger group more manageable and more sustainable.

The participants who felt obligated to give hope to the people inside China's borders also expressed sadness and anger apart from fear. Two of the three participants claimed that they felt sad. Respondent Five connected her sadness to the loss of contact with her mother. However, respondent Three claimed that he felt sad for the people in China and that he was motivated to do more because of this sadness. This suggests that for this participant, sadness is an emotional motivator.

5.1.3. Upholding the Voice of the People in China

Though two participants mentioned that if they stop protesting, the people of China will lose their voice, this finding might be worth conceptualising as it suggests that the importance of substituting for an oppressed voice that is otherwise lost seemed to be a reoccurring theme in the participants' answers. All the participants interviewed for this research explained that not stopping was not an option and connected their fear to that. This appeared to lie at the core of the respondents for the reasoning behind their continuation, as the prospect of doing nothing seemed worse than being subjected to the consequences of transnational repression.

Transnational repression directly focuses on silencing any movement against authoritarian regimes (Tsourapas, 2019). Moreover, these repressional actions are frequently used by China to increase its discourse power nationally and internationally (Sloss, 2023). The mention of not wanting to lose their voice might relate to this theory as it moves directly against one of China's most frequently used strategies. Protesting, therefore, might give a sense to the Chinese diasporic activists in the Netherlands that they are fighting back, as Moss (2022) describes a common way of responding to transnational repression.

The theory of Brown and Pickerill (2009), Cox (2011) and Velez, Baranowski and Manosalvas (2022) confirm the reasoning that doing something is better than staying oppressed as a way of preventing burnout. The motivation gained from the emotional stress imposed on them, as implied by the data analyses, might aid in maintaining their voice. By claiming that they (the Chinese diaspora activists) do something only they can do since the people of China are unable to move against the Chinese regime, they might reorient themselves to the positive aspects of their work as a way of coping with repressional action (Velez, Baranowski, & Manosalvas, 2022). Moss (2022) describes fighting back as being characterised by becoming more active and openly challenging the threatening regime. Nevertheless, the respondents claimed they continue protesting because they do not want to show the effects transnational repression has on them. They are implying that these Chinese diasporic activists experience the transnational repression by the Chinese government as not compelling enough for them in order to stop their activism. Though it might be categorised as challenging the threatening regime, it is worth considering, as mentioned before, that this motivation is not only apparent because of their commitment towards political activism or substantial social capital. On the contrary, the Chinese diasporic activists did not mention feeling supported by the Dutch public. Thus, implying that the response to transnational repression also relies on emotional motivation.

The participants also mentioned using social media to “break down the viral wall between China and the Western world” using the globalised setting where their protesting takes place. Millward and Takhar' (2019) theory suggests that this notion aids in the continuation of protests as it creates a decentralised and multiheaded swarm of movements that can educate and radicalise a generation of activists around the world, creating a movement that is resilient to the effect of burn-out in protesting. Whether this is also the case for the Chinese diaspora activists living in the Netherlands is not researched; however, the possibility appears highly likely.

5.1.5. Safety enables movement

All but one participant mentioned some form of safety in the Netherlands and claimed that this aided in their resistance, which aligns with my hypothesis as the participants linked this feeling of safety as a reason for their continuation of protesting. The theory by Brown and Pickerill (2009), Cox (2011), and Velez, Baranowski and Manosalvas (2022) describes that there should be space for the activists to experience the needed emotional reflexivity. This allows them to connect positive feelings with protesting as they can move against the oppressor. The fear described by the participants was not connected to the fear to their own safety, and they claimed they felt safe enough to move to protest in the Netherlands. This suggests that my hypothesis for this research is correct.

Due to the safety the participant's experience in the Netherlands, the interviewed Chinese diaspora activists will perceive a sense of security and, therefore, might experience the needed emotional reflexivity, connecting their fear, sadness and anger to motivation in order to

be able to move against the transnational repression imposed on them by China. The ability to do so suggests that it aids in creating emotional relief and, therefore, might prevent emotional burnout.

In sum, to answer the main question, what emotional motivations sustain Chinese diaspora activists in the Netherlands in their activism despite transnational repression? The idea of doing nothing elicited the emotion of sadness, anger and fear, which in turn motivated the participants to continue protesting. The perceived safety of the participant's experience in the Netherlands aids in their protesting and therefore allows the space to create the needed emotional reflexivity as described by Brown and Pickerill (2009).

5.2 Strengths and limitations

The theory of Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022) demonstrates the effect transnational repressional action has on diasporic activism. It categorises three ways of responding to a tactic the Chinese government frequently uses: proxy punishment.

Moss and Kennedy (2022) supposed that the reaction of the diasporic activists was connected to their commitment to political activism and their social capital in the host countries. Depending on whether they had a solid or weak commitment and a strong or weak social capital, the activist would choose between going silent, fighting back or navigating between principled and protective actions.

This research has supported the research of Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy (2022) by confirming the ways of reacting to transnational repression by diasporic activists. It is identified that the Chinese diasporic activists in the Netherlands choose between fighting back and navigating between principled and protective actions. However, what makes this research innovative is that it added emotions to the theory of Moss, Michaelsen and Kennedy. Adding the theory of emotional reflexivity and sustainability to the theory of coping with transnational repression sheds more light on the reasoning behind and the motivators of the sustainability of protesting in diaspora activists. Additionally, the theory of Brown and Pickerill (2009), Cox (2011), Velez, Baranowski and Manosalvas (2022) addresses the importance of space for emotional reflexivity, being able to reflect on one's emotions during protesting. This research has added the importance of feelings of safety within a host country and how this aids in the sustainability of diaspora activism. By allowing the participants to express their feelings through activism, a host country might aid in emotional reflexivity, preventing emotional burnout (Cox, 2011; Valez, Baranowski & Manosalvas, 2022).

The findings in this research suggest that there is indeed a linkage between experiencing fear, the motivation elicited from that fear, the risk of emotional burnout and the feelings of safety that prevent this. However, the scope of this research also allows for limitations.

This research focused on the Chinese diasporic activists in the Netherlands and the Chinese authoritarian regime. However, transnational repression is not limited to the Chinese authoritarian regime and diaspora. Turkish authoritarian regime has been repeatedly used to display that authoritarian power is not limited to the Turkish border and affects its diaspora (Öztürk & Hakki Taş 2020). This research has focussed on a specific group of diasporic activists, namely the Chinese diasporic activists in the Netherlands and is therefore limited to their perspective, giving this research limited generalisability.

Another limitation this research suffers from is the practicality of finding willing respondents. The subject appeared to be very sensitive, and upon contacting certain members of the diasporic activists, I needed to elaborate deeply on my motivations for this research and my intentions with their responses. It had been challenging to find these diasporic activists on my own, and I was lucky I had help from one of the leaders of the diasporic activists here in the Netherlands. Finding six participants was, therefore, a challenge.

Most (apart from one participant) of the participants did not speak English or Dutch, I had to use a translator during the interviews; this meant that I received data subjected to the translator's interpretations. As Gawlewicz (2019) explains, translation is a multidimensional process with different layers; it is an interpretative act. The key to translating qualitative data is gaining a conceptual equivalence, meaning comparability of meanings between the two languages. This required my translator to have in-depth knowledge of languages and culture, which she luckily had. However, this does limit my data as it is never the same as the data in the source language (Gawlewicz, 2019).

5.4 Suggestions for further research

There are some remaining questions left that this master thesis did not answer that make a compelling case for further research. The respondents for this research mentioned using social media to break through the viral wall between China and the Western world. Building on the theory by Millward and Takhar (2019), this might suggest that the diaspora activists actively make use of the digital, globalised setting to educate and radicalise a generation of activists around the world, effectively creating a movement that is resilient to the effect of burn-out in protesting as they create a network of multiheaded swarms of movements. It would be interesting to find out if there is a linkage between preventing emotional burn-out and the loss of voices of diaspora activists through digital activism.

Another suggestion for further research is the examination of the spur in activism after the covid 19 pandemic and if the protests by the Chinese diaspora activists indeed aid in creating and sustaining activism against the Chinese regime, considering the significant investments China has made in digital control and power, examining the effects of breaking through that digital firewall and aiding in the negative learning process as described by Wang (2018), suggesting that the Chinese diaspora activists learn from movements in their host countries and pass this knowledge on to the movements in their home countries to enable a sufficient way of protesting (Zhao, 2020).

Broadening the scope of this research to not only the Chinese diaspora activists would also aid in solidifying my conclusion. An interesting case to follow up on is the Turkish one. Turkey has been used as an example in many of the theories used for this research and appears to have a wide variety of Turkish diaspora activists.

Another research question that this research did not answer is how does the Dutch government respond to transnational repression? According to Anstis and Barnett (2022), it is an obligation under human law to protect the freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, expression and the right to privacy. However, since the Chinese diaspora activists experience first-hand threats to their safety by Chinese government officials, it suggests that the Netherlands fails in this obligation. Examining how the Dutch government aims at preventing this can be of great societal relevance. It also appeared that, according to the interviewed participants, Dutch police officers were used to harass the activists by frisking them or examining their apartments. A follow-up

question could be if the Dutch police know how the Chinese diasporic activists perceive their actions and their link to the Chinese transnational repressional actions. It might be that the Chinese government uses this tactic in other countries as another form of transnational repression.

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Appendixes

1. First Interview guide

introduction

Hello, first of all, I would like to thank you for participating in this research. My name is Marisa Tuinstra; I am 26 years old and am currently studying for my master at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. I am conducting a research for my final thesis and have decided to focus this around the matter of the Chinese diaspora in the Netherlands who are protesting against the Chinese government. Diaspora means the people that are ethnically Chinese and living in another country. I am interested in your perspective on protesting against the Chinese government and hope that you feel safe enough to share this with me. You will be completely anonymous and this thesis will only be published in the universities online library which is not available to the broader public.

In order to be able to remember everything that we discuss, I would like to record this interview on my iPhone, I hope that is okay with you? I will use the recording to transcribe this interview. Of course you are not obligated to answer a question if you don't want to. I hope everything is clear?

Before we start, do you have any questions?

General starting questions

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- Can you tell me a little about your ethnical or cultural background?
- Where did you study?
- How do you like living in the Netherlands?
- What is the biggest difference between China and the Netherlands?

Questions directed to determine the participants (national) identity

- 1) Were you born in China or the Netherlands?
- 2) Do you still practice Chinese cultural traditions? Why yes/no?
- 3) Do you feel resentment against China? Why?
- 4) What kind of traditional Chinese practices do you incorporate in your life?
- 5) Do you consider yourself part of a community? If so, which one (Dutch or Chinese, or something else)? If not, why not?

Questions directed to determine the participants level of grievance and efficacy.

- 1) I encountered you during a protest against the regime of China, against the government, can you tell me again why you were participating in this protest?
- 2) How did you start with protesting?
- 3) How long have you protested against the Chinese government?
- 4) Do you attempt to change anything in the Dutch foreign policy towards China? Why yes/no? if yes then what?
- 5) What do you hope to achieve with protesting against the Chinese government?
- 6) Do you feel like this type of activity is helping to achieve that goal?
- 7) Have you noticed any change?
- 8) Are there more types of protesting that you use?
- 9) What are the risks to protesting against the Chinese government?
- 10) Can you name these risks?
- 11) Why are you willing to take them?
- 12) Can you describe to me how it feels to protest against China?
- 13) Do you feel safe in the Netherlands whilst protesting?
- 14) Would you also protest against the Chinese government if you were living in China?

- 15) Why is it important for you that the Dutch foreign policy is changed towards China?
- 16) What do you hope will come from a change in Dutch foreign policy?
- 17) How do you think will China react to a change in Dutch foreign policy?

Ending question

- 1) In your ideal world, what should China look like and do?

And that concludes my interview, Thank you so much for your time. You have helped me a great deal with this interview. Do you perhaps know someone else that would be okay with an interview?

I also hope that it is okay for me to contact you after this interview should I have any questions regarding your answers? If so, how may I contact you? You must know that you can also always contact me if you have any questions. Should you reconsider your participation and decide to not further participate then simply send me a message and I will delete your information from my research. I'd like to thank you again for your time and effort and wish you a lovely day/evening.

2. Second version interview guide

introduction

Hello, first of all, I would like to thank you for participating in this research. My name is Marisa Tuinstra; I am 26 years old and am currently studying for my master at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. I am conducting a research for my final thesis and have decided to focus this around the matter of the Chinese diaspora in the Netherlands who are protesting against the Chinese government. Diaspora means the people that are ethnically Chinese and living in another country. I am interested in your perspective on protesting against the Chinese government and hope that you feel safe enough to share this with me. You will be completely anonymous and this thesis will only be published in the universities online library which is not available to the broader public.

In order to be able to remember everything that we discuss, I would like to record this interview on my iPhone, I hope that is okay with you? I will use the recording to transcribe this interview. Of course you are not obligated to answer a question if you don't want to. I hope everything is clear?

Before we start, do you have any questions?

General starting questions

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- How is/ was your day?

Questions to determine the participants (national) identity

- 1) How long have you lived in China before you came to the Netherlands?
- 2) Why did you come to the Netherlands? And not any other country?
- 3) Do you have a sense of loyalty towards China or the Netherlands? Can you describe to me why not/why do you still feel that?

Questions to determine the participants level of grievance and efficacy.

- 1) I understood that you are actively participating in protests against the regime of China, against the government. Can you tell me why you are protesting?
- 2) Why is that important?
- 3) Do you have a goal with your protests?
- 4) How did you start protesting? Also back in China? How did that go?

Questions to determine why people take the risk and how it feels

- 5) What are the risks of protesting against China?
- 6) Why are you still protesting despite these risks?
- 7) How does it feel to protest against China?
- 8) Do you feel safe in the Netherlands whilst protesting?
- 9) Can you explain to me why it is important to keep protesting despite the risks?
- 10) Have you felt any attempts to stop your protests? From who? How was that like?
- 11) Do you feel like you could still change anything despite being stopped? How do you feel about this?
- 12) What do you hope to achieve with protesting against the Chinese government?
- 13) Why is that important?
- 14) Does it have anything to do with the Netherlands?

Ending question

- 1) In your ideal world, what would China look like and do? Why are these values so important for you?

And that concludes my interview, Thank you so much for your time. You have helped me a great deal with this interview. Do you perhaps know someone else that would be okay with an interview? I also hope that it is okay for me to contact you after this interview should I have any questions regarding your answers? If so, how may I contact you? You must know that you can also always contact me if you have any questions. Should you reconsider your participation and decide to not further participate then simply send me a message and I will delete your information from my research. I'd like to thank you again for your time and effort and wish you a lovely day/evening.

3. Transcribed interview 1.

Interview 1.

Interviewer: I.

Participant/translator: T.

I: Can you start by telling me something about yourself.

T: He's from China, Wuhan.

I: And how does he like living in the Netherlands?

T: He's fine! Ehm...*speaks Chinese* about ten. Ten years.

I: Ten years? Okay wauw, okay. So do you consider yourself part of the community? Part of the Dutch or Chinese community?

T: He's part of Holland right now, he has a Dutch passport so in his heart he is Dutch right now.

I: Okay, that's cool, so he doesn't feel any Chineseness still? Or I don't know if I'm saying this right but he doesn't feel like he is Chinese?

T: He still relates with it, but I think he is more Dutch right now.

I: Okay, in what sense does he still relate with China? How does he...

T: He still relate with the people in Wuhan in China, but the way the communist is ruining the country it is broken it, So he doesn't have any connection with the country but with the people.

I: Okay, okay, that's a nice bridge to my next question. Cause in what way, does he think that the government has ruined China. How does he think that the government has ruined China?

T: He thinks that Chinese Communist Party is a terrorist party. That ahm, they don't have ethical regimes, they don't have humanity, there is a lot of wrong doing in China, the environment, the mountains, the water the food, everything is polluted. There's no room to live anymore. Ahm, he is really, really sick in it. Chinese Communist party is a terrorist party.

I: Okay, that's ahm. Okay. So I encountered him during a protest against the regime of China, against the government. Ahm, can you tell me again why you were participating in those protests, like why did you decide to go to Amsterdam and protest?

T: He says, he's against the regime, it's a terrorist regime, they're illegal in China. He wants everyone in the world to know that he is against it. And he's encouraging everyone in the world to stand up and acknowledge that China is a terrorist regime.

I: Okay, and eh so he want's everyone to know what is happening in China and...what is his goal then? What would he like to see being changed with the protest?

T: He wants China to be like Europa. Like western countries. Be free to have laws with people to can live free. And not under a terrorist regime like China government regime.

I: Okay so China must be like Europe?

T: jah.

I: Right. And ehm with protesting, it is...how can I say this... so he he's feeling like by protesting he is creating this attention and with it the change? Is that correct? Am I understanding him correct?

T: Yeah, jep.

I: Okay, so the protest is just to create attention to the problem?

T: Yes.

I: And he wants to get the attention from, who?

T: He want's the rest of the world to see they make video's from the protest, it's gonna be on youtube, facebook he wants everyone to see what's happening.

I: Okay videos on youtube/facebook, okay. And then...so these videos will go viral of course and we've also learned that there are these police stations in the Netherlands from China and there. Well it is speculated that China is very heavily spying on people. Ahm. How does he feel, how does he experience that? Is he scared or not?

T: He is ahm, he is aware of the police are in Holland, America and Europe. Ahm, not only the police but also ahm. We have a lot of...Chinese movements in Holland. And they are connected with communism. He's aware of it but he is not afraid of it. We are who we are, we want to help the world to see what communist are, and we are doing anything for it so we are not afraid of it.

I: Okay, well that's good, do you think he's also not afraid because he is living in the Netherlands? Would it be different if he were living in China?

T: He says, doesn't matter where he is. In Holland or China, he will still do the same as right here. He has been protesting in China, he has been locked up for almost 11 years, and he still does it.

I: Wow, so that implies that it is really important for him that it is changed. But then my next question might be a bit controversial. But ahm, he is living in the Netherlands, and he doesn't really necicarily have to do anything with China, since he is not living in China. Why, does he still want China to be Changed? Does he ultimately want to go back?

T: Yes, he really, really wants to go back to China. If China one day is changed in a freedom, free world, he really wants to go back to his own life.

I: Okay, okay that's..yes, that's beautiful. Ahm...do you feel like this type of activity is helping to achieve this goal, the protesting, since he's doing it for quite a long time. Has he noticed any change?

T: Yes, he's feeling it, he's feeling the *inaudible* of it, he's feeling the change in China. He said he's feeling is that before '35, Chinese government will collapse.

I: Okay, that's what he's thinking?

T: Yes, that's what he's thinking.

I: Okay, so...the government will collapse 2035, if he's continuing protesting –

T: Yes.

I: Okay ,ahm...is he also trying to change the way the Netherlands is....ahm..how can I say this. The way the Netherlands has bonds with China. Is he also aware of that? And trying to change that as well?

T: He's aware of the communication form between China and Holland. How China is very close to holland, and trying a lot of things to oppress the Chinese people in Holland. But, ahm what he wants to do. Is to tell the Dutch government that China is a terrorist organism. So don't work with them. And he's will it to...send them a paper, anything around it to say stop working with China. But he still hasn't done it.

I: Okay, ahm....so I have two more question as a follow up. He, like you said, he is noticing or he is aware that China is trying to oppress the people, the Chinese people in in the Netherlands. Let's just start with one question; how does he notice that? How does he feel that the government is trying to oppress the people living in the Netherlands?

T: Ahm..he's saying is, formally there is not, there isn't any oppression against the Chinese people or the people who are protesting. But if they are protesting in front of the Chinese embassy, they always call the police, and tell them that they have bombs amongst them. And the police will come and search them. So there isn't a formal oppressing but they still are very close to the Chinese embassy, the police.

I: Right, so does he, just to be clear. The Dutch police is close with the, with China –

T: Wel, no he, it's only formality that the Chinese ambassadors call the police, saying that protesters here, there are terrorist protest here and the police will always come and always pick them up and search them for bomb, weapons, ID's anything like that.

I: Right...okay, that's only in front of the Chinese embassy... okay.

T: Yes. Yes. Yes.

I: Right, well that's very interesting. Ahm...let's see cause I'm. there's so much information. Ah...right, and then...ahm.... Okay, I think I actually already have all the information that I need. Ahm. It's very helpful. I just have one closing question and then. I'm sorry, two closing questions. And then we can wrap it all up. So...in your ideal world, what would China look like and do? Just a closing, fun question.

T: He says, right now, China is a destroyed country. The country with a black hole. What he's hoping for, is a China, a land for hope for freedom and for everyone to be free, right now it isn't. in his mind what he's hoping for is that China would be like the rest of the world. Everyone is happy and free.

I: Okay, thank you so much. And then as a final question. Well that concludes my interview. Thanks again so much for your time. Ah and yeah, you've helped me a great deal already, I've so much to work on right now. Just as a follow up on that, do you maybe know people that are willing to do this interview as well with the similar question. That are willing and able to reach out to me? Do you know those people? That are also protesting?

T: He knows a lot and he's willing to help you?

I: That's amazing, also people that are able to speak English?

T: No he doesn't. They're missing Dutch and English speaking people in the community. It's fine. If he knows people, that are willing to talk, he has my number, so he can text me those numbers as well. So, that's it. Thank you so much.

4. Transcribed interview 2

Interview 2

Interviewer: I

Translator/participant: T

I: The first question, is just an opening question, I'm just very curious. Can you tell me something about yourself? Most of all, your background, so were you born in China? How did you come here? Just a little bit information about yourself.

T: I would like to describe myself as a Chinese political opponent. I have carried this political identity for more than 40 years. Since approximately 1980/1981.

I: O-okay, wow and he...is he, are you born in China?

T: Yeah. I'm old, I'm now 66 years old, I was born in China in 1950's.

I: Okay, well that's not old, ahm and when did you come to the Netherlands?

T: by the end of 2018, in November.

I: And what was your reason to come here?

T: I...the reason I came to the Netherlands is to request asylum or refuge...because if I..stayed in China. I would at this moment stay in Prison

I: Were you in...did you get out of Prison or were you about to go to prison?

T: Yeah at that moment I was about to go to jail. And before that, due to the incidents of 64 which happened in 1989, *inaudible* in June, I was sentenced for 8 years in jail. But I sat in jail for 6 years.

I: Wow. Okay. So do you know, you said some incidents before, was that also the reason why you would go to prison again?

T: No, because the reason I came to the Netherlands is not the 4th of June, because which happened in 1989, the reason I came to the Netherlands I could sense stress to my personal security. At that moment there was a massive arrest of civil lawyers. And I was...trying to, I was involved in protecting the human rights. And also, I was involved in some cases in Chinese city (Zindauw) and some *inaudible* cases related to working age, so their working age has been put to 0. So I attempted to protect their rights and at the same time I received some threats.

I: Okay, does he know from who he received those threats?

T: This threat I received from the squad of National security, because they have called me and told me to not get involved with a list of names which I don't want to mention. And I, they also told me that they were aware of this and if they came to the city Zendao, I am responsible to inform the squad of national security. Which I cannot do that. For example the new liberal movements. One of the members...I hosted him in Zendao. And the people from the national

security told me, we are aware of that and the moment I left China. I received information that he got arrested.

I: Okay, wow, so I encountered you during a protest against the regime of China, against the government. Can you tell me again why you were protesting and is that related to what you're telling me what happened in China.

T: The reason is very simple, since 1949, after the people...they established the people's republic of China they ran the Chinese regime, went away of anti people...anti humans, and they abolished the, they went authoritarian way, path, and also they abolished republic regime.

I: Okay, so that's why he was protesting?

T: Exactly, that's the reason why I am, a reason to me as a Chinese political opponent to China communist party.

I: Okay, and what does he hope to achieve with this protest?

T: Ahm, simply stated there is no goal for this regime, there is no freedom and democracy, and there's not give any human rights to people, so...basically he said there is no goal. But I guess I should finish his sentence. And through this protest we simply want, we simply aim to express that our attitude, that we, like we...don't accept the way they do, and we should not simply accept this ruling.

I: Right, and is it to express their attitude to the Dutch government or the Chinese one?

T: To the Chinese government.

I: Okay...ahm...does he still feel threatened here?

T: Yes, I can still feel the threat, approximately two years ago, I received their call, that they persuaded me to go back to China. And they used the carrot and stick strategy, so they asked me what my requirements are, and they tried to meet my requirement but predictable, but the outcome if I'd go back to China would be predictable.

I: Okay...so there was a call, right...and...why, cause that was two years ago, why still keep protesting then? Why is it so important to keep protesting even though it's threatening to his personal security?

T: Yeah, I have been engaged in protesting for more than 40 years, I identify as a Chinese political opponent, I dedicated myself to this career, I never had a good life, I studied law to become a lawyer but it never happened. I was trained to be a leader in our, train as a leader in our factory, but also I lost it. And now I'm here in the Netherlands but my wife and daughter are still in China and we can not get reunited, my wife she got, stopped, at the passport control in the airport and my son in law, my daughter's husband, he also got threatened, by his employee.

I: And then why, does he still want to protest?

T: As I said, that I identify myself as a Chinese political opponent, I don't see myself can do anything else except this, within that Chinese regime, and I can not do anything else. Now

here in the Netherlands, in a relatively free country, I don't have the fear here. So I can keep doing this. As long as I don't go to dangerous countries such as Thailand, Vietnam.

I: Okay, so...he feels safer in the Netherlands to express his, political opinion. Against China...

T: Exactly, yes.

I: Ahm, and why is it that he feels safe? Because it has been in the news that China also has this political police stations in Rotterdam as well, and there has been spying on Dutch universities. So it is known that China is also looking at ahm...you know, the Chinese people oversees, ah...why does he feel safer?

T: What you said indeed exists but there..indeed, but it kind also risky and not easy for them to achieve their agenda, police station, but I...we have no choice, I am dedicated to myself that Chinese opposition, I will never give up. We have no choice. Ofcourse I know some people they changed their aim, as along as they're granted political asylum, rather to live an...how to say it, easier life, but I will never change.

I: Okay, so what do you hope will come from the protest that do you? What does he hope to achieve with protesting...here?

T: I think I would establish moral example for those people in China, there are still people engaged in protest...and its...I would say its moral support...its heroic, examples is ofcourse not an immediate effect.

I: Okay, I have two more question. And then it's finished. Do you attempt to try and change anything for...within the Dutch policy towards China?

T: Indeed we do have something to say for the Dutch foreign policy towards China, but we don't know how to talk with them. And ahm, the Netherlands keeps good diplomatic term with China, and they should see the nature of Chinese communist party and take a strong stand against...Chinese communist party, because China aims to transform the whole world into authoritarian regimes, and the biggest threat and challenge to the world is not Russia but China.

I: Okay, so then I have...this is great and very helpful, thank you so much. I have one concluding question and then some formalities and then we can finish this. So the last would be, in your ideal world what would China do and look like?

T: Yes, I would like to see China ah...China in three aspects politically is a constitutional democratic country of the people, everyone have their *inaudible* and economically it provided equal economic opportunity to people. Ah...legally or constitutionally everyone's right are protected. There is no worries about police, courts and also...anyone who helps the courts to put any crimes on anyone and arrest anyone as they want. So in that sense I would like to see China as other democratic countries in these three aspects.

I: Right, thank you so much. This has been incredibly helpful thank you again. ahm...do you maybe have other people that are willing to talk about this subject and are willing to do a similar interview with me?

T: I have a small question, I would like to ask you belong to which organization? Behave individual or with media?

I: I am a student at the Radboud university, so this is my research, I don't belong to any organization other than the Radboud, this is just for my research.

T: Oh I see.

I: Does he have other people that are willing to talk?

(the rest of the interview continued about the scope of the interview, there had been an issue with the video call and it cut us off in the last couple of minute)

5. Transcribed interview 3.

Interview 3:

Interviewer: I

Translator: T

I: actually we already discussed this question but I would still like you to, for the recording, to introduce yourself a little bit and tell me specifically how your life was in China and why you decided to go to the Netherlands, that would be nice.

T: Back in China he had been captured three times, and two of them he went to prison. He got out. And everything was changed. His whole life was being watched. And the last time he went back to jail was in 02 and he ahm...was tortured, wasn't getting food and he starved himself 15 days. And when he got out he still was doing everything he could for Chinese people, for the people there. And he doesn't want to give up his free life, his freedom. So that is why he kept doing everything. But after three times in jail I think he was, he still want's to do everything for the Chinese people.

(interviewee talks more)okay, if he's talking about his past life in China, he can get a little emotional so don't get upset about that. (Interviewee talks more) ahm...back in China he his life is changed after Prison of course. He has a girl, his daughter, can't be free everything, so he want a better life for his daughter and of course for him so that's why he choose to come to holland. He didn't want to, he wanted to stay in China. But his freedom, he really wanted to get his freedom to help the people and for the little girl. Ahm, he says, if you are an enemy of the state, China will do anything to destroy you. To contact his family, his daughter, he said he didn't want his daughter to get vaccinated, the vaccination in China is deadly, that's what he said. And he doesn't want it...that's why he came to holland.

I: Okay, so...that's pretty intense, so maybe, cause he said he can get a little emotional, I'm really curious. Why does he get emotional from talking about his past life in China.

T: He says he got tortured. So that's why.

I: Right, oh okay, so he got tortured. Oh my gosh, so ehm...okay, I'm thinking of a good follow up question for this. So he came to the Netherlands because he wanted, his, himself and his daughter to be safe. Ahm...does he still have a sense of loyalty towards China or has it changed towards the Netherlands?

T: Okay, by law he is still Chinese, he doesn't have a Dutch passport. He have, he does have a Dutch ID. Ja, by law he's still a Chinese citizen. But he can't get a Dutch passport because he is country less.

I: Country less?

T: Yeah, because he is fugitive. And Chinese Fugitive, and Chine doesn't recognize him, so he is country less. And he doesn't have a Chinese passport, but he also doesn't have a Dutch passport. (interviewee talks more Chinese...). He says, Chinese, being Chinese is a difficult point to discuss. What is Chinese? You are a Chinese person, but not a Chinese, democrat, oh no, communists. Ehm... this is a difficult point to discuss. Ahm. Chinese people doesn't mean you're communist. So I think he is still a Chinese person but he doesn't have anything with Chinese communist party.

I: Right, so ethnically and politically totally different. Yeah, ahm, okay so does he...does China or the Chinese government make his life harder here in the Netherlands? And does he have any examples of how the China, makes his life difficult here?

T: Right now in Holland, he doesn't have any pressure from China. Ehm..he in person, but by phone he still has a house in China and every month there will visit him once or twice. He has a camera outside his house so he can see who is around his house. So he says Chinese police will visit his house once or twice per month to see if there is anything happening. And he also have phone calls from China. With Chinese policemen calling him with threats. But in person in Holland he doesn't have any problems.

I: And I have two follow up questions then, like what are the threat that they used over the phone? Like what are those threats and I am very curious how he feels about that what does it do to him? These things?

T: Ahm, at the – in the phone call he doesn't really ahm...threaten him, they only say: oh your parents are still in China, your daughter is still in China, so when come back. There wasn't really threatening but more how they say it. Your parents are still here so...you never know. The same night he didn't sleep. He think about it a lot. And he posted on Facebook about it on the internet with the story and the policemen who called him and saying what city he was, what police station he was. And saying if something happen to me, that's the policeman who called me. So he... published it ahm, online.

I: Okay, wow, does he feel like, showing that online he is being threatened, helps him in a way, does he feel like that's a relief?

T: He said, yeah it does help a little. Ahm I think ahm...he thinks the person who calls him will feel attacked. But the bigger lie doesn't. the bigger lie it won't help. But ti will affect the person who contacted him. He says, the new government. Xi Jinping, on power it effect will lose. Because every, in China, the social media is less then here in Holland.

I: Right, but Facebook is broader than China so of course other people will see his messages. Does he think that the protesters do this too, because it gives them a sense that it helps them to show the world what is, yeah what is going on with them?

T: Ahm...he's saying, it doesn't matter if it helps or not. Ahm, it is only a little drop in a bucket. But still he want's to show the people in China and all over the world that they are doing something. That they fight to help. It doesn't mean there is no end to it? He's still going to do it. This little thing he wants to do, it doesn't matter if social media will help or not.

I: Right, and...ahm..well like he said, he still receives some, in a way, some threats, ahm...why still continue? Why still do it? Why is it so important? For him, that he does this?

T: He has been dead before, he says, after torture, his first life had ended, this one is his second life, he doesn't fear death or anything, and he second part is...ahm..he he want to do what good, what is good for the people. He wants to change the world. He wants to change the way of thinking of the government of China he wants the people on top. Stand up for the Chinese people. That's number two and number three he doesn't want to give the children in China, he wants to give them a better life. So he has to do it, not the next generation, next generation. So it's now...or never.

I: Right, and does he feel like he has a chance, to change anything? Despite everything that is happening?

T: No, he doesn't know, he doesn't know if anything gonna change or not. But, he will do everything his power to change it, every day he's gonna try, a little bit better a little more. But no he doesn't know if it is gonna change or not.

I: Okay, and how does he feel about that? Not knowing that it will...does he, yeah how does he feel about this?

T: Yeah, he is sad, sad about it. But he said, he is fortunate to be able to do something. He is fortunate to be alive, alive and kicking. So he said, everything in his power, the little things he can do in Holland for the people in China, he will. And everyday, can I do a little bit more? So, yeah he is sad, but because his sadness he will do more.

I: Okay, that is powerful. Ahm...is he afraid of China?

T: Ahm, yes, he is afraid of the Chinese government. But he is above it, he is above his fear. He said, ahm. His parents is still in China, he has two children in China, his wife is still in China and it doesn't mean that he isn't afraid of the Chinese government having his parents and childrend and wife because he want's to do more. Because his fear for the Chinese government, he still wants to do more. It doesn't mean he doesn't love his family, but everything is above that. Above that fear. Do you know what he means?

I: Yeah, so he's very motivided? If I'm understanding him correctly. Just very motivaded because of this fear?

T: Yes.

I: So that implies that he still thinks that he has a chance? Right?

T: Yeah, there is still hope. He is still hoping that it is going to happen. After the covid, He said in China is more people standing up, more people are seeing what is happening, ahm, although the Chinese government are brainwashing the local but still there are still people standing up, and he said that he is still hoping that he can see the change in China in his life time. But no he doesn't know when he's just hoping that in his life time he's going to see change.

I: Right, and am I understanding him correctly that seeing other people protesting also adds to that hope?

T: Yeah.

I: Okay, cool, so what else would help, with this protesting? With him, in general? It's a big question so..just...

T: At first, ahm the Europe – that western people has to know what is happening in the regime. He's called it a nazi regime. He wants to let the western people see what is happening in Beijing. And number two is that western people must realice that Chinese people are different from the Chinese regime so we're Chinese but we're not communist. And number three is that China must be free on the internet, the firewall must be going down, so the sociale media have to go back to China. So the Chinese people is going to see what is

happening in the western world. And of course number four is that the western government has to stop communicating with China above the human rights so human rights is more important than financial business that they are doing in China. So he also said, the western people have to stop doing this to China.

I: Yeah, okay, ehm...I'm just searching through the questions, because in a conversation it's always better, ahm it flows better if you ask questions that follow up for the story but then I have to search for the questions. Please explain that too.

T: Okay.

I: so a bit to follow up on that, so he want's to see some changes in the western world too. why is that so important? Because he is focussing on China? Why is that so important?

T: He said, that, in western, or here in Holland we don't know what is happening in China, with Chinese people in general. Everything we know about China is general Hong Kong or Tibet, they have propblems with Chinese government but in China people self also have problems with the regime. So it is not only in Tibet, Hong Kong or Macau, it is also in the mainland that they have terrorist regime. And that is what the western people doesn't know.

I: Okay, and is he attempting to also reach out to the western people to you know, tell this story?

T: He has, he talks a lot, talk a lot to people, he also does interviews. But there is, at the moment he doesn't have the...the...the power to speak to the dutch government, but he is still in conversation with normal people. He does speak a lot.

I: Okay, ahm...I wanted to ask another question...ehm...okay, then maybe let's just ask another question and I might find it again. So in his ideal world what would China look like and do?

T: He would like China to be...a normal country. A normal country like holland or the western countries. Freedom of speech, freedom of believe, just be you. He want China to be a normal country without the nazi regime without everything being brainwashed. He lives in a normal country he wants china to be that too.

I: Okay, again this might sounds a bit repetitive, but why does he value that so much.

T: He says, ahm, if you know what freedom is, and you will only, he lives in holland now so he knows that freedom is like and he want's everyone to have freedom now. He knows how important freedom is.

I: Okay, that's a beautiful answer, I just have one more question and then I think I have everything I need for this interview. Ahm...so he did say that he talks a lot to various people, doesn't feel like he has the power to talk to the government. Why does he feel like he doesn't have that power and second question would be ahm...does he feel like people listen? Actually listen to his talks?

T: Okay, first answer is ahm...if the holland, if the dutch government is communicating with the Chinese people, always with the big organisations, never with a single person. So he is too small. He is too small to have a conversation with the Dutch government. So he doesn't speak English and there's a language barrier in his problem, and he is too old to learn English. And

his brain has so much torture in China so he can't even learn a new language anymore. So, the language barrier is there and the Dutch government only speaks with big organisations so never with a single person. He would want to, he wants to contact the Dutch government but there is no simple way. (interviewee says something in Chinese). And the third is, ahm...he in holland, he has to live, try to live a normal life, so he has to work, he has to bring up his daughter. He still has a daughter over here. And his energy is in his normal life, at the moment he doesn't have energy left to contact the Dutch government. (interviewee continues talking in Chinese). He says, some people does, some people listen to him and some people don't at the beginning he stayed at a refugee camp in Holland, the AZC, and the doctors and therapist all listen to him. But still there are people who doesn't listen to him. So he want to give the Dutch people a chance to learn about him. About Chinese culture, the Chinese way. Yeah.

I: Okay, ehm that's beautiful, thank you, well that actually concludes my interview. Ahm. I'm curious does he maybe have anything else that he maybe wants to say to me?

T: He's doing three things right now, number one is he follows a lot of Chinese imprisoned people, he follows them. The second one, he's supporting people to break down the fire wall in China. So the social media will go to China but also to western people. And number three he has a list, he's making it everyday a list of the bad people in China. The person who's doing bad things and he's ahm sending them to other people so they can call them or email them to stop. Tell them to stop doing bad things. So everyday he has a top ten. Top ten of bad people. So he's doing that right now.

I: Wow, so every day?

T: Every day.

I: Can you ask him if I understand him correctly that he is very invested, that it's kinda still. How do you say, influences his life every day.

T: He doesn't sleep a lot, he only sleeps four hours a day. Because he has a mental illness from the torture in China. So, he only sleeps four hours and the rest of the day he does his life, is this. do what he can do.

I: Wow, does he feel some type of anger or resentment? Because he was tortured? Is he angry?

T: Yeah of course he was angry, the first time he got captured he was very angry. But ahm, he is a good Christian. He believes in God, and God always says turn other cheek. Be kind to people, also to enemies, so he's believing that. He is being kind to every one. He is above his anger. (interviewee continues to talk Chinese). Once in prison he stopped eating for 15 days, he's still alive so he believes in God.

I: That's ahm...awesome. Okay, so then, I have, I think I have everything but should I have more questions is it okay to contact you again?

T: He has twitter, so he says you can follow him there. He posts a lot.

I: I don't have twitter, haha.

T: You can find his name, on social media, just type his Chinese name in it and you can find a lot of articles from him.

I: Okay, okay, thank you. And thanks again for doing this interview with me...

- End of interview -

6. Transcribed interview 4.

Interview 4

Interviewer: I

Interviewee: T

I: Yes, its recording, so just to start can you tell me a little bit about yourself. Like where are you from, how old are you, what do you do? Just general information.

T: Ah, okay, ahm I'm from...you know, absolutely I'm from China,

I: Yeah

T: Yeah, and eh this year is I think, 20...22 years old yeah! And we...you know, always against the Chinese communist party cause...ahem...lots of things. So yeah, basically we doing this. they make a lot of problem for us. Yeah. But, yeah still we will against the communist yeah.

I: Okay, okay, so you you were born in China if I understood you correctly.

T: Yeah, of course.

I: Okay, and when did you came to the Netherlands then?

T: Eh, actually this is a very long story, 'cause you know, I left China in 2019, eh you know, in this time I was just 17 years old, yeah under 18, because I post something online I mean. I support Hong Kong, eh democratic protest and I support protest is a rights. It's a basic human right I think so the Chinese authority they want to catch me. I mean, they put my warrant on and they can state media, national tv a lot of Chinese news, and I left China, otherwise I will be under police arrest and this...so I left China in 2019, I think juli, first I go to Hong Kong, after a lot of country, even Europe, America, eh,...heh, ah Africa, A lot of countries, so...I come to the Netherlands is a 2021, august I think. This is eh...you know, I know I come to Netherlands because Netherlands is a very beautiful country, very nice country. So I come here Yeah yeah.

I: (laughs) okay, well that's great, well normally people would disagree with you, normally people would say like the Netherlands is cold and its not really a beautiful country, in my opinion, but that's eh –

T: (laughs) yeah yeah. You know actually the Netherlands in Chinese, is eh... (Chinese word for Netherlands)... like a, if directly translated is a whole land. In Chinese means is very beautiful so I think Netherlands is very beautiful.

I: Oh, okay, great. So ahm...okay you went away from China, you went to Hong Kong because you were threatened? Or you posted something online and then you were threatened right? If I understood you correctly?

T: Hm, yeah yeah yeah, correct. A I think it's not only threatened, they put my warrant you know, in state media. In national tv in a lot of this. almost all Chinese people know me. So I must leave this country in other ways I will be in jail like this yeah.

I: They broadcasted your photo? Online?

T: Hmh yeah of course, my photo my name, eh like the national ID card, ID number eh passport number, phone number, the address yeah. Even my parents information.

I: Woah, they did that because you said that you agreed with Hong Kong...

T: Yeah, correct.

I: Wow, that is...that must have been terrifying for you.

T: Yeah, yeah yeah...

I: ...and ahm after you left China, were you...like can you describe to me how that process went. Like. Were you scared and all? Like what happened when you said okay, I'm gonna leave.

T: Actually, you know, when I left China I feel..I feel freedom. I don't have any problems, so happy I left China. But until 2021...eh April 6, cause ehm you know, I just bought a ticket from Istanbul to New York, America eh I choose the Emmerates Airline so I need to transfer in Dubai, when I arrived in Dubai the Dubai police arrest me and put me in prison. Like two months. Yeah yeah, almost two months, and they want to send me to China because the Chinese authority they asked dubai arrest me but they...so..but finally I was...a lot of international media eh report this situation and white house. They said my case is human rights case they also said Dubai release me, so Dubai released me so now I'm in the Netherlands, not China. Yeah.

I: Wow....ahm...that's eh...I'm sorry I'm just a little bit flabbergasted because this is a very interesting story so I...I...okay. Eh...so you went tot the Netherlands, and then...in the Netherlands, what did you decide to do, like, you came here and what happened?

T: Actually, when I arrived in Netherlands, I think I must be very safe. Because this is European union country. But ehm...unfortunately it is not because it is...you know, I mean the Chinese authority in CCP, the Chinese communist Party, they keep threaten me, for example, especially like last year. Eh the 2021, June, they send a killer to my apartment and the police they send me and my girlfriend to hotel you know, living for three months because you know very very dangerous. And eh the beginning 2021 September, they changed the plan. So Dutch police already arrest the you know, some Chinese agents because you know they want to kill me or they want to do some crazy things at the beginning from September 2022, I'm sorry, yeah 2022, change the plan. Eh...for example like eh from beginning they use my name send an email to (inaudible) or Dutch police saying I have a bomb. I plan go to the international court, kill people or do some really crazy things you know. And a lot of time you know police in like a two am, three am they come to my apartment you know a lot of police the come with policecar and helicopter because my apartment has a bomb, yeah it really happened a lot of times. And after, because Dutch police already know this is eh its Chinese authority do this, eh also like three weeks the Dutch media report this situation, the Dutch police told the media they confirmed its false bomb...or somebody say I have a bomb is from China. And the Chinese authority they changed the plan again. It's embassy, they officially called the Dutch police they told the Dutch police I make a bomb in Chinese embassy. I don't know this is, a same things, a lot of Dutch police they block the streets, even send army military to check in there, if I have a bomb or not. The I really don't know why they do this. but yeah, the people do this now. They changed the plan again. In a name, because I don't know how they know my number. I mean the Dutch number and my address. So then booked

a taxi, you know uber eats, you know everything like a only 40 of 50 tons come to my apartment, harassing me. So I can't even sleep yeah, so, this is the situation now. And the Dutch police, eh actually you know I think the Dutch police take this very seriously because ehm...in 2022 eh...august I think yeah. The Dutch foreign minister, I don't know...his name...like a Hoekstra? I don't know, he told the media yeah the Dutch police is making plan protect us. He said like this, but until now the Dutch police told me they really want to do something but they cannot do anything because you know the all threats from China, they cannot go to China arrest people (laughs).

I: No, okay, right. But you eh would you say you feel protected in the Netherlands? By the police?

T: Eh...no, no no no, actually no, because the Dutch police, I'm sorry to say this, but actually you know sometimes they a little stupid because I already told them, I said now...almost is not just in Netherlands, even in Germany, Belgium, or even in Hungary they already know, the Chinese government make bomb threats under my name. But the Dutch police told me even they know this is fake but if someone said I have a bomb they all will send a lot of police eh come to my house I can't understand what is this. yeah.

I: Hmmh right, ehm do you still protest? Do you still actively engage in protests? Whether online –

T: Yeah absolutely but recently I didn't go to Chinese aabassy, Im with another media make some documentary.

I: Okay, so you make a documentary as a form of protest? Or...?

T: Not...yeah eh probably, you know it's a..I think part of protest but I mean, the...it's about the Chinese oversees policestation. Because they opened policestation and they even use official number make phone call and they even send people make arrest me. Now that guy is already in prison and I think is very funny so a lot of media make a documentary like a BBC, or the Netherlands, I don't even know the name oh yeah NOS social media. You know recently everyday I have a film yeah yeah, because they want make a documentary and they release probably like next month yeah.

I: Okay, okay.

T: Yeah this is very funny.

I: Yeah, I'm looking forward to that documentary.

T: Yeah I know, they already finished a documentary in German media, I can send a link to you yeah.

I: That would be great! Thank you.

T: Yeah no problem.

I: Okay so then you do protest or not in recent weeks maybe but you still protest right?

T: Yeah yeah!

I: And would you continue protesting in the future too?

T: Yeah ofcourse

I: Okay, so then my next question is...hmh, why would you still continue with protesting then if you are so threatened by the Chinese police, why do you still protest?

T: Eh Actually you know, eh...as a ...Chinese police, I mean Chinese overseas police. They call me they ask me do something for (inaudible) delete my twitter, because I have 13 something...8 thousand followers. They ask me delete my account, stop protest, stop talking to media, and they will not harras me. This is what they say but yeah this...I don't want to accept this. I will accept this the Chinese authority they will think...like threaten people, herras people, it work...so they move to another citizen or journalist, so I think...I can't accept this. another reason is I have to do this. they will think this is gonna work in Europa, everybody, I mean in Europe I'm a little bit famous. A I mean, the Chinese dissidents so if I accept this they will do this to another dissident and know because of a lot of reports media, message situation, if I need a problem, I need any help its probably within 24 hours, theres big news. But I will think they will do similar things to another dissidents but normally you know to Chinese dessidents it is really really low...whener when they show another sees, they really have a problem even authorities, if I mean overseas police did the same things to another dissidents this will, will is really terrible. So I can't accept this, another reason is that I help with this.

I: So, if I understood you correctly you feel like you have to do this?

T: Yeah of course.

I: Okay, because it wont change anything if you stop. Right?

T: eh actually, if I stop it will change yeah. They will stop herrasing me or threaten me but they will think this plan works. And they want to use the system and then use the same ways to herras another dissident, this is very terrible.

I: Right...ehm...and how do you feel about that?

T: E...actually I feel its really...ehm...I don't know what I can say. Its ah....actually I feel very....bad...I think...is not. Sometimes I think this is very funny because I can't believe Chinese authority in Netherlands they send eh police station. And they send overseas police in Dutch territory. Eh herrasing dessidents. But also you know, I feel...I don't know how to say like...I don't understand Dutch authority why let...I mean, Dutch media, I don't understand I also asked Dutch government why? The Dutch government they didn't do anything like before they already know the Chinese overseas police station, they already know like one year ago. They already know this, but they didn't do anything, until, a lot of media asked them question and they shut down this police station. So yeah. Totally I think is very bad. It's not just because of Chinese authority. Its also, about the european union, the country, especially the Dutch government. Eh yeah. I think this is not right, eh supposedly this is everything is wrong. Because, the Chinese authority they did a lot I mean quete but the Dutch government didn't do anything. Until I...post this whole situation in media and okay then they start do something. But before they didn't do anything so yeah..

I: Okay, do you have a certain goal with your protest?

T: I'm sorry?

I: Do you have a certain goal, like do you want to achieve something with your protest?

T: I'm sorry what is goal?

I: Eh...how can I explain this? ehm would you like – so you go to the embassy to protest right? And then what do you hope will come from that? Of protesting, what do you hope will change?

T: Eh actually, I...you know I hope the Chinese authority they will change, for example, we just want human rights, democracy, and ehm...the freedom of press. Yeah. And we want freedom of speech, we also want for the China to release all the Chinese political prisoners. Yeah...this is...basically yeah. This is our ask. Yeah. I think this, is...I think in normal country this is the basic human rights. This is. We don't need to protest. For example in Netherlands... have a freedom of speech, we can say whatever we want. Just not threatening of course. This is very basic rights, but in China we don't have this rights. In China if we say anything wrong I mean...for example, I said I'm not agree this policy, police will come to my house and arrest or beat and I will do a lot of crazy things. But for example if China. If sometimes we really need police help like a the murder or rape if the police saw the police will not come they say like ow, nah, I'm busy, but if for example I say there is a guy he said Chinese government is not good, immediately they will come this is China.

I: Wow...why do you think is that? Why do...

T: Yeah, eh before if I saw the news ehm...eh...old man. There is...how can I say. There is a big fire in the house and there is an old man...he can't go outside because there is a lot of fire. It's really emergency situation, and he made a phone call to emergency services, oh yeah the fire fighter. And they said we are very busy. Even they come, because this is really big fire they cannot do anything. After this old man he...he wrote 84 paper and he say the big bad Chinese communist party and a lot of police came even they fix the fire problem it self. Yeah this is very funny but this is real situation. I now I can't still...

I: Oh wow.

T: Yeah, so this is really funny but yeah.

I: That's so strange too. ahm...why...is it so important for you that China becomes, that China has the basic human rights. Why is that important for you?

T: eh I think it's not just important for me, also important for all Chinese people, everyone, because a lot of ways, you know everyone is unsafe in China. And you know China is a big country, we have I don't even know, the exact number, but is very...China have a lot of people, everyone is unsafe so. Important for everyone.

I: Would you say it is also important for you cause you ultimately would want to go back to China?

T: Oh no I don't go back (laughs)

I: Then why still protest?

T: E...like just now I say it, because you know we are out of China. Right. We can do protest. We just want to do something help eh...the Chinese people, who live in China. Like for example (inaudible) yeah so...if you know, because you know they cannot do anything in China. Like eh...protest. Or other ways. It's a really big problem. So yeah. We can help, we just want to help them to do something.

I: Right but ehm...you don't have to answer really, but that's why I'm asking these questions because you said like okay you're being threatened and ehm...like the police is actively trying to catch you, yet you don't want to go back to China, you still want to help them, despite your own safety. Why is that? I'm just trying to understand you.

T: Yeah because eh this is a lot of ah...a lot of reason, like just now I say it. First we really want to help the people who live in China because everyone is unsafe and you know they have a lot of political prisoners. And second reason is you know, because I mean Netherlands and I'm doing a lot of protest of accept media interview or make documentary or it's everything is big. So I'm in a democracy country, I'm doing legal things this is totally no any problem. But even they the Chinese authority threaten me. It's harassing me, even this the people want to kill me, arrest me the...so...I must, I mean this is my responsibility, I must ehm...you know, against, that. Other ways now...they just doing like harassing or threaten, if I say, okay I will stop, I will never talk anything about all of this beliefs or about Chinese government they will say all...this is working. And in the future they will do more and more of this. to me or other people to other residents. I can't you know from my opinion, I can't accept this. because this is Netherlands, I'm doing totally (inaudible) and in China, you know Beijing, from Beijing to Amsterdam is very far I don't know but yeah it's almost 80 thousand kilometers I don't know, but now they want to come here. I don't accept this. So I must against this yeah.

I: Right okay, so now I understand you better, if...if I understood you correctly its because you are, if you were to stop it will give them a sign saying that okay this works, we should continue with our...with our activities across borders right? That's what you're saying?

T: (agreeing) hmh

I: So you've been threatened and harrast. How where you herrassed but...was it, I'm sorry if I missed that but was it the Dutch police? Or the Chinese police here in the Netherlands, like what happened?

T: Yeah, yeah, Chinese police,

I: Did...did they come to your door or what happened?

T: Eh...yeah I think maybe later I can send you a link about Dutch news, it's really funny because they just make a phone call to me, they say tomorrow I'm going to kill you blablabla, very funny. And second day they make phone call to me they say now Im already arrived Den Hague central station eh...I give you a chance to come to Den Hague central station, meet with us, talk with us and go back to China and otherwise I will go to your house arrest you that is... I told Dutch police and together with Dutch police we found this guy. He's in Starbucks, he take computer and said he want to talk to me, he is says he is police.

I: Wow, so he asked you to come to the train staion in Den Hague, and he was, it is confirmed that he is Chinese police?

T: Hmh, he said he is Chinese police so yeah. I'm I don't know who he is, he arrest him, I mean the Dutch police arrest him.

I: Okay, wow, that's interesting, ehm...and then...so they called you by phone, they called you from china or do you know if they called you from the Netherlands?

T: Eh here, Rotterdam. We were there, there were two police station, one in Rotterdam one is in Amsterdam.

I: But they told us in the news that that's not allowed right.

T: Yeah, absolutely, they threatened to kill me, they threatened to arrest me, until now I think this is very funny.

I: Yeah, but they're not active anymore right?

T: Yeah,

I: They are?

T: I'm sorry?

I: They're not active anymore right? The Chinese police stations here in the Netherlands?

T: I'm not sure, I'm not sure the Dutch, foregin minister he said it is shut down but I'm not sure really.

I: Okay, do...when was the last time that you received any threatening or harrising things from China? From the Chinese police?

T: Eh...everyday almost.

I: So you got it today too?

T: Yeah of course.

I: What did they say?

T: You know, sometimes they use a lot of noice, sometimes they say they will kill you, they will some crazy things but almost always they use my name book a taxi and the taxi driver come to my apartment and ask me what happened. Or they just how I said, they call police, I mean Dutch police they say my apartment has a bomb.

I: That's crazy, ehm...so I, asked you before, But I'm still very curious, do you have a sense of security? That you live in the Netherlands, like you said the Netherlands is a free country, freedom of speech, you should be able to do everything that you are doing here. Do you feel safe? Here?

T: Eh no no no, I feel, actually I feel unsafe yeah. You know the Chinese authority they know my number, they know my address, they know my everything, eventhough I changed it a lot of times, even I cant remember my number but Chinese authority they know.

I: But by law, they're actually not eh...how can you say by law they cannot come to you, in the Netherlands, they should be, they should stay in their country we have Dutch border, border security etc. so by law, on paper, you should be safe.

T: Yeah, absolutely, but the Chinese authority I think they don't care about the law, even international law, they don't care even is...otherwise they will not open police station.

I: So, ahm...do you gather together with lots of other Chinese people to protets against this?

T: Eh yeah sometimes.

I: Do you have a big, like group chat or?

T: Yeah. Yeah of course. We have a whatsapp group, or telegram group, or twitter... yeah.

I: And then you gather around to protest once a week or...how does that work?

T: I'm sorry?

I: And then you gather to protest once a week or –

T: Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely.

I: Okay, let me just check for my questions if I have everything that I wanted. Em... we've talked a lot already, but I...think you answered a lot already. Do you hope that the Netherlands might do anything against what is happening or. Do you hope that the Netherlands in general can help you? What would help you? It's a very broad question I know but..

T: Yeah I just hope that the Dutch government they can, they can keep Netherlands safety, they can do something for this country safety like...shut down this police station, or arrest Chinese spy. Yeah, just do that. For this country own safety. Yeah.

I: Okay, ehm...then I guess it's a quick interview this time, but ehm for my ending question, in your ideal world. What would China look like and do, and what would you do, if anything was possible.

T: Oh I think to be honestly I think the communist party they are I mean, absolutely also the Chinese government I mean now, I think theyre not governmental or party their like the I don't know what I can say they are the anti humanity organisation. I think they are the biggest terrorist organisation in the world. They are more wars, more prisons and now, even nowadays they will not...(inaudible) Chinese communist party they like you know, for example they send spy balloon to America and they open a lot of police station around the world and the prosecute a lot of Chinese citizens, they just want Freedom, they just want democracy and freedom of speech and therefore the Chinese authority prosecute them. Yeah, I think this is what I can say yeah more wars, more criticism yeah. I never say this, it's crazy, I cannot believe now is 2023 the Chinese communist party they kept doing this, I cannot believe this, so yeah, I think in the future, they will do more crazy things, more worse things, I come to my, they come to you, they won't let you do anything.

I: Do you think that China in the future, like you said okay it will get worse, but do you think that with your activities with protesting with continuously asking for attention towards this problem. Do you think that they will change.

T: Eh no no no, I don't think they will change. Actually they now or later, even catch the Chinese prosecution he want. Like a, probably like he wants to be like a Putin, like a Russian president like, they are kinda like a brothers probably. He want to do something like him. I don't think China will change, the people take down the Chinese communist party or yeah I really don't think eh if Chinese communist party maybe 100 years yeah...

I: Do you think that maybe other countries might help?

T: Yeah...! Actually I don't think so because now is 2023 is not like before, like 1940 or 1950 like, like America not coming together against Germany. Now is 2023, now China have a lot of money, they have a lot of army. I mean he military ahm...I don't think another country will help otherwise they will have problem, Yeah.

I: Okay, so I get a sense of that you think that China is just too powerfull. Is that right?

T: Hmmh yeah yeah, is too powerful.

I; Okay, okay...ahm...wow...wow...I thank you so much. I think I have everything that I need for now, do you have anything that you like to say about this whole situation? Is there anything else you'd like to explain or say.

T: I think almost all already said (laughs).

I: Yeah?

T: Yeah.

I: Okay. Well if you ever feel like you want to talk more about this then of course you're very welcome to contact me again.

T: Thank you!

I: The same, I hope the same goes the other way too, like if I'm writing down the data and I have a few more questions if its okay for me to contact you again?

T: Yeah yeah, of course. Very welcome

I: Thank you thank you.

- End of interview -

7. transcribed interview 5.

Interview 5

Interviewer: I

Interviewee: T

I: I'll start the recording now and I am doing this interview around the protesting against the Chinese regime. So I'm really curious, especially towards your experiences, from this protesting and the way they try to stop you protesting. But before we dive into that I'd like you to introduce yourself a little bit, just tell me where you're from and yeah, just general stuff please.

T: She's from Hubei, a province Hubei, in 2004...2006 she went to work in Beijing. Actually, her story starts with her cousin. Her cousin got sick, got cancer. She started doing research for like how it is in the west. The difference is too high, too big, in China and in western countries. I think what she's trying, or meaning to say is that the help and everything around, the difference is too big. Because of this she started doing research. She was asking herself, what is our government doing, why aren't they here? Are they helping us? What are they doing for us. And they started doing research, comparing with western countries. She's telling us, why is difference so big between Chinese government and Western government and she started to do research for incidents. Health incident or environment incidents she find a lot of ehm incidents reports what isn't reported in the news that the Chinese people doesn't know.

I: Okay, wow, and is that also the reason why she decided to come here? Or did something else happen?

T: the reason she's coming to holland isn't because the difference is too big between China and western countries. The reason is that her...she was unsafe in China. We have in China, a chat program called (Inaudible) and she started a group with a lot of Chinese people but also people from foreign countries and they're spreading images of the government ehm but right now with Xi Jinping on power, they can't do it anymore.

I: So the groupchat was about her findings from like medicine and stuff?

T: Yes.

I: Okay, and because she started a group chat she was unsafe?

T: The police ahm, she was captured by the police. She says, back in Beijing she wasn't the bravest. Ahm back in China. But ehm, she had small company, or her family has to be provided by the company and she tried to ehm doing small things, small articles, small chats, but Chinese government have spies around the chat group so she was taken by the police.

I: Wow, and what were these articles and chats about then?

T: Almost everything, every article, every project, everything that is happening in China, on the news or off the news, they are talking about. They are, they have the point on it. So everything. She her, point right now is that in China, there are a lot of children living with their grandparents because their parents has to work in bigger cities, she's pointing out that

this is because of the Chinese government. That letting their parents work outside their hometowns. Their children living with the grandparents they don't have good healthcare, good schooling. And everything with the children happen right now, a lot of children die because they don't have good health. And that...the second point is the environment, the Chinese government is very low on environment. Ehm everything what happened happened in the west. Money or research. That is because the Chinese government doesn't have a strong environment point. A lot of children got sick of it. We have the milk question, with small children drinking milk and then die of it. She knows, in her province there's a small group of students, they started their own environment group. Without the money of the government and they started to do environmental good things but they got pick up and got punishment.

I: wow, so in a way they were kind of criticizing the government, if I understood that correctly? And that is why she got arrested?

T: That is exactly what you're saying, she's criticizing the government. The government doesn't have a right system. They doesn't have human rights. That what she is complaining about.

I; Yeah, okay, so then she got arrested. Like, what happened after that?

T: After she got captured by the police, release she's a business woman in Beijing and also her little brother. They live in the same area and after that the police were ehm. They, if you come, if you still do this you're gonna be caught again. but also you're little brother. The business. Everyone around you will be captured and punished. One day after work she was followed by the police and she was captured again. she got locked up for one night eh...the low ranged police officer was talking to her. We have a bigger, higher rank officer who wants to talk to you, and that person wasn't in police uniform she's saying, that he was...I don't know how to say it in English. A government...

I; Official?

T: Yeah. Also one day. That is the day of human rights. There was a special day. They went to the streets, talking to people, doing interviews. And she asked young people, almost no one knows of the existing of the human rights day. And she says, everything that happened in China is being watched, everyone is watched. If you do something wrong, if you say something wrong you will be punished. Eh. So younger people doesn't even know what is happening in China. Everyone is thinking that they have a great economy in China right now. That's not true. That's not true.

I: Wow, and them ehm okay. So I can imagine from hearing all of this, that this is not a very nice place to stay is that also the reason why...like after she was arrested, like after the event that happened in the night. I didn't quite understood that experience, but she decided to go to the Netherlands? Or how did she leave China?

T: At some point everything in her life was being controlled by the police. Her mom back home, is also being controlled. Being watched. So if, at a point she was sitting at her house and was hearing footsteps she thought to herself, where is the footsteps coming from, who does the footsteps mean to? So she was living in fear. And that's the point what she thought I can't stay here anymore. Also, from the pressure from home. Her family say, if you just don't say anything, just be normal, then you'll be okay. But she says, this is what she's living for. Some people like to dance, some people like to sing and this is what she wants to do. This is her. This is her life. She don't want to give it up.

I: so then she went to the Netherlands I presume? Then so, she decided to continue her work right? She decided to continue publishing articles, or...how did she give her new life meaning? I guess that's what I'm searching for.

T: well her (inaudible) and wechat doesn't work now anymore, she can't host anything anymore. But every protest, she went to every protest in Holland and Europe. She just goes to that. And she says Chinese government isn't afraid of the people, there isn't afraid for protesting. But they are afraid for western countries. So she's saying, she wants every western country to know what is happening in China. There, every human right conference, every UN conference, they are hoping, they're going to protest.

I: And did she experience any problems during those protests? Like, was she stopped by someone or... did she experience maybe some threats from the Chinese government here in the Netherlands?

T: she says she's safe here, she can do everything she wants to do. She feels safe. But doesn't matter how she feels she's safe or not, she's going to do it. First she wants to let the Western countries to see what kind of country China is. China is is, China is trying to make western countries like China. Exactly like how it is in China. She says that Chinese regime is even worse than Hitler, than a Nazi regime. She wants the western people to see what China really really is. And she wants, also wants to let the Chinese people know that they are here for them. That Chinese people, there isn't alone. Every free time they have. Everything possible she's going to do it for them. To let them know; you are not alone.

I: Okay, so I've two follow up questions on that. So she herself didn't experience any form of threat or like stopping her from the Chinese regime here in the Netherlands. But is she aware that other people, do you experience something like that? Like threats or actively being called by the Chinese police? Stuff like that?

T: Her personally in Holland; no. But her husband back in China does have contact with the police. The police was asking her husband what she's doing in Holland and what's happening. So no, she personally in Holland they didn't (Inaudible) her. The police are also contacting her mom. Her mom is older generation Chinese of course. And her mom is...actually complaining about her talking to her is that you're living in a safe country so why are you still protesting and doing stupid things. So her, the last time the police contacted her mom is after her mom's surgery. And they just busted in her house and talking to her about what her daughter doing in western country and her mom was complaining to her. And after that she doesn't even have contact with her mom anymore.

I: Wow, and how does that make her feel?

T: Well she's sad. You can see you know. But she understands it. That the point of her mom. The Chinese government is putting pressure on her family. On her mom, her little brother. Ahm, she said they, her mom and her brother is on the Chinese government side. Because they have to live they have to do her, their things. If she's contacting her little brother, the police will know the police will call her little brother who's calling you. Is a foreign number, why is she calling you, so don't speak to her. So they are having pressure. She's sad about it, but yeah, still she understands. She has a strong will. She can sustain it, but the pressure from the Chinese government is okay, you can go above that, but the pressure for her family is hard. That's what's hard for her.

I: Right, and then she still continues to protest right? So why is that so important? Despite the pressure from her family?

T: she says every country have to evolve, every country has to go through several steps and someone has to step up. She said she's not the hero, she's not the big guy to step up but someone has to do it. She says now we live in a democratic country but that is not our doing, that's the doing of your ancestors. The grandpa's and grandma's from Holland. So someone has to stand up to this and in Holland we have your ancestors doing this and in China it has to be someone and she wants to be that someone. And she said, if she don't do anything China will be very big and if China's economy is growing that isn't a good thing for western country and Xi Jing Ping is doing everything to be big. He want's his hand also in Europe and America. She says we in Holland, in Holland we have a let's say, in China we have a lot of different kind of people, in Holland we have a lot of people looking. We have in China a lot of different type of people and that is also the aim of the police. That's how they are watching us. The little organizations, the little groups, so they are everywhere in Holland.

I: And is she afraid for those people, or how does she feel about that?

T: Yeah she is afraid of, of course she is afraid but western people, western government will never know what is happening in China.

I: Did she feel any support in the Netherlands? Did she found that? Or not yet?

T: No there isn't, she's saying there is little support for her work, because there are just too little people doing it. She want's, she's hoping that more people will stand up so that they can do bigger work letting more people know what's happening but right now there's just too little people doing it. Eh they have, they had a group of people, of Chinese people they are volunteering, and they are also hoping that more people will stand up and go to protest. But they all voluntary have to pay their own travel costs and everything but they are hoping that more people will stand up.

I: Okay, I have two more questions, and then I'm done. So this might be a bit, a hard question, and you must know that you're not obligated to answer but what is the worst that could happen? Ahm in this entire situation for you?

T: She isn't afraid for her own safety because she's living in Holland and her safety is okay. But she's afraid for the safety of her family in China. So every time she's going to a protest she's wondering, what's gonna happen to her family in China and she also have her discussions with her husband should I go? Shouldn't I go (Respondent starts crying) ahm, and every time she goes, she steps out of the train, she's thinking about what's going to happen to her family. But still, every time she goes. So she's not afraid for her own life, but her family back in China.

I: Then I still want to know, how does she cope with that? How does she, deal with that?

T: She says actually she's not thinking about it. She's just doing it. If we don't step up the government will continue to every, also her family back in China will be a victim of it. She doesn't even think about it she just does it.

I: Hm, okay. Then we have to wrap it up, so just one last question to end on a positive note. What do you hope will come from this, what do you hope to achieve what's the best thing that can happen in this situation?

T: she's saying she's hoping that China is becoming just like Holland, everyone is free we have a minimum health insurance, older people have nursing homes, children have school. She says, just like holland.

I: Okay, then...ahm, I can see there's a fire still in her, she's very passionate about that. So I admire her about that. I'd like to thank her for telling her story I can see that it hasn't always been easy for her so I want to thank her for that. Also, I just, yeah this happens to be a lose questions. But I have another question for...is that also why she chose the Netherlands? To come here? Why the Netherlands? And then we can finish it.

T: it doesn't matter which country, it's a coincidence that she ended here. And she says thank you too.

I: Okay, great. Well thank you so much for this interview. Ahm. Is there anything else you would like to say?

T; No..no she's, happy to told, tell her story.

I: Okay, awesome. Thank you so much.

8. transcribed interview 6.

Interview 6

Interviewer: I

Interviewee: T

I: Ahm, and you...you must also know that you are not obligated to answer any of my questions. Feel free to talk about you know what you're comfortable about. I don't want to pressure you into talking about something you don't want to and eh...I do this interview around the protesting that I understood are participating in, against the regime of China, and I am interested in especially your experiences.

T: Okay. You can start.

I: Okay, so like you said in the beginning you were an artist in China and I'm really curious like how was your life in China before you decided to go to the Netherlands?

T: He's a contemporary artist, a modern artist, in his art work he wants to know what's happening in China. He's looking for all the news. Because modern art in China is very difficult to do so he, it's difficult for him.

I: Okay so why is that difficult for him? Did he experience anything bad for it?

T: his art form is really modern. Its contemporary. The way they are thinking is very different from China right now. She he's having, the thinking way is different from the Chinese people and he has a problem with that.

I: Okay, and how is that different?

T: the way he thinking is how can we be better, how can we be like western country, the way of thinking and the older Chinese people are conservative they don't think like free western people. That is a problem.

I: Hm, okay, and then, did he experience anything bad during his period in China? Like why did he decided to leave, what happened?

T: In his life, he well, the artist not thinking about, how can they change China, why is China not like the modern world? As Europe, and he is trying to merge that in art work. Because they...they merge it in their art work and the government is not happy about it so they work against them. They oppress them.

I: Okay, - (Interviewee interrupts)

T: Back in Beijing they had a small village, with a lot of artist like himself. Tailors, all that same conclusion. Things in China isn't working, the government isn't working he is not the only one who's thinking about it. It's a lot of other kind artist they live in the same way.

I: Okay, so he said he was being oppressed. Or is oppressed. Ahm. In what way? What happened? How did he feel that he was being oppressed in China?

T: Okay, ehm, he wants first to explain what artist mean in China. They are a lot of artist in China. A lot of artist is being controlled by the state and there are a lot of artists they want to be free. Around Beijing, around the university area. But the work that they are doing is difficult. Because the state is oppressing them. The artist around Beijing they are being seperated by the police they are taken and spreaded out. But now adays the artist have a little bit of western support but still they are being spreaded out. They are, they can't be collective. All collective is not allowed.

I: Okay so, if I understood him correctly, the police was separating them. Like actively trying to get them not to publish anything? Is that also like, if they try to publish something online they try to take it down?

T: He said, yeah a lot of people were in prison. The free artist in China they aren't free, they are being oppressed a lot. They are a lot of artist free artist are being imprissened, in somewhat outskirts of Beijing.

I: Oh wow, did he also go to prison in China?

T: On the question of he's ever being captured. He'll come back to that but first the village in Beijing with the artist is being kept, the vilagers are actually quete okay with it. The artist are being kept there because they are getting more money for it. Ehm they're having, I think money from the state. Every year there are a lot of artist being captured, being prisoned.

I: Okay but I, wait I'm not sure if I understood him correctly, so he's saying artist are being captured but also there is this village that gets money from the state to capture the artists? Or did I mis understood that?

T: we had a little mis understanding, the village isn't a prisonment for the artist, they volunteer to be there, it's a (inaudible) century. They pay, the villagers are happy because the artists are there, they have to pay rent for the houses, they have to buy food, it's not a prison it's an escape place for the artists.

I: Oh right, and that is in China then?

T: In China, in Beijing.

I: But, okay, so that must have been cool and like nice to have such an oasis for the artist then...then why did he decided to leave and come to the Netherlands? Specifically, the Netherlands?

T: Yes, he lived there for 10 years, and he said China isn't safe. He's an artist, he wants people to see his art, he wants people to come to his show but that's it...that's not possible in China. Every show they have...the police will come and pick him up, so he's an artist he wants people to see his art.

I; Right, and does he feel safer in the Netherlands then to express his art and all of that?

T: He thinks its safe is to publish his art. But right now he's not thinking about it. Right now he's not ready for it.

I: Oh okay, so he doesn't do anything with artistics, like he doesn't express his art anymore like he did in China.

T: Right now, there's just no possibility, no space, but in the future yeah he really wants to.

I: Okay, so I understood that you are actively participating in protests against the regime of China. Is that true? Do you perform any form of protest?

T: yes he in Beijing he had demonstrated, not in the sense of going on the street there having a demonstration in the form of art show. Showing their art is a kind of demonstration. And yeah, the police are coming to their shows and defending – no...not letting the openness show.

I: Okay, and did he also try and protest here in the Netherlands?

T: Yes he have, if there is a demonstration in Amsterdam, Den Hague, he'll be there.

I: Okay, and how does he experience that, does he feel safe to protest in the Netherlands?

T: In Holland he feels safe, in China not so. Yeah in Holland he is feeling quite safe but he publishes things on social media, and the government or the police always comment on it: stop commenting bad things, don't come back to China, if you come back to China we'll do stuff to you. And he's smiling, and saying oh I'm not going back.

I: Okay, so I heard from other people that there's also, that their families is also being targeted in China. Does he have any experience with that? Are they safe too? did he apart from the comments, are there threats maybe?

T: Yeah, his family back home, they are also being contacted by the police, asking things about him, what he is doing, when is he coming back, yeah, his family is also being watched.

I: And how does he feel about that?

T: Yeah, he is afraid for his family back home, but he said. I'm afraid but if I don't do anything nothing will change. I have to.

I: Right, so, why is it so important then, to keep protesting, even if it makes you feel afraid maybe sad.

T: He says, he just have to. Its just something he has to do it for the honour he feels, for the country, for the people. It's just something he has to do.

I: Okay, he just feels like he has to protest cause there's no other way that he can make a change?

T: He says, he...right now its just everything he can do in his power. He don't have that much power to change everything. Its protesting or doing his art work is one thing he can mangle in his own power.

I: Right, okay. So you said that you feel safe in the Netherlands? Why did you decided to go specifically to the Netherlands? Why the Netherlands?

T: There's no reason, its just how Holland. There's no reason at all. Right now he lives in Holland, but it also can be the states, or Germany, or something else. Its all safe but right now its Holland.

I: Right, right, okay. Ahm. So he talked a little bit about his family being watched by the Chinese police. In China. Ahm. And he also received some threats on his protesting comments online as well. How...what is the worst that could happen, for him?

T: actually right now there won't be a bad thing that can happen because he is in Holland. The worst thing that can happen is back home to his family, that they are getting punished. Actually he can't think of anything worse that can happen for him.

I; So just his family – (Interviewee interrupts)

T: He's saying, their not afraid of the government, the government is afraid of them. What they are saying, what they are publishing, what they are putting out. He said no we are not afraid of government, government afraid of us. And what personally, not in family, family back home is getting watched. Is terrorised. But personally he is not afraid.

I: So, what would happen if they'd stop protesting?

T: Okay, if they stop the Chinese people will lose their voice. Then the Chinese government can do anything, everything they want, oppressing people and do bad things. So if they stop people will lose their voices, they will lose their point of saying we know what you're doing.

I: Okay, and this might sound a bit repetitive, but why is that so important?

T: in his heart he feels the anger, of oppression in China by the government, by the party. So if he don't do anything against it he will feel a lot of anger. It will be too much if doesn't do anything.

I: Right, okay, so its very frustrating?

T: Yeah.

I: Right, so I'm nearly through my questions eh so...just to end on a positive note, what is the best thing that could happen from your protesting and all?

T: he hopes for a free China, just like the West. Freedom of speech, freedom. Just like here. The freedom you have to choose.

I: Okay, ahm...thank you so much for answering all of my questions. So this interview had the aim of getting a better understanding of your experience in your protesting against the regime of China and also how they try to stop you from doing that. Do you feel like you've said anything you wanted or is there something you'd like to add to this?

T: He said, its one hour is too short to say everything he wants to say, but he said a lot and he's hoping that China gets better and better and not worse and worse. So yeah. He's done.

I: Yeah, okay. Great. Thank you. Yeah then I guess, he's very welcome to contact me again if he wants too maybe he wants to share something else. He can just text me or something. He

must know that he is also completely anonymous and the data will not be published so thank you.

T; Okay thank you.

I: Alright, thank you so much and see you.

T: Okay, bye bye.