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# China's Confucius Institute in Indonesia: Mobility, Frictions and Local Surprises

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Received: 24 January 2018; Accepted: 13 February 2018; Published: 16 February 2018

**Abstract:** China's cross-border language promotion body, the Confucius Institute (CI), has proliferated along with the mobility of Chinese capital and people worldwide. It embodies the 'Going Out' state strategy that promotes the global spread of Chinese capital, ideas, culture and people. Often seen as a vehicle of China's power and influence, the CI has attracted much suspicion and even rejection as compared to similar institutions of other states. This paper examines the mobility of the CI and the encountered frictions when it lands in particular places, problematizing the commonly assumed unidirectional impact of the cross-border institution as a mighty soft power instrument. Specifically, it analyses the frictions of the CI's establishment in Indonesia, where racial and political narratives on China and Chinese-Indonesians have long prevailed. Three cases are presented: one at the national level in Jakarta and two at the local level in the cities of Bandung and Makassar. By elaborating how frictions are created, resisted and managed differently, this paper illustrates the interplay of actors and power relations in the mobility of the CI, which in turn gives rise to particular local surprises. This paper also underlines the role of the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora as important bridge-builders of their two homelands.

**Keywords:** mobility; friction; Confucius Institute; soft power; China; Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

In the last decade, the Confucius Institute (CI)—China's cross-border language and culture promotion body—has expanded rapidly along with the increasing mobility of Chinese capital and people worldwide. As China continues to open up its economy and increase its political influence, the dissemination of Chinese language and culture abroad has been officially pursued since the establishment of the CI in 2004. The Chinese state investment in this endeavor is impressive. To date, 511 CIs in 140 countries serve their mandated purpose, namely to be 'a pivotal window for the world to know China and for China to strengthen its friendship and cooperation with other countries' [1]. Schmidt [2] views the CI as a global project to increase China's symbolic capital as it circulates specific representations of China. Driven by certain imaginaries of China's role in world economics and politics, the CI is commonly assumed to play a prominent role in negotiating China's shifting position globally [2] (p. 648). The flows of Chinese culture, capital and people accompanying and channeled through CIs have often been linked to the mobilization of Chinese power and influence. And unlike the cross-border cultural institutions of other states, such as the United Kingdom's British Council, Germany's Goethe Institute and France's Alliance Française, the CI has attracted suspicion and criticism, and even rejection. This Chinese overseas institution has sparked intense debate among scholars, education officials and politicians over its role as China's soft power instrument [3]. There are concerns about the CI's propaganda agenda, the alleged suppression of academic freedom and clandestine espionage operations in host countries.

Yet, historically, state cross-border language and culture institutions have long served to promote language, culture and positive images overseas. They have worked to protect and/or promote states' agendas in their activities around the world. During the 100 years or more of their existence, these cultural institutes—such as those of Britain, Italy, Germany and France—have undergone constant transformations following changes in state politics. According to Paschalidis [4], the global cultural institutes of the West have generally transformed in four historical phases: Cultural Nationalism (1870s to 1914); Cultural Propaganda (1914 to 1945); Cultural Diplomacy (1945 to 1989); and Cultural Capitalism (1989 to present).

Germany's Goethe Institute, for instance, has undergone these transformations. What was once a 19th-century institution, driven by cultural nationalism to cater to the German diaspora abroad, is now a collaboration between the German state and private companies to market national branding and promote economic nationalism. It has drastically changed from the previous focus on the cultural diplomacy tool, which used language and cultural encounters to communicate the image of the newly reunited Germany as a cultural state that did not seek regional domination [5]. This phase is arguably similar to the current strategy of the CI. Such recognition helps to demystify the 'CI industry'. However, such a comparative approach to analyzing the nature and impact of state cross-border cultural institutions is rare in (or possibly absent from) the debate on the CI.

The academic debates on the CI are generally centered on the soft power concept, which is generally divided into two contrasting views. On the one hand, the CI is viewed as a deliberate attempt to use Chinese language and culture to win the hearts and minds of other countries, to give others a better understanding of China [6]. It is a form of cultural diplomacy to engage with the public, even though it is often hampered by China's authoritarian characteristics [7]. On the other hand, China's soft power could make enemies [8]. The expansion of China's soft power is a threat in the eyes of those who see global politics as a realist's zero-sum game: a gain in China's soft power is a loss of Western/US soft power. In this view, many aspects of Chinese soft power are seen as having the potential to be a challenge to the current dominant powers in the international order, especially as it is combined with the increase in China's hard power. The CI as an attempt to promote attraction in order to remove the label of China as a threat can also be seen as an attempt to compete with and undermine the dominant Western force. The latter perspective engenders criticism of and resistance to the CI. As the CI is financially and organizationally linked with the Chinese government, it arouses political concern over it being a Trojan horse [9] and propaganda tool of the Chinese state [10]. The above conventional focus on CIs as a tool for Chinese pursuit of soft power has overshadowed other aspects of the expansion of the CI.

Furthermore, criticism of the soft power concept lies in how the concept threatens to dismiss the meaningful role and agency of the subject of power. It risks over-emphasizing the CI's influence as a powerful agent and overlooking its relation with the subject of power and the context of the place it encounters. Hence, it also risks an oversimplification of power as a resource or possession rather than a relationship [11]. It requires analyses of both parties and the context of the relationship, even though the common practice in international relations treats power as a concrete and measurable resource [3].

Here, we argue that analyzing power as a relationship is necessary to comprehend the complexity of power and the outcomes. In doing so, we need to recognize the ability to act and to react of the one over whom power is exercised [12]. In the analyses on the CI, this leads to the less explored issue of the role of the states and societies in which it operates. Their positionality and participation in the network that have been or will be created in the mobilization of the CI are further analyzed in this paper to understand the impact of the CI.

To investigate it, this paper draws on the frictions of CI's in Indonesia, where racial and political narratives on China and Chinese-Indonesians have long prevailed. This, together with the long-standing and yet complex connection between Indonesia and China, provides the context that plays a significant role in the mobility of the CI in Indonesia. Specifically, drawing on three cases in Jakarta, Bandung and Makassar, this paper explores the spatial dynamics. It pinpoints

the variations in the process of CI establishment in Indonesia, not only across geographical scales (i.e., local versus national), but also across space (i.e., between localities). Specifically, we examine the CI from the mobility approach that views mobility as movement entangled with power and meaning [13,14]. The politics of mobility argues against the nomadic view of mobility as a smooth flow with limited or no friction, but as always constrained and subject to power geometry [13]. Friction is therein an awkward and unprecedented encounter as a result of crossing the border and dealing with the unfamiliar power structures in the place it enters [15]. These unfamiliar power structures work not only through state apparatuses but also in the mundaneness of everyday life, which are manifested in different institutions, procedures, governing logics, sovereign strategies and processes of subjectification [16]. The use of friction as an approach to CI mobility is intended to challenge and complicate the unidirectional soft power concept while bringing nuance to the growing research on the mobility of global education institutions.

Furthermore, this paper explores and deepens the agency of the subject of power, in this case the state and diverse society in Indonesia, by analyzing the relations and negotiations between actors in each place and time. This particularly includes the role of the Chinese-Indonesian (elective) diaspora. How they respond and manage frictions, and how their reactions to frictions affect CI mobility, is examined.

Finally, we believe that understanding the interconnection of mobility, friction, and local surprises will enhance the broader discussion of the global-national-local nexus of human and capital flows in the inclusive development. The elaboration on mobility-friction dynamics at the local contexts will deepen the understanding that the global flows, in everywhere they go, will encounter the friction of context and the particular that in turn also gives them shape [15,17]. The “local surprise”, as we called it, points out the dynamics of local actors, their positionality, and power relations in their responses to the global flows.

## 2. The Mobility and Frictions of Cross-Border Education Institutions

The intensifying marketization of higher education is combined with the increasing interest of governments in the diplomatic and strategic use of cross-border partnerships. Together they have promoted the proliferation of cross-border education institutions around the globe [18]. Under such a development, it is tempting to picture the mobility of cross-border institutions as fluid, smooth and frictionless. It may also be easy to imagine the rapid exchange of people, ideas, capitals and knowledge, and thus produce significant impacts.

The theory of friction in mobility, borrowed from physics, shows that mobility is more complicated than the term might imply at first sight. More mobility does not necessarily mean less friction, let alone frictionless. Friction occurs as moving bodies, or moving and stationary bodies, rub against and stroke each other, creating sticky and unexpected encounters [15,17].

Cresswell [17], who relates friction to the politics of mobility, argues that friction can be a result of the arrangement of power. On the one hand, it could be a tool in the production of power that is used by the powerful to slow or stop the weak. On the other hand, it could be an aid to power that weaponizes the weak. To this end, the practice of power means the management of frictions, that is, if one could increase and eliminate frictions to promote one’s strategic interest. Nonetheless, frictions could also be the enemy of power, as events and chances always produce friction no matter how well something is planned.

Tsing [15] uses friction to explain a grip of the worldly encounter. She argues that the mobile universals (such as capital, forms of truth, science) that depend on the global connection to fulfill their existence as universal, can only materialize or be transformed through the sticky materiality in their encounter with the particulars. Consequently, universals could not be fully able to be the same everywhere, as they should be made to work within a particular situation. Friction occurs in the awkward, unequal, unstable and creative qualities of interconnection across difference [15] (p. 4).

Even though Tsing points out that friction rejects the notion that global power works as a well-oiled machine, she clarifies that friction is not merely a resistance that slows things down. Instead, friction is required as a framework to maintain the mobility of the global power. Frictions can both enable and impede mobility. For the latter, Tsing provides the empirical example of the ‘awkward encounters’ of different actors with different ideas and interests in Meratus forest, Borneo, Indonesia. These actors successfully built a coalition and collaboration under a universal rhetoric to preserve the rights of the forest against the forestry industry in Indonesia. In this case, a collaboration of difference—that is, a collaboration with friction—aims not to reach a consensus, but to kick-start a ‘productive confusion’. Tsing concludes that universals can only experience becoming through the way in which they are made particular through friction and in place.

The concept of friction hindering, enabling and complicating mobility is employed in several works, for example Yeoh and Huang [19]. In their work, the migration of highly-skilled workers is explained beyond the narrow depiction of the economic rationality that drives such workers to circulate freely and effortlessly with their privileges. Instead, they argue that a broader cultural politics of moving and belonging, conditioned by the power geometries of race, nationality and gender, is always incorporated into the highly skilled workers’ migratory moves. The complexity of moving and belonging is subsequently very much situated in particular localities. Migrants consider the cultural politics of place as they encounter a specific place, get attracted to and positioned differently there. In addition, the government markets specific places using specific policy and programs to harness migrants. Thus, transnational migratory moves are negotiated moves, shaped not only by economic logic but also in the context of social, cultural and political consideration, operative at the family–community–country scale.

Related to this is the concept of transgovernmental friction, developed by Zhang et al. [16]. Border crossing, they argue, is not only transnational but also transgovernmental. Migrants are subject to multiple and often conflicting governmental practices, policies and procedures stretching across borders. When they cross borders, they encounter these unfamiliar power structures and relations. This awkward, unequal and unstable rubbing of contrasting and diverging governmental regimes—the transgovernmental frictions—could produce conflicting actions and aspirations, which adds uncertainty to the migrant’s mobility path. However, Zhang et al. argue that rather than being passive and stop moving, migrants could negotiate this friction in their everyday lives. By carefully choosing to inhabit the space in between stopping and moving, they strategically engage with the changing power relation, unexpected exclusion and differentiation.

We use this mobility and friction concept to analyze the mobility of institutions, which has been less examined compared to the mobility of people and capital. Cross-border institutions, which are complex in structure, also have to deal with the shifting power relation, unexpected exclusion and differentiation. In addition, cultural politics and the narratives in the encountered place affect and shape the translations and responses of the mobility of an institution. These show how friction plays a role in slowing or speeding up, impeding, enabling or supporting a cross-border institution’s mobility. In order to explain that, we unpack the frictions, how the friction is managed and the arrangement of power behind it, then relate it to the particular context of the place. It is built upon the argument that connections and mobilities are produced through the management and distribution of friction as it encounters place [15,17].

### 3. The Confucius Institute and the Encountered Friction

The Confucius Institute (CI) was established at the beginning of China’s efforts to internationalize its higher education in 2004. In parallel with China’s geopolitical and economic rise, within a dozen year the CI is present in 140 countries—a development that was faster than that of any other state-sponsored language and cultural institutions. It appears to be a successful state project, with 511 centers worldwide (100 of which are in the United States) and aiming for 1000 in 2020 [20].

CIs are administered by the Confucius Institute Headquarters, an independent, non-profit organisation based in Beijing. The CI program is in turn managed by Hanban (Office of Chinese Language Council International, China), which is administered by the Chinese Ministry of Education. Local CIs have been strategically developed as a global network of language centres [21], modeled on other countries' cross-border cultural and language centres. They operate in three modes: (1) wholly operated by China (similar to the British Council, UK; Goethe Institute, Germany; and Japan Foundation, Japan); (2) locally run under license from China (similar to the Alliance Française, France) and (3) joint ventures between universities in China and universities abroad. The joint venture model is the more affordable and expandable one, and in fact is the most used by CIs worldwide [6]. In this model, Hanban usually provides the initial funding to set up the institute, sending teachers and teaching materials to the host country, and the local partner provides facilities, staff and space [22] (p. 3).

This model, however, combined with the CI's rapid expansion and China's stronger economic muscle, has unexpectedly backfired. Allegations range from China's suppression of academic freedom [23] in the form of prohibiting discussions related to the 3Ts (Tibet, Taiwan and Tiananmen), self-censorship by host universities in order to maintain relations and funding, improper influence over teaching and research, and monitoring and recruiting the overseas Chinese, to its engagement in industrial and military espionage [6]. The perception of the CI as a political long arm of China is dominated the public and media discourse, particularly in the USA and Canada. It is often voiced in protest by education officials and amplified by political leaders, and in a few cases, it has resulted in the termination of the CI. There have been nine CI closures, five of which were in the USA and Canada, resulting from the issue of academic interference.

In April 2017, a report issued by the National Association of Scholars, a conservative group of American university professors, recommended that all the CIs in the USA be either closed or reformed. A similar recommendation was made in 2014 by the American Association of University Professors [24]. Marshall Sahlins, professor and anthropologist at the University of Chicago, argued that having a CI on campus is having a foreign branch of the political power structure that stretches back to China [23]. He criticizes the CI as posing potentially significant threats to academic freedom, one of which was the inevitability of self-censorship by the American partner universities. The University of Chicago closed its CI after more than 100 of its professors signed a petition to terminate the university's contract with Hanban [25]. In the same tone, in December 2013, the Canadian Association of University Teachers urged the country's universities to close their CIs, arguing that in allowing an authoritarian government influence over curriculum, texts and class discussion topics, means 'compromising their own integrity' [26].

Such rejections and criticisms of CIs are rarely the case with other state-sponsored cultural institutions, even though they have relatively similar cultural diplomacy agendas. Whereas the frictions encountered in the mobilisation of the CI in the USA and Canada are mostly related to academic interference, as explained above, this may or may not be the case in other places.

#### 4. Materials and Methods

This paper is part of (Author I's) completed doctoral dissertation research on the cultural political economy dynamics of Indonesian student mobility to China. The study was implemented with qualitative methodologies. The research presented in this paper involved three months of fieldwork in Jakarta, Bandung and Makassar in 2015. The three cities were selected for their particular characteristics, which are explained in the analyses section.

Semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted with 19 key informants, namely university directors and/or staff; directors, teachers and students at Pusat Bahasa Mandarin (PBM, the Indonesian name of the Confucius Institute), journalists and prominent Chinese-Indonesian community figures. In addition to the interviews, site observations were conducted at universities and the offices

of PBM. The gathered data were then compiled and reviewed, along with literature reviews of various research, data and news reports on CIs.

In analyzing different sorts of frictions in the establishment of CIs in Indonesia, this paper juxtaposes three cases. The first is the case at the national level, which provides the friction encountered upon the arrival of CIs in Indonesia. The second and third cases are at the local level and show different local surprises related to the establishment of CIs in Makassar and Bandung. The three cases were examined to explain the frictions that were created, shaped and managed and that affected the mobility of the CI in each place.

### **5. Case 1 (National Level—Jakarta): Friction in a Name of a Mobile Institution**

Our paper exclusively focuses on the establishment of Confucius Institute as it is the focal and starting point of the expansion of China's cross border institution in Indonesia. Unlike several other countries, the Confucius Classroom that expands in many schools worldwide is set up at later phase in Indonesia, mostly with the support of the existing Confucius Institute in the university. Currently, there are only two schools with Confucius Classroom in Indonesia, according to the Hanban website. Six CIs have been established in Indonesia as collaborations between six Chinese universities and four Indonesian public universities and two Indonesian private universities. However, the establishment process required protracted negotiations. Even though the two countries already had close economic relations and the Mandarin language was flourishing in the country at the time CI was proposed, the proposal took years to be finalized and approved by the Indonesian government. The obstacles were closely related to the historical interconnection of the two states.

Indonesia is home to the largest population of Chinese descent in Southeast Asia as a result of several waves of migration from southern China that started in the 10th century. The cultural and historical connections do not automatically make solid ground of political relations. Rather, the relations between the two countries have been through turbulent periods that generated suspicion of each other [27]. In 1965, Indonesia's authoritarian regime led by President Suharto accused China of backing the failed coup d'état allegedly mounted by the Indonesia Communist Party. The regime also implemented an assimilation policy that silenced the cultural and political expressions of the Chinese-Indonesians, such as a ban on Chinese schools, scripts, media and organizations [28,29]. It was only after 32 years, when Suharto's authoritarian regime was replaced by a new democratic government, that the expression of Chinese language and culture was no longer forbidden. Numerous private language centers and schools were established to cater for the rising demand for Chinese language lessons [29].

Meanwhile, Indonesia rekindled relations with China, expanding their economic cooperation to other sectors including education. It was the National Coordinating Association for Mandarin Education (Badan Koordinasi Pendidikan Bahasa Mandarin/BKPBM), a formal institution founded by a Chinese-educated Chinese-Indonesian [28], that built a bridge between the Indonesian and Chinese governments and thus enabled the establishment of Chinese language education. According to the head of BKPBM, Zainal (Pseudonyms are used for all research participants) (personal interview, 2015), BKPBM, a private language institution called the Jakarta Chinese Language Teaching Center (BTIP), Maranatha University and Malang National University discussed the idea of establishing CIs with the Indonesia Ministry of Education as early as 2004; however, the Ministry could not make a decision due to political considerations. In September 2007, BTIP in collaboration with Hainan Normal University finally established the first CI, the Jakarta BTIP Kongzi Institute. The other two universities were to launch their CIs at the same time, but the day before they were due to do so, the government issued an order to suspend the launches [30].

It was only in 2010, the 60th anniversary of Indonesia–China diplomatic relations, that the two governments jointly announced to establish the CIs at six Indonesian universities [30]. They are Maranatha Christian University in Bandung (West Java, Indonesia), Malang National University in Malang (East Java, Indonesia), Al-Azhar University in Jakarta, Tanjungpura University in Pontianak

(West Kalimantan, Indonesia), Surabaya National University in Surabaya (East Java, Indonesia) and Hasanuddin University in Makassar (South Sulawesi, Indonesia). In June 2010, the representatives of the six universities led by the Deputy Minister of National Education of Indonesia, Fasli Jalal, signed the CI collaboration agreement in Beijing. The first CI opened in November 2010, at Al-Azhar University Jakarta, an Islamic university that collaborated with Fujian Normal University. The other five universities opened their CIs in 2011.

One of the thorny issues in the establishment of Indonesia's CI was naming the institute. The Chinese government marketed the institute under the Confucius brand, but the Indonesian government hesitated to use it because Confucianism is recognized as a religion in Indonesia. Underlying that was the political and historical process of the existence of Confucianism in Indonesia. Confucianism, generally viewed as the religion of the Chinese-Indonesians, was first officially legalized as one of Indonesia's six religions prior to the regime change in 1965. After Suharto seized power, Confucianism remained legalized until the Ministry of Interior issued a circular in 1978 prohibiting people from entering 'Confucianism' in the 'religion' column of the Indonesian identity card. The Confucian religion re-ascended in 2000 under the new democratic president, Abdurrahman Wahid, who repealed the circular along with other related assimilation policies.

At first, Indonesian's rejection was not acceptable to the Chinese government, as Confucius is the official brand. The difficult negotiations, which the BKPBM mediated, took almost two years (2008–2009), as Zainal recalled:

*We explained to our government that it is not a religion but a philosophy in China. We also asked Hanban to change the name, but they did not agree. We were looking at many approaches, and then when the head of Hanban paid a visit here, we arranged for her to meet the minister of Education. In the meeting, the minister explained that Confucianism is a religion in Indonesia. If we set up a Confucius Institute, what will happen when the Muslims also want to establish a Mohammad Institute, the Christians a Jesus Institute? The Hanban head finally understood and left the alternative name to the Indonesian side. The minister of Education handed it down to his deputy minister, Mr Fasli, and Mr Fasli asked us to help to find a suitable name for Indonesia's CI.*

BKPBM prepared five names. The Chinese Embassy in Indonesia rejected two of them; the remaining three were left to Indonesia to choose from. The Deputy Minister picked Pusat Bahasa Mandarin (Mandarin Language Centre) rather than Pusat Bahasa dan Budaya Mandarin (Mandarin Language and Cultural Center) or Pusat Bahasa Tionghoa (Tionghoa Language Center). Since then, Pusat Bahasa Mandarin (PBM) has been used consistently for CI in Indonesian, whereas Confucius Institutes is still used in the English version.

The name case is an example of unpredicted sticky friction that China experiences in mobilizing the CIs abroad as it encounters local historical particularity. China has to deal with sets of powerful actors and sociocultural contexts that can halt, slow and enable the establishment of CIs. In particular, friction occurred in Indonesia concerning the different meanings that China and Indonesia attach to the name Confucius, and this prolonged and slowed the plan to establish a CI in Indonesia. The CI is China's global project [2,15,31], with Confucius as its global brand.

Adopting the name of a classical thinker and philosopher to symbolize China's classical civilisation is a dramatic reversal by the state, because the Communist regime denounced Confucian teaching [32] (p. 83). Schmidt [2] argues that it is not only a discursive strategy to mitigate fears about China's current advancement but also to sidestep China's autocratic, closed, undeveloped image since 1949. In other words, he argues that China is trying to shift away from being the political other to being the racial/cultural other. However, this meaning is perceived differently by Indonesia, as it has another discourse about China and Confucius. Indonesia's sensitivity about identity politics as a legacy of Suharto's government means that Confucianism is often viewed as 'the other' religion related to the economically able Chinese-Indonesians. Another legacy of Suharto's post-1965 policy is the old sticky image of China as the Communist other that is currently mixed with the fear of China's growing economic influence.

The contrasting and incompatible political discourse collided and at first slowed the mobility. However, this friction was finally overcome by translating the global project into the local Indonesian context. Both sides compromised on the different meanings they attach to the name, using two names in a different context: PBM in Indonesian and CI in English. This agreement was achieved after the discussion was mediated by BKPBM. BKPBM, which understood the interests of both sides, worked as a coupling agent that connected the two contrasting sides. It was possible for BKPBM to bridge the friction, as it possessed the cultural and social capital to understand and float between two states and cultures. With the mediation of BKPBM, the friction became manageable and the mobility was enabled. However, the friction related to identity discourse about China might still lurk because the prejudices are deeply rooted and oftentimes easily manufactured amidst Indonesia's political instability. Even though the CI is running well, it still needs to consistently and creatively manage the risk of this friction. In other words, this friction serves as an enemy of the Chinese soft power for the uncertainty of the future it has created.

## 6. Case 2 (Makassar): The Enabling Friction

Located on the island of Sulawesi, Makassar is the only city in the eastern part of Indonesia where the CI operates. Hasanuddin University (Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar, Indonesia; or Unhas), a public university, started the collaboration with Nanchang University in 2011 and since then has become actively involved in promoting Chinese language and student exchange to China. In the period 2011–16 Unhas sent 2000 students to China under several exchange programmes, summer camp arrangements and Chinese scholarships (mainly from Hanban and Chinese Scholarship Council.). It is run by seven teachers in a separate building located off the Unhas campus. However, it also operates a 'Chinese Corner' on the campus and helps Unhas to conduct Chinese language learning as an elective course at the Faculty of Cultural Science. The Unhas CI routinely holds cultural events to which it invites and involves the broader Chinese-Indonesian community and their social organizations in Makassar. The Unhas CI has expanded the program by facilitating the establishment of Confucius Classroom in the Islamic school Athirah in South Sulawesi province [33] (and setting up Chinese Tourist Training Center (Pusat Kursus Bahasa Mandarin Pariwisata) in Udayana University, Bali, Indonesia [34]. Its many efforts to develop Chinese language education won it an Individual Performance Excellence Award from the Chinese government in 2016, the only Indonesian university to have received it [35].

Unhas CI's tireless efforts to promote Chinese language and education may seem surprisingly at odds with the sociopolitical context of Makassar. Multicultural Makassar is infamous for being a conflict-prone area that has seen various horizontal conflicts, such as racial violence and student violence, and the intermingling of both. Chinese-Indonesians, who form a minority but have been living there since the 15th century, have become frequent victims of violent conflicts. In 1965, Makassar was among the first cities where Chinese-Indonesians were targeted in Indonesia's clamp down on Communism. The protest organized by the Islamic student organization (HMI/Islamic Student Association and Ansor) in front of the Chinese Consulate in the city turned into violence against the Chinese-Indonesians [36]. In September 1997, their houses and shops were looted, burnt and destroyed when mobs, mobilized by student activists (from HMI and SMPT/Senate of University Students) using religious and cultural symbols, ran amuck after hearing that a Chinese-Indonesian man had killed a local teenager [37]. In May 2006, the destruction of ethnic Chinese property was repeated after a student protest over the alleged abuse of a domestic worker by her Chinese employer. Most of the racial conflicts in Makassar rehearse the classical narrative of Indonesia's anti-Chinese violence in the 'normality' of targeting Chinese-Indonesians as a group for the alleged crime of an individual [38].

The 'normality' came with the rather generalized yet repeated narratives of the causes of conflict, such as the economic disparity and social exclusivity of the Chinese-Indonesian group. As a result of the racial conflicts that still occur even in the post-Suharto, the social tension and prejudices remain

in Makassar. Although anti-Chinese riots have declined in Indonesia and disappeared from public and national rhetoric, the local realities have not [39]. Moreover, the racial violence in Makassar has a particular trait that is less visible in racial violence in another part of Indonesia: the prominent involvement of students, including Unhas students, in conflicts.

The establishment of a CI that promotes Chinese language and culture at a public university in Makassar faces this awkward particularity. Encountering Makassar's prevailing social and racial tension is an unexpected friction that the CI had to face. Yet, the question is, how did the Unhas CI manage this friction such that it could not only set up the institution but also expand it?

The answer lies in the formation of the CI, its prior collaboration with the Chinese institution and the linkage with the Chinese-Indonesian community in Makassar. Many years before the CI was established, Unhas collaborated with Xiamen University in two fields, namely Chinese medicine and Chinese language. The initiative came from the leaders of the Chinese-Indonesian community, who thought of setting up educational collaboration with China. Haryanto, the leading initiator, who is also a prominent Chinese-Indonesian figure in Makassar, explained that they did it on purpose regarding the situation in Makassar:

*People should develop understanding of one another. If there is no understanding, anything I do could be perceived as wrong. I think Indonesians are good people; what happened in the past was very much because of misunderstanding: they just did not understand and we did little to approach them. We saw Unhas has enormous power. If one is angry and misunderstands something, the other could follow. If he understands and wants to collaborate with us, the other could not stir anything. Therefore, I proposed the educational collaboration.*

After establishing an educational foundation, the Zhenghe Foundation, they approached the Rector of Unhas. In 2001, a 20-strong delegation from Unhas and the Zhenghe Foundation went to Xiamen University to discuss collaboration. Xiamen University was chosen because some of the Chinese-Indonesian leaders had studied there and were still connected with the university.

The visit to Xiamen was concluded with an agreement to send a teacher from Xiamen to teach Chinese at Unhas. The financial cost, such as part of the salary and accommodation costs, was paid by the Zhenghe Foundation. The Chinese language course was given as a free course for Unhas students for several years. However, it did not attract as many students as expected and then stalled. It later became an elective course at the Faculty of Arts and Culture.

The collaboration with Xiamen University survived the leadership change at Unhas. The new rector, Idrus Paturusi, wanted Unhas to be the first university in Indonesia to have a graduate programme in acupuncture. In order to do so, another delegation went to Xiamen and signed another agreement. Xiamen sent two lecturers in traditional Chinese medicine to Unhas, and Unhas sent lecturers to Xiamen to take a short practical course. The arrangement lasted for three years and was then stopped due to financial reasons.

Meanwhile, Haryanto learnt about China's CI. He started writing to the Chinese Embassy in Jakarta about the interest in and importance of having a CI in Makassar. Later, he visited the Embassy. Finally, in 2010, Nanchang University offered to establish a CI. They set it up in a separate building from Unhas that is more centrally located in order to cater for more students. The Zhenghe Foundation generously paid to renovate Unhas's old building. Haryanto explained the reason:

*Most of our members contributed the money voluntarily and diverse in sums. I myself gave 60 million rupiahs [around €3776]. We wanted to show that we were really serious. Why was I persistent in this? My thought is with the two countries. I have an origin, an ancestor who gave me a way of life since I was little. On the other hand, Indonesia gave me room to develop; I live and eat here, I have been given the opportunity here, so I should repay it. My own shops have been destroyed several times; I, therefore, understand what I have to do.*

The Chinese-Indonesian community in Makassar strategically utilised their diasporic relations with China and their financial resources to anticipate the potential friction. As for Haryanto,

the diasporic relation was derived from biographical ties or ancestry, but at the same time, he felt a sense of belonging to Indonesia as the place of living. Haryanto lived in an in-between-ness, creating a transnational identity based on being of Chinese descent, a Chinese-Indonesian and an Indonesian. He became an elective diasporan [40] who chose to engage in the creation of China's CI project in his place of living. Unlike the traditional diaspora notion, elective diaspora refers to an elective nature of diasporic belonging, as one has power and rights to choose which communities and cultures one feels connected to. Haryanto's engagement was driven on the one hand by his cultural attachment to China, and on the other hand by his long-term interest in protecting the Chinese-Indonesians in Makassar from potential conflict. Haryanto with his transnational identity and his cultural and social capital, worked to build a bridge between the actors from the two places that were unfamiliar with each other. He could assure Unhas of the importance of the collaboration as well as being 'used' by Unhas to convincingly communicate with China. Furthermore, because he had studied there, Xiamen University trusted him enough to start working with an unknown university in an unfamiliar place.

Haryanto's experience of riots and social tension neither scared him nor stopped him from pursuing Indonesia–China education collaboration. Instead, it became the driver to start, pursue and enable the mobility. Mediating and financially supporting the mobility were used to bridge the gap of understanding between the Makassar people and the Chinese-Indonesians. It may seem a clichéd purpose but it assumes that the language, culture and values of China are similar to theirs and could be associated with them. Yet, the Chinese-Indonesians in Makassar are a heterogenous group, differing in sub-ethnics and degree of integration, as a result of their long interaction with Makassar culture.

For Unhas, the establishment of the CI was perceived positively. Besides the university's academic benefit, it considers it was useful to reach out to the Chinese-Indonesian community, which they had thought was an exclusive community. The following are the words of Burhan, dean of the Unhas Faculty of Arts and Culture:

*This is a cultural friendship. We previously did not know each other. How could we know that the Chinese-Indonesians are willing to socialise with us? The CI is not about religion, is not about race, but how we could connect two cultures. If we know and understand each other, we could give a better understanding, we could influence society. There is a boon for me personally as well, now as I become closer to them; I have been invited to their private events.*

Unhas and the Chinese-Indonesians in Makassar have different interests and views on China, as well as their prejudices about each other. Yet they could manage the differences and collaborate on establishing a CI. The CI project in Makassar provides an example of how friction in a conflict-prone area can be productive in enabling the mobility of a cross-border language institution. Just like we walk better on ice with the rubber soles shoes, friction is also necessary for things move. The enabling friction shows the double-edged nature of friction [15,17] and emphasizes how "the friction of context and the particular give the mobility shape and efficacy" [17]. This case also shows the temporality of friction, as the enabling friction came in the form of past racial conflict that is being managed by the actors in order to anticipate the risk of future friction.

### **7. Case 3 (Bandung): The Impeding Friction**

Maranatha Christian University is a private university in Bandung, the capital of West Java. Unlike Unhas, Maranatha has many Chinese-Indonesian students, academics and board members. In this context, one would assume that establishing a Chinese language institution would not be difficult. However, Maranatha underwent a lengthy process to get a CI on its campus. It is one of the two universities that were supposed to open a CI in 2008, but had to postpone it. Frictions in the form of the stickiness of internal bureaucracy combined with political sensitivity slowed the progress of the plan.

Several years prior to the plan to establish a CI, Maranatha had initiated collaboration with a Chinese university. Wanda, a Maranatha lecturer who had been studying Chinese since 1992 at Guilin

University and then at Guangxi University, saw the opportunity in China's intensifying effort to internationalise its higher education. Having brought students to China several times for short study visits, she had the opportunity to discuss the idea of collaboration between Maranatha and Guangxi University. Wanda explained her personal motivation as follows:

*I am a lecturer in Chinese literature, perhaps because of my own interest in Chinese culture, which I think is a tremendous culture. I went to China and saw that what we have learned in Indonesia about China and Chinese language is in fact different from the reality. We can learn many things from China.*

Wanda's experiences while studying in China reshaped her knowledge of China and Chinese culture. As she materialized her reflection on the experience by choosing to engage in the creation of an education network with China, she became an elective Chinese knowledge diasporan (Jöns, 2014). Wanda brought back the transnational identity she developed in China as a capital (Authors, forthcoming) and translated it into social and cultural capital in connecting Maranatha with the Chinese universities. However, her efforts conflicted with her university's internal bureaucracy. The university responded to the idea with caution, because it would be the first international collaboration, and with China at that. The proposal was not automatically approved; rather, it met with hesitancy from other members of the faculty. Wanda recalled the hesitancy was because of the negative sentiment towards China and the lack of experience with international collaboration.

*I was actively looking for a more effective way for students to learn Chinese. I found that people's minds can open up after they see and experience things themselves. I was looking for ways that my students could experience China. At the beginning, there were so many difficulties – from other lecturers who had not seen and known the situation in China, from some heads of departments who had never entered into an international collaboration and been opened on it. It felt like whatever I said, they did not listen. Eventually, several heads of departments actively supported it. The Faculty of Arts and Design started the exchange of students and lecturers, and it expanded to joint exhibitions and conferences.*

Later, the collaboration paved the way to exchange and collaboration with other Chinese universities, and finally to the establishment of a CI in Maranatha. As there had been no experience of CI in Indonesia and the board of Maranatha was not sufficiently convinced, Wanda visited the CIs in neighbouring countries. Maranatha actively approached China while waiting for the complicated government-to-government discussion and the internal procedure in each country. After acquiring a CI license in 2008, Maranatha decided to establish a CI in collaboration with China's Hebei Normal University, in parallel with the establishment of CIs at Malang State University and BTIP. Unfortunately, a day before the official opening, Maranatha received a phone call from Indonesia's Ministry of Education, suggesting that Maranatha cancel the opening. The opening was cancelled and it took three years of negotiations before the Maranatha CI was finally realized in 2011 together with the five other universities.

The Maranatha CI continues to be active and it is slightly different from the CIs at the other Indonesian universities, which focus on internal Chinese language teaching. As Maranatha has had smooth collaborations with various Chinese universities, its CI is more active in teaching Chinese off campus, such as at schools, other universities, private institutions, civil government training, and so on. It has also served as a mediator for other universities that were interested in establishing collaboration with China.

In the Maranatha case, frictions of the bureaucratic process and political sensitivity over the Chinese issue are a blockage or coagulation [41] that slowed the progress of the plan to establish a CI. Even though Maranatha already had the network and the connection to China and did not need any external help, unlike Unhas, the establishment of a CI did not automatically run smoothly.

In addition, the Chinese-Indonesian actors in the Maranatha case played contrasting roles: there were supporters of the collaboration, who became the coupling agents between Indonesia and

China, and there were board members who were against or hesitant about collaborating with China. The different perspectives on collaborating with China impeded the process internally, while externally government political intervention added to the pressure. The CI as a Chinese global project could not be easily adopted by an Indonesian university whose members are predominantly Chinese-Indonesian. This local surprise in the form of prevailing discourses and images of China hampered administrative procedures and created friction in the establishment of a CI in Bandung.

## 8. Conclusions

The mobility of cross-border education institutions is often mistakenly regarded as smooth and frictionless. In fact, the mobility is continuously shaped and sensitized not only by the state power, but also by the local historical, sociocultural and political context. Hence, the mobility of a cross-border institution should be seen not as a mobility of a single entity from a particular country to another country, but as an interconnection of places, powers and societies. The interconnection between differences mostly rubs against each other, creating frictions that could slow down or speed up, enable or hinder the mobility and create uncertainties [15].

In parallel with the expansion of its economic capital, China might have planned the CI as a global cultural project to enhance its soft power that went hand in hand with its higher education internationalization project. Yet, in its mobility, the results and process are unexpected, as the CI encounters local surprises with particular contexts, particular power structures, and various actors and their interests. Indeed, the diversity of the foreign partners, including their interests and obstacles, are less seen in many analyses of China's CI (Suzuki, 2009). In this paper, CI mobility in Indonesia shows the variety of frictions that give nuance to the dominant narrative of friction about CIs in the USA and some European countries.

The long prevalent racial and political narratives on China and Chinese-Indonesians in Indonesia have been the source of the friction. However, it could be translated differently in contact with a specific locality. At the national level, the winding process of the negotiation over the name Confucius Institute revealed a sticky situation when Chinese government communicated about the CI to the Indonesian government, as both sides have different interpretations of and agendas on 'Confucius'. The friction could eventually be managed, after it was mediated by a coupling agent who understands the different interpretations and their contexts. The unexpected and unprecedented nature of this friction could be an enemy of Chinese soft power, as it causes uncertainty about the responses and processes, and hence, the outcomes of the institutional mobility project.

Delving into the locality, the Makassar case highlights the internal friction that lies in the social and racial tension embedded in a conflict-prone area. This friction might have become an obstacle to CI mobility to Makassar, but on the contrary, it was managed by a collaboration of various actors so that it becomes a driver to enable CI mobility. The Chinese-Indonesian community and Unhas had different interests—the former wanted to minimize the potential for conflict and the reintroduction of Chinese culture, whereas the latter was keen to internationalize the university—but they collaborated under a common cause. It echoes the argument of Tsing [15] about the collaboration with the difference that could work on a new form of unity. The rhetoric of the CI as a cultural bridge between Indonesia and China is also translated into a cultural bridge between Makassar people and the Chinese-Indonesians. This rhetoric works well as the common cause for collaboration.

Unlike Makassar, the Bandung case reveals the bureaucratic process and political sensitivity about the Chinese issue that became the friction hampering the establishment of a CI at Maranatha University. Even Maranatha's existent network with China and the Chinese-Indonesians was not sufficient to provide enough leeway to open the CI. The difference among actors in Maranatha became the bottleneck in the process, besides the obstacles from the governments. Unlike the friction in Unhas, the friction in Maranatha prolonged the negotiations over a CI even with the help of a coupling agent who was familiar with the situation. The local surprise in the form of prevailing discourses and images of China created unexpected frictions for a CI in entering Bandung.

In addition, the three cases show the role of Chinese-Indonesian diasporic actors in building a bridge between Indonesia and China in order to establish a diasporic knowledge (cultural and language) network. Here, diasporic has a broader meaning than biographical ties through birth or ancestry. Rather, the diaspora demonstrates the variety of attachments, strategic interests and translations of the capitals they had accumulated. The diasporic agent in the Jakarta case—a private body specializing in Chinese language teaching and is owned by a Chinese-Indonesian—utilized its transnational identity and cultural capital to mediate the Indonesian and Chinese governments over their interest in developing Chinese language teaching in Indonesia. The Chinese-Indonesian community in Makassar wanted to anticipate future friction in the form of racial conflict, and so reached out to the university in Makassar, then used their economic, cultural and transnational identity capital to connect the Hasanuddin University to the Chinese counterpart. Lastly, the Chinese-Indonesian lecturer at Bandung's Maranatha University, driven by the personal experience of studying in China, attempted to set up the mobility corridor to China by making use of her transnational identity and cultural and social capital. However, there were differences in both process and outcomes, as these agents had to collaborate with the other actors and to fit in with the local circumstances. It also implies the particularity of the Chinese-Indonesians diaspora in Indonesia. Shaped by the long socio-political historical interaction with the place and society they live in, the Chinese-Indonesians are never a homogenized group. They can choose to be the 'elective' Chinese diasporans, in making connection to their ancestor land based on their emotional affinity and/or their strategic interest. In fact, due to identity politics and strong assimilation policy conducted during decades of authoritarian regime, the Chinese-Indonesians have been Indonesianized [28] and made into self-disciplinary citizens [42]. This also contributes to why in Maranatha case, a private university whose students and board members are dominated by the Chinese-Indonesians, some of its board members hesitated to establish the CI. The issue of cooperating with China was much more sensitive to them and treated with caution.

In sum, the various frictions, how they were managed by various actors and agents and how the process unfolded, show that the CI as investments by the Chinese state to promote its soft power is far from a smooth and unidirectional project from the Chinese side. Rather, the process is dynamic and the outcomes are unpredictable. Local surprises related to the sociocultural, political and historical particularity of the place strongly affect how frictions are shaped, experienced and managed. In other words, the mobility of CI as a cross-border institution not only creates friction, as it is often portrayed and experienced in the USA and Canada, but is also produced through the management of friction as it is encountered in place [17] (p. 6). The CI may be able to exert its power and influence to the students in the countries it operates in, but when it touches the ground in certain places, it interacts with the local particularities that consist of spatial and historical context, power relations, actors and multiple interests. The extent to which the interaction with differences is managed, the way the friction is handled, and whether the actors of interests can collaborate under a common cause, determines the extent to which they co-produce the mobility of the global institution project.

**Acknowledgments:** This work was supported by The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) (Aspasia Prize for Maggi Leung, awarded in 2012).

**Author Contributions:** R.T. and M.L. conceived and designed the research; R.T. conducted the field study, collected and analyzed the data; R.T. wrote the paper in consultation with M.L.; all authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest. The founding sponsors had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, and in the decision to publish the results.

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