

Cultural Cooperation Activities between Italian and Chinese Universities: A Case Study

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Abstract

Italy, a country with a great cultural tradition and a founding member of the European Union (EU), since 2004 very actively contributes to the cultural cooperation activities of EU with non European countries. This paper is a detailed review of the status of those activities, which can be subdivided into joint 'Master Mundus' Actions and bilateral teaching and research cooperation agreements established between Italian and Chinese higher education institutions. The University of Padova (UP) has been adopted as a relevant a case study, with teaching and research cooperations spanning from *S&T to Medicine, Law and Humanities*. The results obtained so far are promising.

Keywords: Erasmus Mundus Actions, bilateral teaching and research cooperation agreements, cultural initiatives of *Confucius Institutes*

1. Introduction

Italy, a country with a cultural tradition spanning over 2,500 years, is a founding member of the European Union (EU) and very actively contributes to its cultural initiatives with higher education institutions all over the world.

The present academic cooperation between Italian and Chinese universities had its official birth in 2004, when EU promoted the 'Erasmus Mundus' Actions, with the goal of allowing students from all over the world (China included) to attend post graduate courses offered by European universities and, since 2008, joint Master and PhD programs, to be implemented through direct cooperation between the higher education institutions of several countries. In connection with the 'Erasmus Mundus' Actions, the governments of Italy and China subscribed in 2005 the bilateral 'Marco Polo Project' and the 'Turandot Project', with the purpose of granting fellowships to Chinese/Italian students for their attendance to post-graduate studies at Italian/Chinese universities, while allowing them to improve their knowledge of the language of the hosting Country through special language courses. Other Actions were launched in the following years: in 2013 the 'Marie Curie Sklodowska Action' (MSCA), providing grants to researchers from all over the world to visit EU universities and, in 2014, the 'Erasmus Plus Action', granting fellowships to non-EU citizens to attend teaching/ training courses at EU's Educational, Work and Sport Organizations. Several bilateral teaching and research cooperation agreements were also signed by Italian and Chinese universities. Another extremely significant cultural cooperation channel between China and Italy is constituted by the activities of the various 'Confucius Institutes', created since 2006 by the Chinese Ministry of Education with the goal of teaching Chinese language and organizing cultural initiatives abroad (Hanban, 2017).

The University of Padova (UP), the second oldest and one of the high ranking universities of Italy, which had been created in 1222 a.D. by initiative of a group of students and professors who left the University of Bologna in search of academic freedom ('*Universa universis patavina libertas*'), has been adopted as a case study.

At UP initiated the *Scientific Revolution*, between the second half of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century. Among the most illustrious UP professors of that period let us recall the Flemish Anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), holder of the chair of 'Surgery and Anatomy', who in 1543 published the treatise '*De humanis corporis fabrica*' (*The structure of the human body*), followed by Gabriele Falloppio (1523-1562), who investigated the auditory and the reproductive organs of the human body, Hieronymus Fabricius d'Acquapendente (1537-1619), the *Father of Hembriology* and, last but not least, the Italian Physicist and Astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), holder of the chair of 'Geometry, Mechanics and Astronomy' from 1592 until 1610, who as first introduced the *Scientific Method* in the study of natural phenomena. Coming to more recent times let us mention, among others, the Mathematician Gregorio Ricci-Curbastro (1853-1925), inventor of the *Absolute Differential Calculus* (universally

known as *Tensor Calculus*), and his pupil Tullio Levi-Civita (1873-1941), who gave important contributions to Albert Einstein's mathematical definition of the *General Theory of Relativity* (Heilbron, 2003).

UP, with its great variety of teaching and research areas, spanning from *Science & Technology* to *Health Sciences*, *Law*, *Economics*, *Humanities*, ranks among the most active Italian universities, together with Università di Bologna, Università di Pisa, Università di Roma La Sapienza, Università degli Studi di Milano and others. Structure and statistical data concerning UP are available in the Appendix.

Aim of the present paper is to illustrate in greater detail the various teaching and research co-operations established by UP with Chinese universities, briefly outlined in a recent paper by Sha HA (2018). No comprehensive report existed in this subject area so far. Our hope is to contribute in filling the gap: only a research *in the field* could allow a real understanding of the significance of those academic cooperations. The added value of this research lies, in our opinion, in its detailed exposition of the various academic cooperation initiatives of UP with China. This is also its limit: the number of public Italian universities amounts to 68 units, distributed all over the Country (Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane, 2017): UP is only one of them, even though a significant one.

Our sources have been EU Reports about the '*Erasmus Mundus*' Actions, official data from the International Office of the University of Padova, private communications by the UP professors responsible of the various cooperation programs with China, as well as research papers published by them in international journals. An official list of cultural initiatives promoted by the Confucius Institute of Padova (Istituto Confucio di Padova, 2018) concludes the set of our sources.

The paper is structured into an Introduction, a Section 1 concerning the various '*Erasmus Mundus*' Actions activated by UP so far, a Section 2 concerning the bilateral teaching and research cooperation agreements established between UP and Chinese universities, a Section 3 concerning the cultural activities organized by the *Confucius Institute of Padova* in the course of the period from November 2015 to February 2018 and a Section 4 containing the Conclusions. The References and an Appendix, containing a short illustration the structure of UP, conclude the text.

2. The '*Erasmus Mundus*' Action

As already mentioned in the Introduction, the '*Erasmus Mundus*' Actions were launched by EU in 2004 and following years and comprised the '*Erasmus Mundus Action 1*', the '*Erasmus Mundus Action 2*' and the '*Erasmus Mundus Action 3*' (EACEA, 2017). The second one supports the implementation of Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) courses and, since 2010, also Joint Doctorates (EMJD), which are operated by consortia of higher education institutions from EU and elsewhere in the world. They provide integrated courses and joint or multiple diplomas at two or more higher education institutions. Scholarships cover participation and subsistence costs, insurance for the duration of the study period, plus a contribution to travel costs. There exist over 130 Master programs in the following areas of study: Agriculture and Veterinary, Engineering, Manufacture and Construction, Health and Welfare, Humanities and Arts, Science, Mathematics and Computing, Social Sciences, Business and Law. The '*Erasmus Mundus Action 3*' funds projects developed by EU universities '*to enhance the attractiveness of European Higher Education Institutions*', but it does not have been taken into consideration in this paper.

The Erasmus Mundus courses offered (in English) by UP to internal students from all over in the present academic year 2016/17 were the following (Università degli Studi di Padova, 2017):

- '*Algant*'. It consists of Biennial Masters Courses and Triennial Ph.D. Courses in *Algebra, Analysis and Number Theory*, active since the Academic Year 2006/07. The university consortium is presently coordinated by Université Bordeaux 1 (France). Other partners are: Concordia University (Canada), Chennai Mathematical Institute (India), Università di Milano (Italy), Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy), Université Paris 11 (France), Université Paris Sud (France), Stellenbosch University (South Africa). At UP the reference person is Professor Francesco Baldassarri, from the '*Tullio Levi-Civita*' Department of Mathematics. During the Academic Years 2006/07-2016/17 the number of Chinese postgraduate students attending this course amounted to 10 units.
- '*Astromundus*' (Erasmus Mundus Masters Course on *Astronomy and Astrophysics*), active since the Academic Year 2012/13. The university consortium is coordinated by the Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck (Austria); other partners are: Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany), Univerzitet u Beogradu (Serbia), Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy), Università di Roma Tor Vergata (Italy). At UP the reference person is Professor Enrico Maria Corsini, from the '*Galileo Galilei*' Department of Physics and Astronomy (DFA). During the Academic Years 2012/13-2016/17 the number of Chinese students attending this course amounted to 2 units.

- 'Fusion' (*Fusion Science and Engineering*): triennial PhD Course coordinated by the Università degli Studi di Padova, with no additional partners, active from 2013/14 until 2016/17. The reference person is Professor Paolo Bettin, from the 'Galileo Galilei' Department of Physics and Astronomy (DFA). During the Academic Years 2013/14-2016/17 the number of Chinese students attending this course amounted to 2 units.
- 'Mbio' (Erasmus Mundus Master Course of *Bioethics*), active since 2006/07. The university consortium is presently coordinated by Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium). Other partners are: Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy) and Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen (Netherlands). At UP the reference person is Professor Corrado Viafora, from the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology (FISPPA). During the Academic Years from 2006/07 to 2016/17, the number of Chinese postgraduate students attending this course amounted to 9 units.
- 'Medfor' (Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Course in *Mediterranean Forestry and Natural Resources Management*), active since 2014/15. The university consortium is presently coordinated by Technical University of Lisbon (Portugal); the other partners are: Karadeniz Technical University (Turkey), Universidade Catolica Portuguesa (Portugal), Università della Tuscia (Italy), Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy), Universidad de Valladolid (Spain). At UP the reference person is Professor Davide Pettenella, from the Department of the Territory and Agro-Forestry Systems (TESAF). During the Academic Years 2014/15-2016/17 the number of Chinese postgraduate students attending this course amounted to 2 units.
- 'Nuphys' (Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in *Nuclear Physics*), active since the Academic Year 2017/18. The university consortium is coordinated by Universidad de Sevilla (Spain). Other partners are: Universidad Autonoma de Madrid (Spain), Universidad de Barcelona (Spain), Université Caen Normandie (France), Università di Catania (Italy), Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain), Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy), Universidad de Salamanca (Spain). At UP the reference person is Professor Francesca Soramel, from the Department of Physics and Astronomy (DFA). Chinese postgraduate students attending this course are expected within the next Academic Years.
- 'Planthealth' (European Master Degree in *Plant Health in Sustainable Cropping Systems*), active since the Academic Year 2017/18. The consortium is coordinated by Universitat Politècnica de Valencia (Spain). Other partners are: Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany), Centre International d'Études Supérieures en Sciences Agronomiques, Agroalimentaires, Horticoles et du Paysage (France), Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy). At UP the reference person is Professor Carlo Duso, from the Department of Agronomy, Animals, Food, Natural Resources and Environment (DAFNAE). Chinese postgraduate students attending this course are expected within the next Academic Years.
- 'Sahc' (Advanced Master in *Structural Analysis of Monuments and Historical Constructions*), active since the Academic Year 2010/11. The consortium is coordinated by Universidade do Minho (Portugal). Other partners are Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy) and Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Spain). At UP the reference person is Professor Claudio Modena, from the Department of Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering (DICEA). During the Academic Years 2010/11-2016/17 attending this course amounted to 7 units.
- 'Stede' (Erasmus Mundus Master Degree in *Sustainable Territorial Development*), active since the Academic Year 2014/15. The university consortium is coordinated by Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy); the other partners are: Cairo University (Egypt), Universidade Católica Dom Bosco (Brasil), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium), Université de Ougadougou (Burkina Faso), Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (France), University of Johannesburg (South Africa). At UP the reference person is Professor Marina Bertoincin, from the Department of Historical, Geographical and Antiquity Sciences (DISSGEA). During the Academic Years 2014/15-2016/17 attending this course amounted to 4 units.
- 'Sufonama' (*Sustainable Forest and Nature Management*): Erasmus Mundus Master Degree, active since the Academic Year 2017/18. The consortium is coordinated by University of Copenhagen (Denmark); the other partner universities are: University of Wales (UK), Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sweden), Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy). At UP the reference person is Professor Vincenzo D'Agostino, from the Department of the Territory and Agro-Forestry Systems. Chinese postgraduate students attending this course are expected within the next Academic Years.
- 'Sutrofor' (Erasmus Mundus Master Course in *Sustainable Tropical Forestry*), active since the Academic year 2017/18. The university consortium is coordinated by the University of Copenhagen (Denmark). Other partners are: Bangor University (UK); Dresden University of Technology (Germany), Institut des sciences

et industries du vivant et de l'environnement, AgroParisTech-ENGREF, Montpellier (France) and Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy). At UP the reference person is Professor Davide Pettenella, from the Department of the Territory and Agro-Forestry Systems. Chinese postgraduate students attending this course are expected within the next Academic Years.

- 'TPTI' (Erasmus Mundus Master Course in '*Techniques, Patrimoines, Territoires de l'Industrie*'), active since the Academic Year 2014/15. The university consortium is coordinated by Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (France). Other partners are: Universidade de Evora (Portugal) and Università degli Studi di Padova (Italy). At UP the reference person is Professor Giovanni Luigi Fontana, from the Department of Historical, Geographical and Antiquity Sciences (DISSGEA). During the Academic Years 2014/15-2016/17 attending this course amounted to 4 units.

3. Bilateral Teaching and Research Cooperation Agreements between UP and Chinese Universities

In addition to the '*Erasmus Mundus*' Actions, during the period 2008-2017 the University of Padova established several bilateral cooperation agreements with various Chinese universities, economically supported by the Italian Government or UP, Chinese universities and the *Chinese Scholarship Council* (CSC). The Guangzhou University (GZHU) was the first Chinese university to establish, in 2008, a bilateral student mobility agreement and joint research activities with UP. At present, 15 students and 5 academics from GZHU visit yearly UP, and conversely for Italian students and academics. The students can attend courses for a maximum of 10 months each and the academics can yearly teach courses and/or perform joint research activities for 1 month at the most. A 'China Desk' has been established at the Department of Cultural Relations of UP, to assist the incoming Chinese students and academicians from Guangzhou University, and a similar Desk has been established at GZHU.

In the following years other Chinese universities established with UP bilateral cooperation agreement concerning student mobility and research partnerships.

As for the Academic Year 2017/18, the following teaching and research cooperation agreements were active:

1. Department of Chemical Sciences (DISC):

- a) in the area of '*Surface Science and Catalysis*', it has been activated the '*Graphene Innovative 2D Materials Project for Sustainable Energetics and Catalysis*' (GINSENG Project), in cooperation with the 'Institute of Metal Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences', the 'Peking University' and the 'Sichuan University'. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Gaetano Granozzi (Granozzi, 2018).
- b) In the area of '*Supramolecular and System Chemistry*', the teaching and research cooperation projects with the 'Beijing University of Chemical Technology', the 'Tsinghua University', the 'Tianjin University' and the 'Shanghai Institute of Organic Chemistry of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' are active. The local coordinator at UP is Prof. Paolo Scrimin (Scrimin, 2018).
- c) In the area of '*Computational Chemistry*', a teaching and research cooperation project with the 'Hubei University of Technology' is active. The local coordinator at UP is Prof. Antonino Polimeno (Polimeno, 2018).

2. Department of Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering (DICEA):

- a) in the areas of '*Construction Engineering*' and '*Wind Hazard Protection*', teaching and research cooperation projects with the 'Harbin Institute of Technology', the 'Dalian University of Technology' and the 'Liaoning University' are active. The coordinator is Professor Carmelo Maiorana (Maiorana, 2018).
- b) In the area of '*Earthquake Hazard Protection*', a teaching and research cooperation project with the 'Guangzhou University' is active. The local coordinator is Prof. Francesca Da Porto, delegate of the UP Rector for the '*Conservation of the building heritage of the University*' (Da Porto, 2017).
- c) In the area of '*Porous Media*', a teaching and research cooperation project with the 'Capital Normal University' is active. This cooperation is aimed at the development and application of numerical models for the simulation of flow and deformation in porous media, in order to predict the conditions that can lead to cracking of the continuous medium. These models are implemented on parallel computers for the execution of high performance simulations. The activities should include soon an international 'Joint Key Laboratory', in cooperation with other universities from Australia and Canada. The local coordinator at UP is Prof. Massimiliano Ferronato (Ferronato, 2018).
- d) In the area of '*Soil remediation, water purification and pollution detection*', the so-called 'ROLES Project' (Remediation of Old Landfills for Environmental sustainability and final Sink) is active, in cooperation with:

the School of Environment of the 'Tsinghua University'. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Raffaello Cossu (Cossu, 2018).

3. Department of Industrial Engineering (DII):

- a) in the area of '*Fluid Machines, Pumps, Hydraulic Turbines*', teaching and research cooperations with the 'Jiangsu University' and the 'National Research Center of Pumps' in Zhenjiang are active. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Giorgio Pavesi (Pavesi, 2018).
- b) In the area of '*Metallurgy*', a teaching and research cooperation with the 'Shanghai Tech University' (ShanghaiTech) is active. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Lucia Nicola (Nicola, 2016), former professor at the 'Delft University of Technology', in the Netherlands.
- c) In the area of '*Biological Engineering*', a cooperation project with the 'Shanghai Tech University' (ShanghaiTech) is active. On November 16th-18th, 2017, a joint workshop entitled '*Cell Biology through Integrative Bioengineering*' was held at ShanghaiTech. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Nicola Elvassore (Elvassore, 2018).
- d) In the areas of '*Environmental Engineering*' and '*Energy Economics and Technology*' a teaching and research project with the 'Shanghai Tech University (ShanghaiTech) is active. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Alberto Bertucco, Director of the UP 'Levi Cases' Interdepartmental Research Center on Energy Economics and Techniques (Università di Padova. Inter-Departmental Levi Cases Research Center, 2017).
- e) In the area of '*Advanced Ceramics and Glasses*', a teaching and research cooperation project should be activated with the 'Shanghai Institute of Ceramics of the Academy of Sciences' (SICCAS). The local coordinator at UP is Professor Paolo Colombo (Colombo, 2017).

4. Department of Information Engineering' (DEI):

in the areas of '*Fiber Optical Sensors*' and '*Linear Stochastic Systems*' teaching and research projects with the 'Northwestern University', the 'Shanghai Jiao Tong University' and the 'Guangzhou University' are active. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Andrea Galtarossa (2018). Professor Emeritus Giorgio Picci, from DEI, Italian Director of the *Confucius Institute of Padova*, was a visiting professor at Guangzhou University and Jiao Tong University in October 2017 (Picci, 2017).

5. Department of Territory, Agriculture and Forestry systems (TESAF):

in the areas of '*Remote Sensing*' and '*Water Hazard Protection*' teaching and research cooperation projects are active with the 'China University of Geosciences', the 'Institute of Mountain Hazards and Environment of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' and the Guangzhou University. The local coordinator at UP is Prof. Paolo Tarolli (Tarolli, 2017).

6. Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences (DSFARM):

in the area of 'Pharmaceutical Biotechnologies' a teaching and research cooperation project with the 'China Pharmaceutical University' has been established and waits to be activated. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Barbara Gatto (Gatto, 2018).

7. Department of Cardiology, Thoracic and Vascular Sciences (DCTV):

in the area of '*Arterial Hypertension and Vascular Biology*' a teaching and research cooperation project with the 'South China Normal University' has been established and waits to be activated. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Piero Maestrelli (Maestrelli, 2012).

8. Department of Historical, Geographical and Antiquity Sciences' (DISSGEA):

an '*Archive of Ancient Chinese Silk Textiles in Western Collections Project*' (Silk Road Project) has been established and waits to be implemented, while a research cooperation project with the 'Zhejiang Scie-Tech University' and the 'National Silk Museum at Hongzhou' on '*Silk Worm Studies*' is active since 2016. The local coordinator at UP is Professor Luigi Fontana (Fontana, 2018).

9. Department of Sociology:

- a) in the area of '*Comparative study of religious phenomena*', a teaching and research cooperation agreement has been signed with the the Renmin University of China. Local coordinator at UP is Professor Giuseppe Giordan. A volume, containing research contributions by Italian and Chinese academics will be edited in August 2018 (Cao, Giordan & Pace, 2018).

- b) In the area of ‘*Human Rights, Society, and Multi-level Governance*’ an Agreement Memorandum between the ‘Antonio Papisca’ Human Rights Centre (UNESCO Chair) of UP and the Institute for Human Rights of the ‘Guangzhou University’ has been signed, concerning the exchange of post graduate students for the attendance to Joint Master and Ph.D. Degrees courses. Two students from Guangzhou University during the Academic Year 2017/18 are attending the joint Ph.D. course, under the guidance of Professor Giuseppe Giordan.

As for the students mobility related to all these bilateral agreements, the available statistical data refer to the academic year 2016/17. The number of Chinese students attending undergraduate or postgraduate courses at UP amounted to 148 units, with the following distribution:

- Agricultural and Veterinary Schools : 6 students,
- Schools of Economics and Political Science: 21 students,
- Law School: 2 students, Engineering School: 23 students,
- Medicine and Surgery School: 6 students,
- School of Science: 21 students,
- School of Humanities and Sociology: 49 students.
- School of Economics and Political Science: 21 students,
- School of Psychology: 23 students
- School of Engineering: 23 students.

4. Cultural initiatives of the Confucius Institute of Padova

As mentioned in the Introduction, the ‘Confucius Institute’ (Kǒngzǐ Xuéyuàn) is an educational organization created in 2004 by the Ministry of Education of P.R.C. with the aim of promoting the Chinese language and culture and facilitate cultural exchanges with China all over the world. Its activities are overseen by the ‘International Chinese Language Council’ (Guóji Hànyǔ Xuéyuàn Bàngōngshì, simplified as Hànbàn) in Beijing. The *Confucius Institute of Padova* was established on April 3, 2009 as an emanation of the Beijing Confucius Institute and in collaboration between the University of Padua and the University of Guangzhou (Istituto Confucio di Padova, 2017, November). The President of the *Confucius Institute of Padova* for the Academic Year 2017/18 is Prof. Rosario Rizzuto (Rector of UP), the Chinese Director is Prof. Yang Haibin, from Guangzhou University, and the Italian Director is Professor Giorgio Picci, from UP.

The activities of the *Confucius Institute of Padova* are performed on the base of a cooperation agreement between UP and Guangzhou University. Among the most recent cultural exchange activities of the Confucius Institute of Padova, let us quote the following conferences and workshops:

- on November 6, 2015: a conference entitled ‘*Modern Science and Technology shed new light on ancient Chinese civilization*’, by a visiting professor from Guangzhou University.
- On February 2, 2016, *Sino-Italian Workshop on Applied Statistics*, in cooperation with UP and Guangzhou University.
- On February 15, 2016, a conference on ‘The theory and practice of human rights in China, A perspective of development’, by a visiting professor from Guangzhou University.
- On September 23, 2016, *Sino-Italian Workshop on the preservation of cultural and archeological heritage*, in cooperation with UP and Guangzhou University.
- On September 8, 2017, *Sino-Italian Workshop on Astro-Statistics*, in cooperation with UP and Guangzhou University.
- On May 5, 2017, a conference and projection of a documentary, entitled ‘*Matteo Ricci – The Mandarin of friendship*’ (an Italian-Chinese production realized by Annamaria Carraro). The documentary had been previously presented at the *2015 GZDOC Festival* and selected for the *2016 Golden Tree International Film Festival* in Frankfurt / Germany.
- On September 28, 2017, workshop on ‘*Chinese and Italian perspectives on Law and Human Rights*’, in cooperation between the ‘Centro di Ateneo per i Diritti Umani’ of UP and the ‘Human Rights Institute’ of Guangzhou University.

- On December 19, 2017, a conference on ‘China’s uphill battle against inequality’, by a visiting professor of Guangzhou University.
- On January 14, 2018, a conference and a photographic exhibition on ‘Jewish Refugees in Shanghai’, hosted at the ‘Museo della Padova Ebraica’ (Museum of Jewish Padua).
- On February 15, 2018, a conference and exhibition on ‘The Forbidden City and four thousand years of Chinese History’ (*La Città Proibita e quattromila anni di Storia*), by Adriano Màdaro, hosted at the historic ‘Palazzo della Ragione’ (13th century A.D) of the city of Padova.

5. Conclusions

Even before the advent of the *Global Market Economy*, intercultural exchanges between Italy and China were a well-established reality. In present days, computers and mobile phones, sport cars, haute couture and casual clothing, haute cuisine and junk food from the West and from the East of the World, everything is available in the *global village*.

Cultural exchanges find their place at a higher level, since they require an attitude to mutual understanding and are based on a serious study activity. *Cultural co-operation* activities among higher education institutions find their place at an even higher level, since they require the acquisition of a common working method among the involved people, to be obtained through frequent visits of experts and a consistent flow of specializing postgraduate students. All that constitutes the essence of the present cultural cooperation activities between UP and Chinese universities. As for the fulfillment of the cooperation projects established between UP and Chinese higher education institutions so far, the increasing number of visits by Chinese academics and postgraduate students attending Master and Ph.D. courses at UP and of Italian Academics and postgraduate students to Chinese universities, and the good quality of the joint research activities (with joint research papers starting being published in international journals) constitute a demonstration of the success of those initiatives: other research results will hopefully follow in a near future.

As already mentioned in Ha’s paper (2018), on September 23, 2017 took place in Rome the 15th edition of the ‘China in the 21st Century Forum’, which addressed the history of the Chinese –Italian relationships and the best ways to develop them in the spirit of the new *Silk Road* called ‘The Belt and Road Initiative’. (see “China, Italy eye deeper cultural exchange”, 2017). Mr. Chen Zhu, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of China, observed that ‘about 20,000 Chinese university students came to Italy during the period 2006-2017, and more than 5,500 Italian university students have studied in China, since the Marco Polo Program was launched in 2005 and Turandot Project for art education in 2009.’ On the same occasion Mr. Alberto Bradanini, former Italian Ambassador in China, underlined that ‘the Belt and Road Initiative, comprising the Maritime Silk Road, aims to build trade and infrastructure networks connecting Asia with Europe and Africa on and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes’.

Fulfilling those ambitious goals requires time, good will and an increasing financial support by State, regional institutions and private entrepreneurs.

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Appendix

Structure and statistical data concerning the University of Padova (UP)

According to official sources (Università degli Studi di Padova, 2017), UP is subdivided into the following Departments: Department of Agronomy, Food, Natural Resources, Animals, and the Environment, Department of Biology, Department of Animal Medicine, Production and Health, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Department of Cardiac, Thoracic and Vascular Sciences, Department of Chemical Sciences, Department of Civil, Environmental and Architectural Engineering, Department of Comparative Biomedicine and Food Science, Department of Cultural

Heritage: Archaeology and History of Art, Cinema, and Music, Department of Developmental Psychology and Socialization, Department of Economics and Management, Department of General Psychology, Department of Geosciences, Department of Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World, Department of Industrial Engineering, Department of Information Engineering, Department of Land, Environment, Agriculture, and Forestry, Department of Linguistic and Literary Studies, Department of Management and Engineering, Department of Mathematics, Department of Medicine, Department of Molecular Medicine, Department of Neurosciences, Department of Pharmaceutical and Pharmacological Sciences, Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education, and Applied Psychology, Department of Physics and Astronomy, Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, Department of Private Law and Critique of Law, Department of Public, International and Community Law, Department of Statistical Sciences, Department of Surgery, Oncology and Gastroenterology, Department of Women's and Children's Health.

At UP there are 27 Interdepartmental Research Centers:

Center for Innovative Bio-Technologies (Centro di Ricerca Interdipartimentale per le Biotecnologie Innovative – CRIBI), Center for Cognitive Neurosciences (Centro di Neuroscienze Cognitive – CNC), ‘Dino Tonini’ Hydrology Center (Centro di Idrologia ‘Dino Tonini’), ‘Giorgio Levi Cases’ Study Center for Economics and Energy Technologies (Centro studi di economia e tecnica dell'energia’ Giorgio Levi Cases’), Research Center of Mechanics of Biological Materials (Centro di Ricerca Interdipartimentale di Meccanica dei Materiali Biologici), Research Center in Pedagogy of Infancy (Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca in Pedagogia dell’Infanzia – CIPPI), Research Center in Services to the Individual (Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca e Studio per i Servizi alla Persona – CISSPE), Research Center on Workplace Unease (Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca sul Disagio Lavorativo – CIR), Center for Family Research (Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca sulla Famiglia – CIRF), ‘Carlo Giacon’ Research Center for Medieval Philosophy (Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca di Filosofia Medievale “Carlo Giacon” – CIRFIM), Research Center for Intercultural Studies and Migration (Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca per gli Studi Interculturali e sulle Migrazioni – CIRSIM), Research Center for juridical-environmental and ethical-social decisions on emerging technologies (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca per le decisioni giuridico-ambientali ed etico-sociali sulle tecnologie emergenti – CIGA), ‘Giorgio Lago’ Research Center on the Italian Northeast (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca sul Nordest “Giorgio Lago” – CIRN), Research Center in Myology, Biology, Pathophysiology, Clinical and Skeletal Muscle Biotechnology (Centro Interdipartimentale di ricerca in Miologia, biologia, fisiopatologia, clinica e biotecnologie del muscolo scheletrico - CIR-Myo), Research Center for the study of cementitious materials and hydraulic binders (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca per lo studio dei materiali cementizi e dei leganti Idraulici – CIRCE), Research Center for Gender Studies (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca Studi di genere – CIRSG), ‘Studies on Titus Livius’ (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca "Studi Liviani"), Research Center on Conservation of the Archaeological, Architectural and Historical-artistic Heritage (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca studio e conservazione dei beni archeologici, architettonici e storico-artistici – CIBA), Research Center on the modeling of neuropsychological alterations in clinical medicine (Centro Interdipartimentale di ricerca sulla modellistica delle alterazioni neuropsichiche in medicina clinica – CIRMANMEC), Research Center on Headaches and Drug Abuse (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca sulle Cefalee ed Abuso di Farmaci – CIRCAF), Research Center for Experimental Surgery (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca di Chirurgia sperimentale), Research Center of Medical History (Centro interdipartimentale di storia della medicina – CISM), Research Center on Geomatics (Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca di Geomatica – CIRGEO), Research Center on Viticulture and Oenology (Centro Interdipartimentale per la Ricerca in Viticoltura ed Enologia – CIRVE), Human Inspired Technologies Research Center – HIT, Center of Hydrodynamics and Morphodynamics of the Venetian Lagoon (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca "Centro di Idrodinamica e Morfodinamica Lagunare" – CIMoLa), Research Center in History and Philosophy of Science, (Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca in Storia e Filosofia della Scienza – CISFIS).

In the Academic Year 2016/17 the teaching/research staff of UP amounted to 2,092 units (of whom 445 were Full Professors, 887 Associate Professors, 541 Researchers with tenure and the remaining 179 ones were Researchers with a yearly or triennial employment contract; the ‘Yearly Contract Professors’ should be also taken into consideration, but their number is difficult to estimate. The total number of students amounted in the same period to 57,404 units, subdivided into Undergraduate Students (35,227), Master Degree Students (18,569), Ph.D. Schools (1,305), Post-Masters Specialization Schools (1,639), Others (574): see the official, yearly report (Università degli Studi di Padova, 2017).