Higher Education Internationalization:
The Erasmus-Mundus network added value

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Abstract— **Higher education internationalization can play a major role in developing universities and students' capacities and their opportunities broadly throughout the world. Irrespective of contextual differences within and between countries, nearly all higher education institutions worldwide are engaged in international activities and are seeking to expand them. Engaging with the world is now considered part of the definition of quality in education and research. However, with the current crisis, possible tensions and counter reactions to the development of the internationalization can occur, such as an imminent resistance to a supposed denationalizing effect of internationalization, and related to that the possible development of a new form of local and regional identity, and the increasing influence of competition and market processes as driving factors in internationalization. In this paper we highlight a specific internationalization case study between Europe and South East Asia. We mainly explain the construction process of such historical collaboration, which is the essential element for its sustainability. We open**

Keywords—Internationalization; Erasmus-Mundus; South East Asia; Bilateral and multilateral collaboration; Mobility

I. INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of higher education is a dynamic process, impacted by the international changing context. One of the current contextual factors is the globalization. Central to the globalization are the increased mobility of people and services, and the accelerating use of information and communication technologies to bridge time and space in unprecedented ways and at continually decreasing costs. Globalization gives an international dimension to all aspects of our lives, communities, and professions. Globalization is the system of interaction among the countries and regions in the world in order to develop the global economy.

Somehow, the distinction between internationalisation and globalisation is not categorical [1][2]. They overlap and are interrelated in all possible ways. In terms of both practice and perceptions, internationalization is closer to the well-established tradition of international cooperation and mobility and to the core values of quality and excellence, whereas globalization refers more to competition, pushing the concept of higher education as a tradable commodity and challenging the concept of higher education as a public good.

In higher education, globalization has led to intensified mobility of ideas, students and academic staff and to expanded possibilities for collaboration and global dissemination of knowledge. It has also introduced new aims, activities and actors engaged in the internationalization [3][4].

In all cases, though the risk of brain drain remains a serious concern in some parts of the world, some countries are using international student mobility to expand their higher education capacity and capabilities [5]. Surprisingly, some of the countries benefiting from the internationalization are those who suffered in the past from the brain-drain. They succeded in creating solid links with the academic talents in the world and with their own diasporas in the industrialized countries. It is worth to mention that today a good amount of resources exist in an open access way on internet such memorandums, guidelines, codes of good practices [6][7]. Such codes include a set of principles which should be respected by institutions or organizations involved in the provision of educational services through transnational arrangements.

Higher education internationalization can play a major role in developing universities and students' capacities and their opportunities broadly throughout the world. Irrespective of

contextual differences within and between countries, nearly all higher education institutions worldwide are engaged in international activities and are seeking to expand them. Engaging with the world is now considered part of the definition of quality in education and research.

This paper highlights the construction process of some Erasmus-Mundus exchange programs and their added value to the EU-Asia mobility. Section II reminds some higher internationalization topics, Section III focuses on the EU-Asia specific case, Section IV brings a discussion related to the outcome of such Erasmus-Mundus programs and the last Section draws some conclusions and perspectives.

II. HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION CHALLENGES

Internationalization covers a broad range of topics that include cross-border education, e-learning, massive open online courses (MOOCs), student mobility and several others. The two topics of interest for financing higher education are cross-border (sometimes called borderless or transnational) education and student mobility. Cross-border education refers to the delivery of higher education in a country through a branch campus of a foreign institution of higher education, while student mobility refers to students studying abroad to obtain a degree or a number of credits.

De Wit [8] described the internationalization of European education as a positive development and gave its features:

- more explicit and coordinated

- interactive and proactive

- more strategically focused on multilateral partnerships

- continuing professionalization

- more focused on the world outside Europe

- more attention given to internationalization of the curriculum

- more attention to quality assurance

Besides this, he also pointed to possible tensions in and counter reactions to the development of the internationalization, such as an imminent resistance to a supposed denationalizing effect of internationalization, and related to that the possible development of a new form of local and regional identity, and the increasing influence of competition and market processes as driving factors in internationalization. In Europe, in the first place we see a growing tendency to criticise the European unification and cooperation, despite the achievements of the Bologna Process [9] and the European programmes for education and research. Whereas at the same time, ironically, stronger appeals are made to European values versus other cultures.

Brandenburg and De Wit [10] think that internationalization is claimed to be the last stand for humanistic ideas against the world of pure economic benefits allegedly represented by the term globalization. Alas, this constructed antagonism between internationalization and globalization ignores the fact that activities that are more related to the concept of globalization are increasingly executed under the flag of internationalization.

Knight [11] points out that internationalization of higher education is being fundamentally changed in reaction to and support of the competition agenda and market orientation. He mention that what is certain is that it brings new opportunities, risks, benefits and challenges, and that the double role of internationalization in furthering both cooperation and competition among countries is a new reality of our more globalized world.

Europe has always seen the mobility as an instrument for promoting internationalization. For instance, in the 2009 communiqué of the Ministers of Education of the Bologna countries it is stated that "Mobility is important for personal development and employability, it fosters respect for diversity and a capacity to deal with other cultures. It encourages linguistic pluralism, thus underpinning the multilingual tradition of the European Higher Education Area and it increases cooperation and competition between higher education institutions. Therefore, mobility shall be the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area. We call upon each country to increase mobility, to ensure its high quality and to diversify its types and scope. In 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad."

The Bologna Process is changing the higher education landscape of the continent, through internationally coordinated reforms, illustrates how internationalization fulfills different purposes and brings different rewards and challenges. A widening of drivers of EU higher education has had the effect of making internationalization more of an institutional imperative. The resulting changes in goals, activities, and actors have led to a re-examination of conceptual frameworks and understandings and, more importantly, to an increased but healthy questioning of internationalization's values, purposes, goals and means.

Recent initiatives (such as the EAR[1] project) aimed to provide more clarity on recognition practices in all European countries, through agreeing on common recognition standards and measuring them against current practices in Europe. It also aimed to serve as a major step towards establishing similar recognition practices. The EAR project contributed to the concept of a joint recognition area of higher education in which all EU countries share similar recognition practices, based on commonly agreed standards and guidelines. This is achieved through the creation of a European recognition manual.

Other initiatives, such as the IMPI[2] project, focus on mapping and profiling internationalization of higher education institutions. They aim at providing institutions information related to their performance in internationalization and measures for improvement. A set of indicators were

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[1] http://www.eurorecognition.eu/manual/EAR_manual_v_1.0.pdf

[2] http://www.impi-project.eu/

developed, with relevance to all EU higher institutions. This provides options for comparison but also will offer opportunities for higher institutions to choose their individual profile of internationalization.

III.   EU/SOUTH-EAST-ASIA COOPERATION: A CASE STUDY

Close historical bi-lateral links exist between some South-East-Asian and EU countries since decades. The French-Vietnamese link is a good example: With around 6000 Vietnamese students in France, including about one thousand PhD students, Vietnam represents one of the biggest Asian communities in French universities. Numerous partnerships between Vietnamese and French higher education exist, such as training programs for engineering excellence, French-Vietnamese centers for Management Training in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, French university centers, etc. The French-Cambodian[3] case is another good example: after years of support for the education of the elites, the current collaboration is more focusing on priority sectors related to sustainable development. Several programs are used in supplement, such as those of the "Agence universitaire de la Francophonie" (Francophony Agency), the Eiffel excellence program and programs implemented by local regions (Rhone Alps region, Brittany region, etc).

Earlier 2000, the European Union launched several collaborations and exchange educational programs with Asia. Since then, the number of students under mobility is continuously increasing. This gave the opportunity to the involved partners to develop specific partnership and curricula[4].

The authors had the opportunity to coordinate several collaboration programs and initiatives in this context and to be part of the construction process of a European/South-East-Asian network as detailed hereunder:

- We have started from a bilateral project (1-to-1) funded by two countries (France, Thailand) that allowed us to understand the needs and the culture of some of our partners.

- This rapidly led to new projects and bigger programs where more universities from each continent have participated (n-to-n), with a significant involvement of the economical sector in fields related to ICT, Engineering, Business, Management and Education Sciences, with broad applications in the Tourism and industry sectors (supply chains, product innovations, change management, etc). This was mainly achieved through Asia-Link and Erasmus-Mundus exchange programs. From the initial exchange of 2 to 4 students per mobility we have achieved the level of a maximum of 334 exchanged students and staff in the Erasmus-Mundus e-Link program.

- The new born network encouraged us to enlarge the collaboration, and participate in bigger consortia and exchange programs. At this level collaboration and exchange of practices between clusters of institutions from former projects and programs became possible (N-to-N). However the quick need in terms of collaboration sustainability and network preservation, leads us to create Knowledge Infocenters in both Europe and Asia, where common studies and joint research are made.

It is worth mentioning that beyond the EU and Asia institutions' networking activities, these experiences resulted in mutual recognition, through some mechanisms such as the ECTS (European Credits Transfer System). Beyond the ECTS themselves, a particular attention was paid to what do learners know and understand and what are they able to do on the basis of their qualifications, and more importantly how can learners carry their qualifications across borders without leaving part of their real value behind [12]. Of course, all this cannot not be possible without a specific attention and understanding between the partners that led to a mutual and sustainable trust.

These projects helped to build joint/Double Degrees and joint PhD supervision for which the examination committees always include members from outstanding foreign universities or research institutes. In several cases the Doctoral Schools signed additional specific bilateral agreements and approved new procedures to bestow the label "Doctor Europaeus" on students who had the appropriate prerequisites.

Furthermore, these projects also helped to regularly organize joint conferences and workshops. The best example is the SKIMA International conference on Knowledge, Information Management and Applications (the 7th edition of the conference[5] was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand in December 2013), which was originated from one of the former exchange programs of the network (the EU EAST-WEST Asia-Link project).

Beyond the research sessions as any conference, SKIMA features education and industry panel sessions, governments and funding agencies panels, interactive sessions, and invited/special sessions. It is intended from the beginning to be an open forum between researchers from developed and emerging countries, to communicate and discuss their latest research findings, but also to propose possible solutions to enhance their future collaboration.

A special care was made in each SKIMA conference to introduce specific sessions related to future collaboration strategies. Representatives from the hosting country government are systematically invited to such sessions. Several Ministers or vice-Ministers of Education, Technology

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[3] http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo/cambodge/la-france-et-le-cambodge/evenements-11566/article/document-cadre-de-partenariat-22910

[4] http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/index_fr.htm

[5] http://www.camt.cmu.ac.th/skima2013/

and Economy (Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Italy…) had already attended these SKIMA specific sessions and shared their countries visions and strategies. This feedback was important to understand the specificity of each member country and its strategic vision, beyond the technical and scientific exchange itself. It also helped some South-East-Asian partners to build a mutual understanding within the ASEAN higher education context.

It is clear that from the research point view, this cooperation enhanced the collaborative publication metrics and reinforced the convergence to harmonized and coherent research platforms and infrastructures.

In the following, we summarize some of the collaboration projects and their main activities and added value to the collaboration construction process.
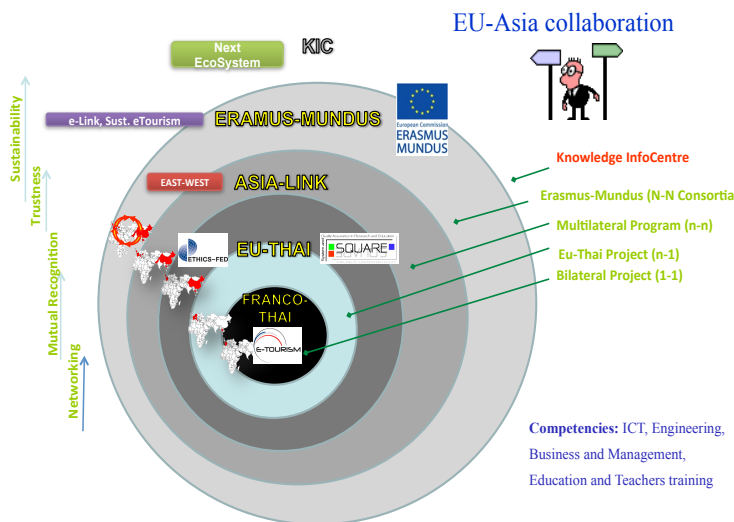

Figure 1. From bilateral collaboration to multi-lateral and consortia networks: an EU/South-East-Asia case study

- ASIA-LINK EAST-WEST PROGRAM 2004-2007: (Euro-Asia collaboraTions and NetWorking in information Engineering System Technology). This project contributed in the development of new co-operative research and teaching links and networking among the participating institutions in the area of information engineering technology. Partners: University of Bradford, UK - University Lumière Lyon 2, France- Kantipur Engineering College, Nepal-Chiang Mai University, Thailand - Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. This project was funded by the European Union.

- EGIDE BILATERAL ETOURISM PROJECT 2009-2010: This project focused on helping tourism Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in both countries (Thailand and France) to improve the sharing knowledge and ideas. It proposed methodologies and an infrastructure to enhance existing "Tourism Clusters" and studied the competitive capabilities to increase the competitiveness of the partners in order to capture new opportunities in tourism industry. Partners: Chiang Mai University, Thailand- University Lumière Lyon 2, France- Yonok University, Thailand - Burgundy University, Dijon, France). This project was funded by the French and Thai governments.

- EU-THAI SQUARE PROJECT 2009-2010: (Systems for QUality Assurance in Research and Education). This project contributed to promote Quality Culture for academic activities, to enhance the continuous improvement and enhanced-led evaluation in the academic activities and to develop Quality Approaches for academic institutions. SQUARE primarily aimed at understanding the university culture between EU and Thai universities, and enhancing the research system of the partner universities through a new quality oriented way to conceive the management of research and educational activities. A Quality Management System (QMS) has been achieved (quality manuals, audit programs, management reviews programs and reports…).
Partners: Chiang Mai University, Thailand- University of Sannio, Benevento, Italy- University Lumière Lyon 2, France. This project was funded by the European Union.

- EU-THAI ETHICS-FED PROJECT 2009-2010 (Euro-THai Implementation of Cooperative Study for Economic development) aimed at promoting cooperative education (sandwich programs with the industrial sector) in higher education system by sharing good practices and establishing pilot structures. It brought EU experience in order to build a cooperative Bachelor/Master degree in production systems, in cooperation with Northen Thailand industry areas. Partners: Chiang Mai University, Thailand - University Lumière Lyon 2, France - Duale Hochschule, Bade-Wurtemberg State University, Germany. This project was funded by the European Union.

- ERASMUS-MUNDUS E.C.W. E-LINK 2009-2011: This program contributed to improve the quality of European higher education, to promote intercultural understanding and to increase the attractiveness of European countries as an educational destination and center of excellence. It helped to upgrade the skills of the students, lecturers and researchers of the program and to raise awareness of opportunities in making interesting links with the economic sectors in the fields of Supply Chain Management. Partners: University of Bradford, UK- Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem, Hungary- Università degli Studi del Sannio, Italy- Staffordshire University UK- University Lumière Lyon 2, France- United International University, Bangladesh- College of Science & Technology, Bhutan- Kantipur Engineering College, Nepal - Mohammed Ali Jinnah University, Islamabad,

Pakistan- Chiang Mai University, Thailand- Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. This project was funded by the European Union.

- BILATERAL PHC CAI YUANPEI PROJECT 2012-2013: This project focuses on Sustainable Product Life cycle Management Project (sPLM) to help enterprises improve the environmental performance of their product in terms of product design, development and management. It explores multidisciplinary approaches for product sustainability such as green product design and life cycle assessment. Partners: University Lumière Lyon 2, France- Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. This project was funded by the French and Chinese governments.

- ERASMUS-MUNDUS SUSTAINABLE E-TOURISM PROGRAM 2010-2014: This program explores the use of advanced technologies within responsible and sustainable tourism, but also contributes to the exchange of knowledge and best practices between the partners, to enhance their cultural understanding. A proposal was made to extend this program and its students' applications to contribute to the Creative Cities Network. This network was initiated by the UNESCO to promote social, economic and cultural developments at the city level, through creative industries. It also promotes and protects the cultural diversity.
Partners: University Lumière Lyon 2, France, University Joseph Fourier Grenoble 1, France - Università degli Studi del Sannio, Italy - Staffordshire University, UK - Villingen-Schwenningen University of Cooperative Education, Germany - Royal University of Law and Economics, Cambodia - International School - Vietnam National University, Vietnam - National University of Laos, Laos - Health Sciences University of Mongolia, Mongolia - Chiang Mai University, Thailand - Chengdu University, China. This project was funded by the European Union.

- ERASMUS-MUNDUS ACTION-2 GULF COUNTRIES (EMA2 GCC) PROGRAM 2011-2015: This program aims at enhancing the knowledge exchange and mutual understanding between EU and all countries member of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf through an innovative mobility program between the partners of the consortium.
Partners: University of Deusto, Spain- Lund Universitet, Sweden- University College Dublin, Ireland- Technische Universität Berlin, Germany- University of Sciences and Technology Lille 1, France- University of Bahrain- Kuwait University, Qatar University, Sultan Qaboos University and University of Nizwa, Oman- The United Arab Emirates University- King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Saudi Arabia.

In this project two of the authors participated as teachers in a host partner university (Qatar University) for students coming from Europe. This completed their practice of the Erasmus-Mundus exchange and mobility in both sides as they have seen the benefit for the involved European students in terms of knowledge, language and culture, and the impact on the mutual understanding between partner universities. This project was funded by the European Union.

DISCUSSION

From a practical point of view, one can ask "where and by what means are an international project can be valued?" Here the attention is drawn towards those spaces where international projects are formed and promoted, and here we can examine their basis and logic. To limit our selves to the Erasmus-Mundus network projects, the specific question is what is their knowledge economy, and why universities massively responded to them? One of the answers is that these universities understood that cooperation is an important mean to capacity building and to advance alternate concepts and metrics of innovation. For the mobility students it is a matter of "learning outcome" formulated by the sending and receiving institutions and stating the "what" a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of an Erasmus-Mundus learning. This leads to achieving new competences that represent a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities. Indeed, the Erasmus-Mundus programs set objectives to be specified in terms of learning outcomes and competences, and validated by the needed ECTS.

Given the specific perceived importance of higher education international exchange, student mobility has become in many regions of the globe not only an essential instrument for internationalization, but a policy objective in its own right.

Actually, at some universities and among their researchers the general opinion is that the university is international by nature, and thus there is no need to stimulate and guide internationalization. Thereby, references are made to the Renaissance, the time of the philosopher Erasmus (ca. 1467-1536), whom the European exchange programme is named after. Neave [13] explains that this historic reference ignores the fact that many universities are mostly originated in the 18th and 19th century and had a clear national orientation and function). He refers here to, amongst others, Neave [14] and Scott [15], who both speak of an 'inaccurate myth'. Internationalization is not a natural process and does not come naturally in universities, but it should be introduced and encouraged. That is why the rather widely accepted definition of internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" [16].

In order to promote good practice in the area of transnational education, the internationalization must now improve in quality to become 'made-to-measure' to serve different institutional aims and objectives. It must also be adapted to the new 'multipolar' higher education world order, in which western universities and colleges continue to play an important, but not any longer an exclusive role. A more critical approach to understanding the work of internationalization explores the ethical implications of disciplining the value of internationalization in different ways. However it is tremendous to move away from dogmatic and idealist concepts of internationalization and understand that internationalization is not a goal in itself but but rather as a mean or instrument to an end, and carefully reconsider our preoccupation with instruments and invest more time on questions of rationales and outcomes.

Erasmus-Mundus programs, which are moving to another phase in their lifecycle called Erasmus+, are good examples of successful international mobility and recognition. With Erasmus-Mundus successful first phases, the collective Erasmus+ network might now work to help reframing the innovation and knowledge economy, achieving world-class institutions or other concepts relating to the academy, state and civil society. It will foster quality improvements in youth work, in particular through enhanced cooperation between organizations in the youth field and/or other stakeholders. It also aims to promote synergies, cooperation and cross-fertilization between the different fields. Universities will have tools and means to cooperate and to change the international playing field for all.

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