



UNIVERSITY OF MACAU
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

**Construction of European Higher Education Area: A
Neo-Functionalist Approach**

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for granting the degree of Master in European
Studies at the University of Macau

17/04/2012

Declaration

I, Ren Yu, declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

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Date: __29-5-2012_____



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I am heartily thankful to my supervisor, Dr. Song Weiqing, whose encouragement, guidance and support from the initial to the final stage of my master studies enabled me to develop a solid understanding of the program, overcome all the obstacles in the research, and finish the dissertation. Without his insightful advices and persistent help, this dissertation would not have been possible.

I want to take this chance to thank the IEEM professors and coordinators, especially to President of IEEM Jose Luis de Sales Marques, Yvonne Sun, Jimmy Leong, whom gave me great support in studying the program. Deep appreciations go to oral defense committee members: Prof. Chen Dingding and Dr. Ho Chiew Siang Bryan, for their motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge, which help me in all the time of completion the research and writing of this dissertation.

I am indebted to all my great classmates and friends for their meaningful discussions, useful advices, and warm regards. Lastly, I would like to sincerely thank my families. Without their endless, unconditional, and dedicated love, life bears no meaning. And I offer my regards and blessings to all of those who support me in every single aspect during the completion of the project.

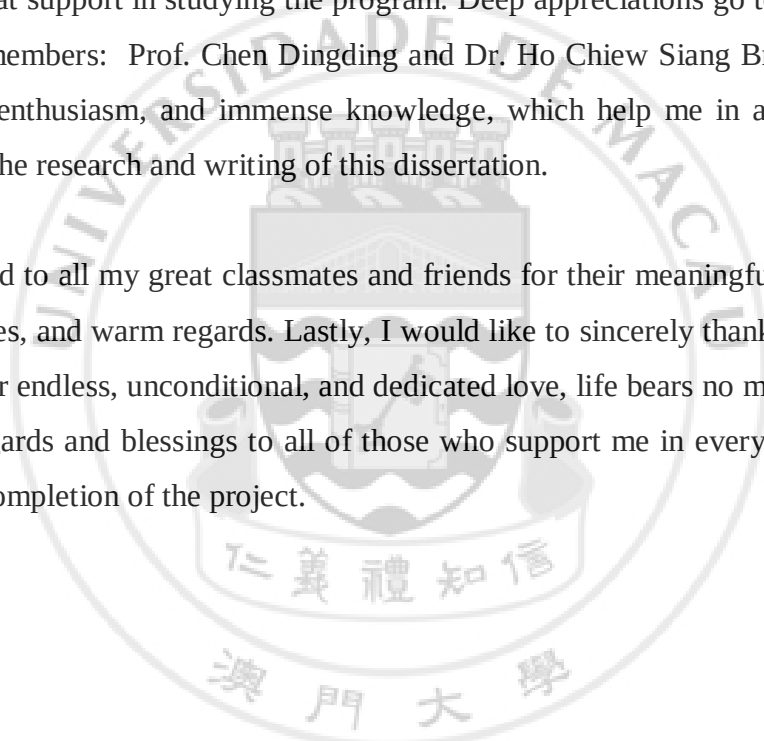
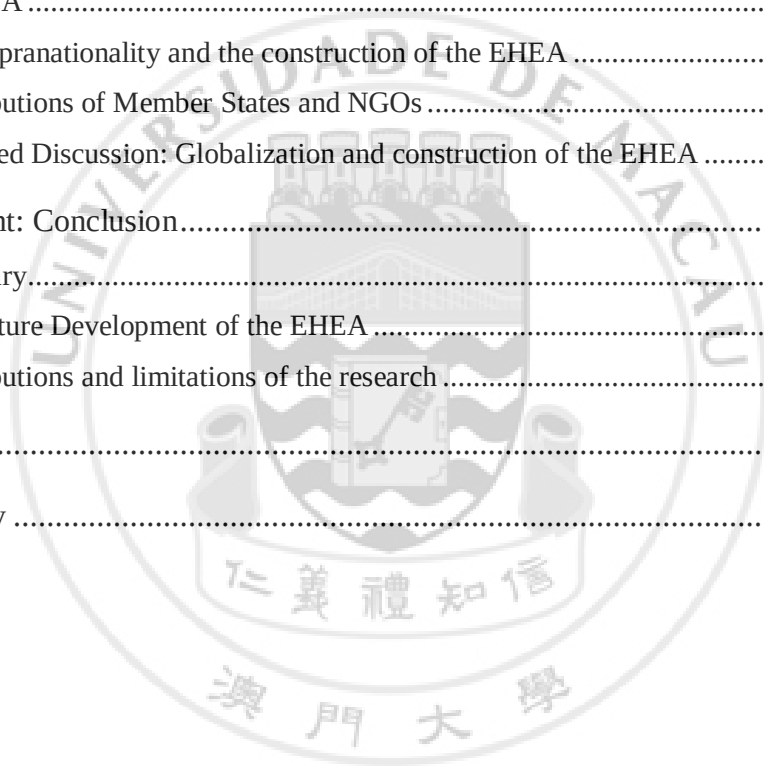


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Abstract

In recent years, the establishment of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been the most sensational event in global higher education field because it is the first regional integration of higher education in the world. This thesis will analyze the motivations behind it from the neo-functionalist approach. Process-tracing methodology is adopted to analyze the process, activities and the causal mechanism. European higher education cooperation begins with its adaptation to European integration through promoting people mobility and economic development, which are the two most important driving forces of European higher education cooperation. In order to realize people's free movement and economic development in a single market, supranational institutions have launched a lot of large-scale education programs. In 1999, Bologna Process was started in which signatories spared no efforts to create a common higher education system. Ten years later, the European Higher Education Area is successfully established due to the effective plans of the Process. It can be concluded that people's mobility and economic stimulation are the two most powerful motivations behind the construction of the EHEA. They are required during the process of European integration and have greatly advanced higher education cooperation with the spillover effect. Supranational institutions, member states and NGOs are also very important factors to push forward its development.

Key words: European integration, people mobility, economic stimulation, European Higher Education Area, neo-functionalism