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Buzzing across boundaries

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"A desk is a dangerous place to oversee the world"

John le Carré

Ackn.

Acknowledgements

To be frank, writing the acknowledgement section of this dissertation, in which you so kindly take an interest I assume, feels somewhat discomfoting. All the sudden, it overwhelmingly occurs to me that my research project, which allowed me to explore myself as well as the domain of science for just over four years, has come to an end. Apart from this manuscript, a package of mixed though valuable experiences and emotions remains.

This brings to mind an anecdote I would like to share with you before starting with the actual process of acknowledgement. At the very beginning of my PhD-research, back in June 2006, I was fortunate to co-organize and attend a PhD summer course at the VU University, Amsterdam, which was attended by an international gathering of PhD-candidates. Tom Elfring, one of my promoters, in his capacity of chairman presided over the plenary opening session by providing us an energetic speech in which he partly reflected on his own experiences as a PhD-student. Although I must shamefully admit to my incapacity for remembering all the undoubtedly wise lessons he so generously shared with us that day, one particular message did come across (albeit with some delay). “The completion of a PhD-dissertation”, Tom said, “is a demanding enterprise intellectually, *but above all*, mentally.” Lacking both experience and judgment, I denounced this remark thinking “sure, whatever.” With the benefit of hindsight, however, I now must confess: a mental challenge it was indeed.

I could not have successfully finished this project, intellectually as well as mentally, without the help and support of many.

Having a background in business administration, I found myself in a position that required me to familiarize myself with scientifically distant domains such as sociology

and economic geography. My gratitude goes out to my promoters, prof. dr. Tom Elfring, prof. dr. Peter Groenewegen, and prof. dr. Marleen Huysman, for granting me the occasion to intensively study all scientific domains relevant to this research project while maintaining a sharp focus on its conceptual boundaries and relevancy. Moreover, I would like to thank Tom, Peter, and Marleen for providing me with the opportunity to participate in this research project, for having faith in my academic capabilities, for critically guiding me along the way, and for raising the bar when necessary. I am convinced that your consistent supervision, sharp remarks, and generous advice has increased the quality of my dissertation significantly.

Some say dissertations are there to be written, not to be read. It is therefore that I would especially like to thank the members of my reading committee for allocating their valuable time and energy to reading and valuing this dissertation: prof. dr. Patrick Cohendet (HEC Montréal/ University of Strasbourg), prof. dr. Peter van den Besselaar, prof. dr. Han Gerrits (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), prof. dr. Charles Steinfield (Michigan State University).

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Marc D. Bahlmann

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