“A desk is a dangerous place to oversee the world”

John le Carré
Acknowledgements

To be frank, writing the acknowledgement section of this dissertation, in which you so kindly take an interest I assume, feels somewhat discomforting. 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
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Marc D. Bahlmann
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