I greatly appreciate the opportunity to spend four wonderful years at the Center for Language and Cognition in Groningen and to be able to work on this thesis (besides other things) among such open-minded and creative individuals. First and foremost, I want to express acknowledgements to my “daily” supervisor and co-promotor, Mark de Vries. Mark was a source of inspiration for my own work even before I came to Groningen and he remains so to this day. He was an exemplary supervisor in that he never hesitated to read my manuscripts or listen to my fresh thoughts and give quick and useful feedback, whenever possible. His interest in fundamental questions of syntactic structure building has functioned as an anchor in my gradual drift from syntax to semantics and helped me not to forget about the significance of the former. Jan Koster, my promotor, was very helpful especially during the time of writing up. He managed to stay calm and supportive even when I decided to suddenly change the topic of the thesis, less than a year before the planned submission. I feel privileged that I could get acquainted with Jan’s recent work first-hand, and learn more about his unconventional views of syntax and philosophy of language. Jan-Wouter Zwart, though without an official label related to my PhD, completes the triangle of senior institute members that were the most important to me. Not only did he provide me with valuable feedback on various issues I was interested in and supplied me with any article or book that happened to be absent from the university library, he also taught me to look at the development and competition of linguistic (and generally scientific) theories through different, less positivist eyes. Before I start the second paragraph, I would like to express my thanks to my dissertation committee—Rajesh Bhatt, Jack Hoeksema, and Anna Szabolcsi—for reading and approving of my dissertation. To Anna, I am grateful for posing a number of important and challenging questions.

Most of my time in Groningen I shared an office with Aysa Arylova and Zhenya Markovskaya. Our friendship has gone well beyond the walls of the faculty building and words can hardly express everything that I’d like to thank...
them for. Their very presence contributed to my feeling happy and content in Groningen. Our friendship grew even more after Zhenya’s daughter Sasha was born. It has been a pleasure seeing her grow up! In terms of our office life, I’m really grateful for their readiness to discuss both theory and (Russian) data. Especially appreciated is Aysa’s extensive help with the thesis, without which some parts would be much less adequate than they presently are. For two years, we were lucky to share the office with Jordi Fortuny, who took part in much what we did. My very first office mates were Janneke ter Beek and Liefke Reitsma. They introduced me to everyday faculty life and had the patience to cope with my first steps in the Dutch language. I was very close to Marlies van Bloois-Kluck and Herman Heringa, also students of Mark, whose PhD time in Groningen almost perfectly overlapped with mine. We shared a lot of experience, linguistic and non-linguistic, and I’m grateful for everything I learned from them.

The largely individualistic linguistic life in Groningen was spiced up by CLCG colloquia, for a while by our small syntax-semantics reading group, and especially by regular meetings of the syntax-semantics research group. Besides all the above-mentioned people, I’d like to use this opportunity to thank everybody else who was involved in these events and shared their ideas, particularly Ankelien Schippers, Jack Hoeksema, Bart Hollebrandse, Reineke Bok-Bennema, Brigitte Kampers-Manhe, Angeliek van Hout, Çağrı Çöltekin, Anja Lobanova, Petra Hendriks, Peter de Swart, Vincenzo Tabacco, and Seid Tvica. Special thanks go to Markus Egg, who helped me a good deal with formal semantics problems, and John Nerbonne, the director of CLCG, who is not only a versatile linguist, but also a great manager. In this context, I would also like to thank to Wyke van der Meer, the PhD coordinator, who made my life at CLCG so much easier by taking over the burden of the omnipresent administrative formality. There are many others, who made the CLCG a pleasant working and social environment, too many to name them without forgetting anybody.

Much of what I learned during my PhD stems from what I see as my two other, though temporary or occasional academic homes—University of Amsterdam and University of Massachusetts. I first contacted Maria Aloni from the ILLC in Amsterdam at the beginning of my third year. I was given a chance to contribute with a small bit to her project about the semantics of indefinites and received so much more in return. The time that Maria devoted to my own work gave me a real push in the understanding of formal semantics and through her I discovered the beauty and strength of the neo-Gricean logical approach to natural language. I would also like to thank to other members of Maria’s project, namely Angelika Port, Katrin Schulz, Ana Aguilar-Guevara, Hedde Zeijlstra, and Machet de Vos.

I spent the second semester of my third year at the University of Massachusetts. My biggest thanks definitely go to Rajesh Bhatt, whose initial role of a “sponsor” eventually grew into much more—a landlord, a teacher, a collaborator, and a friend. I learned a lot from Rajesh, both on a personal and
professional level. Through our little joint project, he taught me to look at one empirical issue from various theoretical perspectives and inspired me by his respect for inter-speaker variation in grammaticality judgements. A number of other UMass faculty members played a crucial role for me. Seth Cable is one of the best and efficient teachers I’ve had. The amount of material he managed to teach us in a single semester, while making us actively think about everything, was dazzling for me. Without him the technical parts of this thesis could hardly be written. Angelika Kratzer and Lisa Selkirk gave me the pleasure of witnessing top contemporary research in progress. I could hardly get a better introduction into the complex issues at the information structure interfaces. It is also thanks to them that I have a job now. Lyn Frazier impressed me by her quick understanding of whatever I was trying to discuss with her. In fact, she often understood it better than me and thus helped me greatly to organize my own thoughts. Many others were willing to listen to my ideas and give valuable feedback, including Kyle Johnson, Tom Roeper, Chris Potts, Gillian Rambaud (the syntax guru of that semester), Amy Rose Deal, Noah Constant, Aynat Rubinstein, and Jan Anderssen. All in all, the UMass linguistics department was an incredibly welcoming environment and besides the above-mentioned, my thanks go to everybody with whom I participated in the many academic and social events.

In the last weeks of my UMass stay, I had a chance to collaborate with Natalia Kondrashova. I met Natalia at FASL 17 at Yale, where we first had the idea to work together on modal existential wh-constructions, the topic of the present thesis. Working with Natalia was extremely valuable to me and made me believe that the most exciting findings are achieved by intensive confrontation of ideas. Our collaboration culminated in a NELS proceedings paper and, though the story has changed a lot since then, there’s a sense in which it laid the foundations for this dissertation.

Very special thanks go to Alexander Grosu—the true godfather of modal existential wh-constructions. He has been interested in my work on MECs from the very start, read enthusiastically everything that I wrote about them, and never hesitated to engage in long email discussions. He’s to be thanked for a number of important observations and generalizations on which this thesis is based. Besides Alex, there have been a number of people who read some of my previous papers or parts of the thesis manuscript. They are Ljudmila Geist, Boban Arsenijević, Jakub Dotlačil, and Anikó Lipták, and their feedback is greatly appreciated. Let me also thank Alexis Dimitriadis at this point, for his priceless help with \LaTeX.

The four years of PhD studies could never be quite as much fun as they were without the many conferences, workshops, winter, and summer schools, esp. the LOT, EGG, and ESSLLI. In many respects, they made for ideal vacation times. I would like to thank the following exceptionally inspiring teachers: Klaus Abels, Hagit Borer, Gennaro Chierchia, Jeroen van Craenenbroeck, Richard Larson, Jeff Lidz, Alice ter Meulen, Orin Percus, Colin Phillips, Tobias Scheer, Michal
Starke, Edwin Williams, and Yoad Winter; linguist friends and colleagues who
joined in discussions and emptying many a beer glass: Lobke Aelbrecht, Pranav
Anand, Svitlana Antonyuk-Yudina, Boban Arsenijević, Gemma Barberà, Mari-
jke de Belder, Natalie Boll-Avetisyan, Željko Bošković, Bert Le Bruyn, Adriana
Cardoso, Anna Chernilovskaya, Kostadin Cholakov, Karen de Clercq, Căneleanu
Constantinescu, Miloje Despić, Luca Ducceschi, Mitcho Erlewine, Urzúa Etxe-
berria, Gaetano Fiorin, Cooper Francis, Berit Gehrke, Ljudmila Geist, Anastasia
Giannakidou, Bettina Gruber, Hana Gruet-Škrábalová, Sander van der
Harst, Jutta Hartmann, Vera Hegedüs, Marko Hladnik, Hadil Karawani, Olaf
Koeneman, Marjo van Koppen, Gideon Kotzé, Tom Lentz, Qiong-Peng Autan-
aman Luo, Lanko Marušič, Louise McNally, Paula Menéndez-Benito, Krzysztof
Migdałski, Nataša Miščevič, Rick Nouwen, Marc Novel, Roumyana Pancheva,
Andreas Pankau, Denis Paperno, Craig Roberts, Catherine Rudin, Kees de
Schepper, Marieke Schouwstra, Rasmus Steinkrauss, Luka Suscich, Tarald
Taraldsen, Robert Truswell, Christina Unger, Jenneke van der Wal, Martin
Walkow, Bartosz Wiland, Arjen Zondervan, and Rok Žaucer.

Diving deeper into “history”, I’d like to thank to everybody who helpe-
d me on the way towards my PhD. Back then in Olomouc, Lída Veselovská,
Joe Emonds, Šárka Šimáčková, Petr Karlík, and Pavel Caha were the first
ones to show me the beauty of formal linguistics. Especially Pavel, who by
the way made me aware of the open positions in Groningen, continues to be a
great source of linguistic inspiration. Then there are a number of young Czech
linguist friends who I’ve known from the very beginning and who I’ve stayed
in touch until now. I’m grateful for their participation in making the Czech
linguistics a better scientific field to be in: Petr Biskup, Radek Čech, Mojmír
Dočekal, Linda Dořezí, Věra Dvořáková, Jan Chromý, Eva Lehečková, Jiří Matela,
Lucie Medová, Jonáš Podlipský, Káča Součková, Jana Šindlerová, and Markéta
Ziková. Special thanks go to Jakub Dotláčil, who was my main Czechlinguist-
companion in the Netherlands and who helped me a lot with some parts of
the thesis, by reading them carefully and giving me useful feedback. Besides
the Czech Republic, I had the opportunity to study in Germany—a semester
in Potsdam and another one in Leipzig. The teachers and colleagues there
included Joanna Blaszczak, Gisbert Fanselow, Peter Kosta, Jens Frasek, Artur
Stepanov, Tue Trinh, Gereon Müller, and Fabian Heck.

Making a leap into the future, I recently landed back in Germany, once again
in the Potsdam-Berlin area. Though I’ve come here only recently, I already got
a lot of useful feedback on the material presented in this book. Some comments
already found their way into the thesis, others will help me in its future elabora-
tion. I am grateful to Gisbert Fanselow, Luis Vicente, Beste Kamali, Malte Zim-
mermann, Joanna Blaszczak, Craig Thiersch, Lena Karvovskaya, Olga Kellert,
Barbara Stiebels, Manfred Kriška, Hans-Martin Gätner, Manfred Bierwisch,
and Kerstin Schwabe.

Writing the dissertation would be absolutely impossible without the help of
my informants. Many of them have been mentioned above, but they deserve
to be singled out in this context, as they were willing to lend their minds to often time-consuming fieldwork. *Basque:* Urtzi Etxeberria *Bulgarian:* Kostadin Cholakov, Diana Dimitrova, Milka Dimitrova, Roumyana Pancheva; *Catalan:* Jordi Fortuny; *Czech:* Eva Magnusková, Jakub Dotlačil; *English:* Gisi Cannizzaro, Charlotte Koster; *French:* Guillaume Thomas; *Greek:* Ourania Sinopoulou (special thanks); *Hebrew:* Aynat Rubinstein; *Hungarian:* Anikó Lipták (special thanks); Ilidi Berzlánovich, Anna Szabócsi; *Italian:* Ivano Caponigro (special thanks); Vincenzo Tabacco; *Latvian:* Andris Jankevics; *Polish:* Krzysztof Migdalski; *Portuguese:* Adriana Cardoso (special thanks); *Romanian:* Alexandru Grosu (special thanks), Camelia Constantinescu; *Russian:* Aysa Arylova, Zhenya Markovskaya, Natalia Kondrashova, Lena Karovskaya (special thanks to all); *Serbo-Croatian:* Jelena Prokić, Boban Arsenijević, Miloje Despić; *Slovenian:* Marko Hladnik; *Spanish:* Cintia Widmann (special thanks), Luis Vicente, Paula Menéndez-Benito; *Ukrainian:* Alex Mikhnenko.

These acknowledgements would be incomplete if I didn’t mention the people that were the closest to my heart during my Groningen time. Linda Gerlach was my girlfriend in the first year and half and remains my good friend until today. Thanks to her, I maintained my German connections, got to see Tanzania, and found out what it is like to master a German idiolect, in particular “lindish”. Being a linguist herself, we also had a lot of fun discussing language and linguistics. I lived in one house with Jorge Tendeiro, Rei Monden Tendeiro, and Tejas Gandhi. We became very good friends and shared all the good, bad, childish, disgusting, and hilarious, the hidden, and the obvious. Besides Aysa and Zhenya, the three are part of the definition of my Groningen. I’m very happy to have met Rink Hoekstra and Jana Stankat. Together with Jorge and Rei, we regularly cooked dinner and watched a movie. I will always miss our eclectic and funny discussions, spiced up by constant English-Dutch-German code-switching. Gisi Cannizzaro was my closest friend from the circle of linguists. We would often go out, have beers, and discuss life. What a pity that I always started falling asleep around two. Eva Magnusková, my closest Czech friend in Groningen, shared my passion for long walks and bike-rides around Groningen. These gave us the opportunity for endless discussions about architecture, future, and Czech and Dutch nature and culture. Jirka Neděla visited Groningen only for a semester. Yet, I really enjoyed the moments we spent together, whether we were making music or going for trips around Groningen. I became a big fan of his art and now I’m really honored to have his picture on the cover of this book. Other good friends that I would like to mention are Tim Van de Cruys, Ilidi Berzlánovich, Berfu Unal, Ebru Dogan, Alejandra Wah, and Petro Kuzyk. Thank you all for being there!

My very last words go to the people thanks to whom I can still call the Czech Republic my home. From my friends, these are mainly Nany (Zdeněk Zálešák), Pavla Zálešáková, Světlana Volfáková, Radek Klech, Jendra Proksa, and Dean Catchpole. Despite the distance and my relatively rare visits, I greatly enjoy meeting them and sharing the latest news. I consider myself very lucky
to have such a great family as I do. Most of my visits home were centered around family-related events—celebrations, anniversaries, etc. My parents—Věra and Vladimír, my brother Petr, as well as other family members have always been incredibly supportive of whatever I decided to do. It’s been a privilege to have this freedom, coupled with such a strong feeling of security. This book is dedicated to them.