## **Acknowledgments**

I'd like to express gratitude to my advisor Onno Oncken for supporting my scientific project and the application to the Studienstiftung, and for having me as a guest in his department at the GFZ Potsdam. He helped me on many occasions with inspiring and insightful discussion and ideas, but also gave me all the freedom I could imagine to follow my ideas and plans towards the final shape of my dissertation.

This project would not have been possible without the funding of the "Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes". In addition to the PhD grant, they supported my research visit to the Tectonophysics Laboratory, University of Toronto. CSAG and the GFZ are hereby thanked for financing the attendance of several international conferences and a field-trip to the Andes.

All colleagues from the Geodynamics section 3.1 at the GFZ are thanked for good times together, discussing geoscience and other important things. Günter Tauscher definitely builds the nicest analogue boxes.

My fellow PhD students certainly understood best what it means to do a doctorate with all ups and downs, including the quest to find the right approach and the constant need for self-motivation: Maike Buddensiek, who has become a close friend; Uli Micksch and Antje Kellner, with whom I shared the headquarters of tea consumption, invention of physical units, and certainly the most fun; and Tina Lohr and Raik Bachmann. Raik shared the experience of being a scholarship holder, so we could discuss all relevant matters.

Uli helped greatly by always finding the right computing tools for data transformation and preparation etc.

I am very grateful to David Boutelier and Christoph Schrank (of course not only for good times at Second Cup) and Sandy Cruden that I could be part of a top-of-the line analogue team. Thanks to you guys I had a wonderful and inspiring time in Toronto - it was here that I regained my motivation for idealistic science!

Thanks to Martina Böhme, who did an internship with me right at the beginning of my PhD. This made me think about everything especially careful. She was a great help, not only with checking my geostatistics and doing great plots (plots of which some are used and acknowledged in Chapter 5), but also with the analogue experiments and the protocols and figures. Best of all, she became a good friend.

I am thankful to Alan Levander who (had to) become enthusiastic about my data, had some good ideas to analyze them, and wrote the Matlab codes to extract the right details.

I would not be where I am now without the support of my family and friends, who helped to make the best out of my PhD time, constantly attented to my motivation level, and accepted my frequent stays abroad. My parents always incited my curiosity for science and sustained my work.

And hard to imagine what would have become of this thesis – "let alone life" – without Steffen.