Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Priv. Doz. Dr. Günter Asch for his support during my PhD work at the GFZ Potsdam. Without his amazing experience, the fieldwork would never have been carried out successfully. In particular, I want to thank him for his support during the hard times and also for the long discussions with Luigi at the library in Salta during the good times. To Prof. Dr. Rainer Kind my co-supervisor, I wish to thank him for encouraging the present thesis and providing help when I most needed it.

My gratitude also goes to Prof. Dr. Frank Schilling, Prof. Dr Onno Oncken, Dr. Peter Wigger and Geophysicist Carsten Dinske for integrating the commission. I also wish to remember Prof. Dr. Peter Giese (+RIP) as the initiator of the SFB-267 "Deformation Processes in the Andes" project, and the SFB-267 group for their support since my first steps in the Andes back in 1996.

I also thank Dr. Ivan Koulakov, who provided his tomography software and taught me how to get the best out of it. With his help, knowledge and suggestions, this work was improved significantly. He was very patient with my many questions and even had time for me when he was back in Siberia. He is also a great artist. The seismic software used was SHM (Seismic Handler Motif) from Klaus Stammmler (Seismological Observatory Gräfenberg - SZGRF).

A very special thanks goes to my friend and colleague Dr. Xiahoui Yuan for his continuous help and support. Working with him was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Dr. Yuan is an inspiring scientist that was available whenever I had problems, always giving the right advice or just making things look easier. Without his help and knowledge this work could have never been done. I also thank his wife Dr. Xuequing Li for her help.

I wish to thank Dr. Ingo Wölbern who kindly provided the receiver function data obtained from our project. To Dr. Winfried Hanka from Geofon (GFZ) for data management and support; Dr. Karl Heinz Jäckel, Dr. Kurt Wylegalla and Ing. Mike Höning for helping with the instruments. To the GIPP (Gerätepool at GFZ) for providing the instruments and to Dr. Jens Bribach. To Liane Tröger for taking good care of everything.

To Dr. Friedrich Lucassen, Dr. Bob Trumbull, Dr. Kevin Fleming and A. Manzanares who carefully read the first versions of this manuscript and helped to improve the quality of the final version. Their patience, critical comments and time must also be acknowledged. To Prof. Dr. Ron Hackney for help with the residual gravity interpretation and comments on the data.

Many institutions have played a great part in the deployment of instruments in the field and the periodic visits to the stations, namely the Universidad Catolica del Norte, Antofagasta (Chile), SERGEMIN, La Paz (Bolivia) and Instituto Geonorte from the Universidad Nacional de Salta (Argentina). I especially would like to thank the following people in Chile: Dr. Hans Wilke, Juan Oliva and J.L. Cerda; in Bolivia: Dr. Sohrab Tawackoli and Ing. Ivar Alcozer and in Argentina: Prof. Dr. Jose Viramonte, Pablo Maciel, Cesar Abraham, Pablo Dib Ashur, Fede, Mauri and Jose L. Heit.

Special thanks also goes to Forough Sodoudi, Amerika Manzanares and Mirjam Bohm, Peter Pilz, Jörn Kummerow, Barbara Heuer, Joachim Saul, X. Yuan and Xuequing Li for the lovely atmosphere at work and nice times shared among the glasses of wine and empanadas during the weekends.

To my dear mother Elba and to my beloved father Jose who died last year……I miss you dad. This thesis is dedicated to my wife Simone for all her love and support.