

Acknowledgements

“If you want to travel fast, travel alone; if you want to travel far, travel with others.”
(Anonymous proverb, most probably of African origin)

In 2006, during an internship with the *Friedrich Ebert Foundation* in Mali, I became aware of this proverb for the first time. Since then, it has time and again come to my mind in various situations of my life – especially in view of the present dissertation.

Yes, this dissertation has a clearly named sole author: me, Richard Bösch. Though, while working on the project for several years, I have somewhat realised that this work has many supporters, mentors, and sponsors without whom writing this dissertation would not have been possible. From the bottom of my heart, I am deeply grateful for the help, the constructive and critical backing, and the encouragement I experienced from many generous people in my environment.

I am especially grateful to my supervisor *Christoph Weller* who supported this project from its very beginning to completion; constructively challenged my thinking about theory and empirical conflict research; provided invaluable feedback that helped me find my perspective and consolidate my project; and supported me in funding my work within the framework of a PhD scholarship. I particularly appreciate that he showed immense confidence in my ability to develop and finalise my dissertation and had great patience while going this way with me. I also wish to thank my dear former colleagues at the University of Augsburg, *Julika Bake, Andreas Bock, Melanie Hartmann, Bernhard Ludwig, Lena von Naso, Pia Popal, Ulrich Roos, Charlotte Rungius and Michaela Zöhrer*, and the participants of the PhD and Master colloquium organised by the Chair of Peace and Conflict Studies. It was a great academic pleasure and a wonderful personal experience to learn and work in this inspiring environment.

I am also indebted to *Mathias Albert*, who got involved with my work as second supervisor with keen interest and showed great patience with the development of my project. As we discussed my work during personal meetings and on the occasion of scientific conferences, he gave crucial feedback which helped me to continuously redefine the guidelines of my proceedings. Of course, his own research in the field encouraged me to follow up on a Luhmannian systems theory perspective on conflict analysis.

This project could not have been completed without the financial and ideational support of the *Cusanuswerk*. I particularly appreciate that the PhD scholarship not only gave me the opportunity to become an independent researcher backed up by a generous funding and a supportive organisation but also offered me the chance to meet and exchange with a huge number of fellows and get inspired by diverse and progressive minds.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the board of the international catholic peace movement *pax christi*, *Reinhold Gieringer*, *Wiltrud Rösch-Metzler*, *Wolfgang Gramer*, my assistant *Sabine Seebacher*, and the head of the department “Church and Society” in the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, *Joachim Drumm*. As my employers and colleagues, they complaisantly encouraged me to continue my academic career and provided me open space to finalise my dissertation within the framework of special leaves for research purposes.

Also, I am especially grateful to my good old university friends, *Benjamin Bräuer*, *Philipp Brugger* and *Jonas Gasthauer*. As members of the self-declared “Proletarian Institute”, they were and still are an important source of my academic curiosity, particularly concerning our special interest in metatheoretical issues in social sciences and schools of thought in International Relations. I will never forget our intense debates for nights on end on the streets of Tübingen! As far as my university years in Tübingen are concerned, I am also indebted to *Thomas Nielebock*. Throughout my studies, he was the right person at the right time, as specialist for IR theories, as a university teacher with great methodical diversity and as ‘a mentor of good will’.

Lastly, and most importantly, my deepest gratitude goes to my family. Throughout my studies and in the course of writing this dissertation, my parents, *Hildegard and Paul Bösch*, my sisters and brother, *Lydia, Christine and Günther*, have always been supportive and loyal and encouraged their fourth child and ‘little brother’ to pursue his plans. The most important contribution to the successful completion of this project comes from *Kerstin Bösch*. I am eternally grateful for my wife being a major moral support during the ups and downs while working on this dissertation. Without her love, encouragement, belief, motivation, and relief, I would never have been able to bring my work to an end. Only together with Kerstin and our children, *Salomé and Leonard*, I could stand the adventure of writing this dissertation. *Meine Lieblingsmenschen, das ist für euch!*