Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to thank the many people who made this thesis possible. It is difficult to overstate my gratitude to my PhD supervisor, Florian Wagener for his enthusiasm, inspiration, and excellent supervision during the four years of my PhD. Throughout my thesis-writing period, he provided sound advice, good teaching, and lots of great ideas. I would have been lost without him. I would also like to thank my promotor Cars Hommes for his support and the always positive-attitude.

For this dissertation I would like to thank my reading committee members: Henk Broer, Gustav Feichtinger, Ale Jan Homburg, Cees Diks, and Dieter Grass for their time and interest in reading this manuscript. I also thank the Tinbergen Institute and the University of Amsterdam for their generous financial support.

I am also grateful to the many people who taught me mathematics: my MRI master program teachers at Utrecht University, especially Brenny van Groesen, Stephan van Gils, and Arjen Doelman; my graduate teachers at Kerman University, especially my master thesis advisor Mohammad Reza Molaei; and all of my undergraduate teachers at Iran University of Science and Technology.
I am indebted to my many colleagues at CeNDEF for providing a stimulating and fun environment in which to learn and grow. Thanks to Cees Diks, Jan Tuinstra, Maurice Koster, Marius Ochea, Pim Heijnen, Michael Anufriev, Domenico Massaro, and Te Bao. I am extremely grateful to Tatyana Kisleva who was my classmate in Utrecht and my officemate at CeNDEF and has been my best friend in Holland. Thanks to Tatyana for all the emotional support, camaraderie, and caring she provided.

Outside CeNDEF my time in Amsterdam was made enjoyable in a large part due to the many friends that became a part of my life. I am especially grateful for time spent with Sara Ramezani, Vahid Hashemi, Arash Kamali, Nabi Chegini, Kamelia Sadjadi, Arash Salek, Mahdi Jaghoori, Danial Keshani, Marius Ochea, and Adina Luncan.

Lastly, I would like to thank my extended family for all their love and encouragement. And most of all for my loving, supportive, encouraging, and patient wife Andisheh whose faithful support during the final stages of this PhD is so appreciated, and our lovely sons Ilia and Aria. Thank you.

Saeed M Moghayer,
The Hague, December 2011