Immobilisation of Ru-based metathesis catalysts and related aspects of olefin metathesis
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Citation for published version (APA):
Acknowledgements / Dankwoord / Podziękowania

It is quite some years ago that I came for the first time to Amsterdam to apply for a Ph.D. position in the group of prof. van Leeuwen and dr. Mol. After twenty-four hour journey by bus (those were the dark times with no low-cost flights to/from Warsaw) I was picked up by Włodek Buchowicz and brought to the university. With my then scarce English there was not too much talking with my future bosses Piet and Hans and the people I met on that day. After eleven-hour stay in Amsterdam I was heading back to Warsaw wondering, during the night in the bus, if I have made a good impression. Luckily, the learned-by-heart piece in English over my chemical achievements during my master’s thesis and my personal charms (beard?!?) were sufficient. Now, my thesis is finally ready after many years of fighting with the reactions that did not work or led to nasty brown-black residues, incorrect measurements and so on, but also with my own shortcomings. This book is lying now in front of you all who usually start the reading of a thesis from the very end and that is acknowledgements.

Consequently, first I want to thank Piet van Leeuwen - my ‘remote’, sitting up there on the ninth floor, promoter for all helpful remarks and advice and for corrections to this thesis. Have fun in warm and sunny Tarragona! – quite a change from the chilly and rainy Holland. Next, I want to thank Hans Mol, my co-promoter, for the daily, except the ‘holy’ Wednesdays, priceless guidance and for all the fun in front of your computer solving your almost daily problems with weird attachments. Hopefully, your health problems will soon be over (veel sterke daarmee) and you can than fully enjoy of the freedom on your retirement. All the work on the lab would not be possible without the patient and cheerful technical help of Ron Barendregt who mended all the things that ‘just’ stopped working mainly because I had done something wrong. I hope that once upon a time I will visit all the far far away countries you have travelled to in the last years and of which you showed me the great photos. Bedankt, Ron, voor dat alles en met de beste wensen.

The small metathesis group of Hans Mol, residing in a small but neat lab on the seventh floor, was formed in the last years by Ron as part-time technician, me as a Ph.D. student and a post-doc. In my time in this lab four post-docs shared the same sitting room and the lab with me. First, there was already Włodzimierz (Włodek) Buchowicz who, asked by Hans, made the Polish connection to prof. Danuta Buza at Warsaw University of Technology (dziękuję pani profesor za pamięć ponad sześć lat temu) so I got to know about the position in Amsterdam. I thank you, Włodek, for getting me more familiar in the field of organometallic chemistry and catalysis, and also for the intro to the Dutch way of life.

Then came Florent. Though, at first glance, he looked a bit strange, the wise words of Włodek that ‘His look doesn’t work in the lab but his head and hands’ reassured me. In the beginning Florent was indeed a nice guy, but soon it became a year of surprises: ‘Where is Florent?’ ‘There where the smoke is coming from!’ ‘What is he doing?!’ ‘Extinguishing the blaze of boiling oil on a hot plate using paper towels.’ ‘How did it happen?’ ‘While trying to cool down the boiling oil-bath with liquid nitrogen’ ‘Is he high of @#$%&*? Or his brains
down of sugar shortage in his veins?’ Those were almost daily questions of Hans, Ron and myself. After one year he disappeared for good, not only from our own eyes but also of his family who tried to reach him for several months after he left the lab. Are you still coming to get the stuff you left below the office desk? Give us a sign of life! Take care!

Then I spent two years with Maarten Dinger. His first name sounds pretty much Dutch and actually his roots are Dutch, but he came to us from New Zealand via the United States. I have had really great lesson in conversational English for those two years. You are direct in your uncompromising view of the world, having always something to say about everything. I tried to keep up the pace despite troubles expressing my thoughts in English on some subjects. That’s why I thank you for polishing my Polish English. It is still not perfect as you could witness while proof-reading the whole manuscript of this thesis within ten days. Great thanks for making this thesis more readable. I hope to pay you a visit in New Zealand one day (amazing, Ron wasn’t down there yet!) and that I can see one of you great rockets flying high in the blue sky.

And finally, in the last months of my stay at UvA I enjoyed the company of Donatella Banti. Ti ringrazio per l’incoraggiamento in quell’ultimi mesi del mio contratto e poi lavorando qualche volta il sabato e domenica all’università. In bocca al lupo a te!

I thank both Włodek and Maarten for the scientific cooperation that resulted in two chapters of this thesis and two publications, even though we worked most of the time on different subjects. One chapter and paper is a result of the Russian connection: prof. Natalia Bespalova and Olga Shuvalova form Moscow, who I thank. Olga, I hope you enjoyed your three months stay in Amsterdam, even though it started scary with your bus being hours late and you stranded alone in the middle of the night at Amstel Station. I wish you success with the defence of your own thesis. I thank also prof. Yuri N. Bubnov for the support in this work.

I am also in debt to Floris Rutjes for his scientific help in the initial steps of my stay in Amsterdam and, also to Hans Scheeren, for offering me the post-doc position in your group in Nijmegen. This allowed me to stay in the Netherlands and finish writing my thesis in the weekends. I must admit, the seven-day working week was taking its toll and I was not always excelling in Nijmegen.

I made use of several facilities at our own and other universities and several persons assisted me. I thank Jan Meine Ernsting and Jan Geenevasen for help with NMR machines, especially with the nano-probe, Han Peeters for swift measuring of piles of MS spectra, Jaap Elgersma (what went wrong with AES?) and Leo Huizinga for AAS measurements. EXAFS measurements were made possible by people from Utrecht University: Jeroen van Bokhoven (especially the tricky calculations) and Moniek Tromp. Those days at the synchrotron in Hamburg were the longest six days and nights in my life (aha, Maarten, thanks for being my buddy down there, too). The determinations of several crystallographic structures presented in my thesis were done by Martin Lutz, Jan Fraanje and Rene de Gelder who I kindly thank.

The placing of our lab in the corner of the seventh floor far from the whole Homogeneous Catalysis group, made me a kind of an outcast. I was showing my face up there
by you to enjoy the birthday cakes and notoriously ‘stealing’ some chemicals or dry solvents from your lab. I had only one long-standing cooperation with the dendrimer masters of Homkat: Joost Reek and Riek van Heerbeek. Unfortunately, I was not able to bring to the happy end the combination of dendrimer wedges, very oxygen sensitive alkyl phosphines and ruthenium carbenes. The interaction with other members of the Homkat group was mainly on a social level. To mention first, the members of our weekly indoor soccer encounters that after some time resulted in the formation of our fabulous team, initially named Fortuna Homkat, but later given a more appropriate name - Eendracht Droevig (in free translation for non-Dutch speakers: Pathetic United). We knew three seasons of some ups and many downs in the university amateur competition. The permanent members of this great team were: Richard van Haaren, Ed Ebrahimi, Vincent Slagt, Riek van Heerbeek, Jitte Flapper, Cedric Dieleman, Martin Zuideveld and me in the role of a goalscorer that from time to time I was able to fulfil (check out the great piece of history of Dutch soccer at www.van-haaren.org). Our team got strengthened by some short-term players: Gino van Strijdonck (the real professional), Marc Röder, Peter Keeven, Mark van Haaren (family of Richard), Mark Kuil, Guido Batema, Fabrizio Ribaudo, and some more people whose names I’m not sure of. In our weekly games most of the boys from our chemistry lab took part: Włodek Buchowicz, Bert Swennenhuis, Maarten Boele, Sirik Deerenberg (and his sporty wife), Eric Zuidema, Rafael Sablong, Mathieu Sauthier, Josep (for short time), the organic girl and boys: Alessia Amore, Peter Botman and occasionally a couple of more people. I thank you all for happy (and, less, for sad) moments and for keeping me in shape. From time to time we enjoyed also the cheers of the non-football-crazy people of our lab: Paul Kamer (thanks for chemical suggestions), Peter Dirkes, Soesila Ganeshie, Eric Oosterom, Christian Müller, Silvana Silva, Bert Sandee, Karina Almeida (chats by long NMR experiments), Angelica Marson, Kevita Ramkisoensing, Eric Zuidema, Mary McCarthy, Urlike Nettekoven, Raymond Bronger, Daniëlle Petra, Saskia van der Slot, Zoraida Freixa, Ruifang Chen, Teresa Monzón Merchán, Yannick Guari, Elsbeth Goudriaan, Lars van der Veen, Debby de Groot, students and people whose names I might have forgotten (sorry for that). Thank you all for your companionship in and outside the lab.

But sitting on the seventh floor had not only bad sides – I got to know well the residents of this floor, namely: Jeroen Diederen, Wim Hoogervorst, Sander Gaemers, Sander Kluwer, Joris van Slageren, Alberto di Fabio, Giorgio Marinoni, Edward Plummer, Erica Nollen, Anthony d’Aleo, Arianna Benetti and Mirco, Anouk Dierksen, David Domínguez, Alexandre Holuique, Başak Kaletas-Kukrer, Boke de Pater, Sun Chaode, Dorette Tromp (chemical storage problems), Tehila Koblenz, Frank Vergeer, Hans-Werner Frühaufl, Jeroen Sprengers, Ron Jukes, Jeroen de Pater, Steve Welter, Marcel Duin, Marcel van Engelen, Martijn van Laren, Mara Staffilani, Taasje Mahabiersing, František Hartl, Kees Elsevier, Luisa de Cola, René Williams, Eva Dova (Dutch course mate) and those whose names I might have overlooked. Thank you for nice Dagjes Uit, chats at the coffee table and everything else.
I thank also the secretaries: Loes Swaning, Ineke Baas and Petra Hagen for all kind of favours, as well as the library personnel: Ankie Koeberg, Marijke Duyvendak, Rickey Tax, and Stephen Vanderbijlarda. Thanks also to Ron Groenestein from the glassblower facility (extra swift reparation orders), Gerard Schoemaker for technical help on the 9th floor, Kees Bergfeld from the storage on the same floor.

All colleagues from Nijmegen, especially the Scheeren ‘koffie tafel’ people: Hans Scheeren, Renè Aben, Sjors Kuster, Leon van Berkom, Stijn Gremmen, Daniel Blanco Ania, the Syntarga people – Vincent de Groot and Patrick Beusker and your stagiaires (success met jullie bedrijf) and the students, thanks for continuously asking me the same question: “Wanneer is je boekje af?” that I always answered with “Binnenkort”. That was very encouraging and helped me a lot in finishing so I would not have to answer this question ever again!

Chęć też podziękować również wszystkim moim polskojęzycznym przyjaciołom i znajomym z Amsterdamu i okolic, w szczególności Ewie i Thadeo z Timo i Lukasem, Natalii i Swenowi, Grzegorzowi i Anecie, Edycie i Antoine z Alexem, Dorocie i Bernardowi z Sarą za chwile odprężenia, zabawy i rozrywki. Przyjaciołom oraz znajomym z Polski, zwłaszcza Beacie i Przemkowi z dziećmi oraz Marcie i Tomaszowi z dziećmi, dziękuję za wakacyjne spotkania i podróże. Życzę Wam wszystkim pomyślności i spełnienia Waszych marzeń.

Moi kochanym rodzincom, Irene i Ryszardowi, serdeczne podziękowania za wszystko. To, że ta praca doktorska powstała było możliwe dzięki Waszemu wyśiłkowi wychowawczemu i wsparciu przez ponad dwadzieścia lat, a zwłaszcza przez te ostatnie lata na obczyźnie. W końcu osiągnąłem cel mojego pobytu w Holandii w postaci niniejszej książki, którą Wam dedykuję. Mojemu bratu Pawłowi życzę szybkiego ukończenia studiów, co w połączeniu z pracą zawodową od rana do wieczora nie jest łatwe. Sorki za ciężkie katusze podczas moich wakacji w Polsce, kiedy to pozbawiam Ciebie samochodu.

Kochana Izabelo, Ty byłaś moją ostoją i opoką podczas mojego doktoratu. Wyjazd do Holandii wymagał od Ciebie poświęcenia kariery zawodowej w Polsce i zaczął się od niepewnych dni tuż po naszym przyjeździe do Amsterdamu i miesięcznej tułacze po ulicach w poszukiwaniu mieszkania. Potem nastąpiło wiele miesięcy rozłajk, kiedy to holenderskie władze imigracyjne nie chciały Ci przyznać wizy. W końcu razem, Ty podarowałaś mi dwójkę wspaniałych dzieci: Natalię i Michała, przejmując jak dotąd praktycznie całkowicie obowiązki obojga rodziców, podczas gdy ja zmagalem się w soboty i niedziele z wykańczaniem doktoratu, a i w dni powszednie byłem gościem w domu, jeżdżąc do pracy prawie cztery godziny dzienne między Diemen a Nijmegen. Teraz to sobie odbijamy! Kochanie, dziękuję za to wszystko, dedykując również Tobie tę książkę, gdyż i Ty pośrednio jesteś jej współautorem. Wszelkie dotychczasowe wyrzeczenia postaram się odpłacić moją miłością do Ciebie. Ti voglio tanto bene.

Piotr,

Diemen, 2004-10-01.