Acknowledgments

Four years (it is in the nature of an engineer to approximate the reality) have passed. I remember exactly the day of the interview for this PhD position. In particular, I remember exactly how I felt that morning and that evening. In the morning, while walking to the Potentiaal building of TU/e before giving my presentation, I confess I was a bit stressed. I had not slept much the night before because I still had to prepare the presentation and practice it "at least once". However, I was reinsured by wearing the new "lucky charm shirt" my mother offered me for the special occasion. While walking I was also fascinated by the combination of the blue and sunny sky on top of my head, the icy cold wind surely more powerful than the coffee I had had for breakfast, and a cracking white snow under my shoes. Everything looked very beautiful and I really thought that I could be happy in that place. Everything during the interview went smoothly. The same day, in the late afternoon, I took the airplane to go back to Genova where I was living. At the airport, I discovered that the "lucky charm shirt" still had attached the security tag. That small piece of plastic made my life quite difficult that afternoon, but I managed to fly back without ripping the shirt. In the evening, while driving on the highway from the airport to my house, an unlucky deer stepped in front of me causing a car accident from which, miraculously, I walked away without a scratch. Today I still don't know whether they were all signs given to me to take the decision to go and stay in the Netherlands in case of a positive feedback, but this is how my adventure started and it is the first of many stories that I have locked in the deepest part of my heart and my mind. Our lives are made of stories and we will be remembered mostly because someone will continue telling them. Here I would like to acknowledge the people that made the stories related to the years of my PhD an incredible experience and who helped me to grow, think, invent, share, smile, and love.

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