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Acknowledgements

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The real trouble comes now. Expressing, in printed words, my gratitude and feelings towards so many people, so many friends who were not directly related to my research and who are now part of my soul is "like dancing about architecture". I am going to do something unusual, which is sparing any name from now on. To all my friends, I know you are now reading this with a smile in your face. My justification—not my excuse—is the fear of forgetting someone important; besides, you know who you are.

I want to start with the wonderful people I have met working next to me, mainly, but not only, in the WZI and the ITF buildings. After hours in the darkness of the lab, and a labyrinth of data and equations, it has been very important to me looking up and finding always someone I could vent on, talk to, listen... someone with whom I could have a break, or a beer, or a laugh... The life of a young scientist implies movement, and master and PhD students, and post-docs have come in and out of Amsterdam during my own temporary period there, from all places around the Globe. I have met some really warm people, kind, funny, some of the smartest people I could ever think of. I will never forget some of them, and I want to thank them for their friendship and their personality—in so many cases, out of what is socially expected. I have shared many hours with many of you; in the building, sharing a coffee, so many evenings in the Kriterion, discussions, parties... This text is becoming unintelligible, as it is the nature of my acknowledgements to so many colleagues who became friends. Thank you again for insisting in going to a bar, for smoking in the corner of the courtyard, for becoming my confidants, for keeping me sane and for going insane together.

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Notes