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Acknowledgments

For a few years now, I have been practicing the art of surfing. In thinking about my time as a Ph.D. student, it struck me that there is an interesting parallel between pursuing a Ph.D. and surfing. In fact, one can view the process of writing a Ph.D. thesis as surfing in the "ocean of ideas". In both cases, catching a wave requires balance, patience, the ability to be at the right place at the right time, technique and a bit of luck. Waves come in many different forms. Some look good from a distance, but prove useless when they get up close to you. Some are great, but impossible to deal with. Unfortunately, you often realize this too late due to a lack of experience. Occasionally, somebody else is catching a good wave right in front of you. Moreover, once you are on a promising wave, you must go from the bottom to the top and back down again in order to have a successful ride. Finally, you need to have the skills and courage to change direction along the way whenever the circumstances require it. During my time as a Ph.D. student, I have had plenty of rides, both successful and less successful, which culminated in this Ph.D. thesis.

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Iwan Bos, Maastricht, September 20, 2009.