Preface

In 2006, I was selected as one of the first candidates for the joint double degree program which was established by the research institute and graduate school SOM of the University of Groningen in the Netherlands and the graduate university of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in China. During the five years that followed, I was very lucky to have many people supporting and helping me to write this thesis and finish this program. In this preface, I would like to take the opportunity to mention and thank the people who supported me in different ways during my research project.

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