The process of writing a PhD thesis is not merely an engagement with scientific analysis, but rather it calls for multiple skills in order to achieve the goal. One of the most critical elements is how to sustain one’s spirit. Like a rollercoaster, the writer’s motivation will sometimes rise and sometimes fall. I have recognized this dynamic since I first wrote the proposal. However, managing the motivation in real life is not as easy as I imagined.

Writing a thesis is also related to the strategy of managing time and how one works. Initially, my strategy was somehow influenced by my past experience and knowledge. I took my masters degree in Seoul, South Korea, a country that is well known for its culture of hard work. Koreans work very hard, and it was wired into me that hard work is a prerequisite for success.

In the Netherlands, on the other hand, it is quite the opposite. Relatively, people work less. But, surprisingly, in spite of that, they get optimal results. It led me to assume that people here work in more effective and efficient ways. Furthermore, it inspired me to adopt their work culture.

In reality, both experiments were not such an easy task for me. I found that adopting a new way of working was linked to a learning process. However, working more effectively and efficiently is much more difficult than just working hard.

The social environment in which one lives also influences the process of writing a PhD dissertation. I was fortunate to have lived in Groningen when writing my thesis. I much enjoy the city and its overall ambience. (Little wonder that according to the European Commission’s survey in 2007, people in Groningen are the happiest in Europe with their city!) I was also fortunate to have been surrounded by people who inspired me to find the right track.

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Finally, above all, I would like to say “Alhamdulillah” (Praise to God) that I have completed this dissertation. I hope that this work will benefit others, even if it is only a little.

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Mustajab