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Five years ago, I stepped out of the train at Groningen Noord station in a late autumn night and my feelings to the coming doctoral career was like the way I tried to find my apartment from the station: there was some light meters ahead but it came with a longer way of darkness. On the other hand, I was relieved because my wife (girlfriend back then) was there and showed me the way, just like few lights shining out of the darkness, dim but comforting. Now, after five years, it is coming to an end. It was not an easy time but every single minute was worth it and I am really happy about it. What makes me happier is that we welcomed a new member to our little family during that time, my lovely daughter Ruby. She is one of the biggest support to me finishing my PhD study. Apart from that, there are many people I would like to thank for their support. Without the help from them, I could not finish my PhD. I would like to gratefully acknowledge those who have contributed to this thesis and supported me during my PhD study.

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