Bibliography


List of Publications


∗joint first authors
Acknowledgements

I can say with absolute certainty that the last four years took up an entire chapter of my life story. It was not just about writing this thesis but also about the journey of both scientific and self-discovery. Valuable lessons were learned in a fraction of a lifetime and the discovery of my own passion has never been made more clear. As has always been my nature, looking back makes me wish I could have done better. But just like everything else in life, this part of the journey has to end too, and so in the words of Dr. Seuss, I look forward with optimism:

“Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.”

This thesis, and more importantly the lessons I will carry with me for the rest of my life would not have been made possible without the help and support of my friends, colleagues, and family.

Thank you Fred for the great opportunity to work in your group. Even from the very start when I was then an awkward visitor, your management style encouraged me to become an independent researcher and to freely engage in spontaneous discussions with the group. It took time to adjust into this new environment before I finally managed to convince myself that I can work with you. You pushed me beyond my comfort zone by sending me to schools, meetings, and conferences. Not only did I learn a lot from them but they also helped me learn more about myself. When things got too rough, you were there ready to help and I cannot thank you enough. Having been a passive onlooker on most of our group lunch conversations, I will always remember the funny anecdotes about your friends and colleagues, your political views, that vinyl music has a distinct and incomparable quality, and that the original radio series of “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy” is always the best version.

Mel, Gerrit, and Dia, thank you for arranging my pre-PhD visits at the VU and to Fred’s group. I will always look back with sincere gratitude to all your support. Thanks Mel for letting me use your bike that I didn’t have to buy my own. Thank you Marja for helping me with the countless forms to be filled and the phone calls to be made to live in the Netherlands and work at the VU.

Abhi, the countless cups (or should I say liters?) of machine coffee we downed to fuel our discussions was mind-boggling, so much so that my uninterrupted 8-hour sleep is now but a distant memory. Jest aside, those discussions were highly productive that in the end we finally wrote a handful of cool papers. Thank you for the friendship and for
bringing out in me patience, persistence, and critical thinking. Sherlock Holmes could have never said it more fittingly:

“When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”

Chase, thanks for showing me the ropes to find my way into the messy but exciting world of fiber network modeling. Your patience to the then greenhorn me was phenomenal. For some unknown reason, there had been a majority of M’s in the group, and I just can’t allow myself to miss this opportunity to say a few kind words to them together: Moumita, Martin, Misha, Matthew, and Mahsa, together you may not have overlapped much with each other but your wonderful personalities, as well as those of the non-M’s definitely made our smallish group lively. Mo, I appreciate the way you express what’s on your mind but also caring about other people’s sensibilities. I also never got the chance to thank you personally for handing me down your TV and DVD player, they helped me learn how to read Dutch from the subtitles. Misha, I remember that afternoon when we got locked up in the office and everyone in the group had already gone home. It was funny how two polar opposite states were suddenly confined in one room at once. Strangely though, the one in the state of panic found the solution. Mahsa, you’re such a friendly character, that I’ve picked up some Persian words of greetings. Thank you so much for lifting my spirits and reminding me to keep my focus when things weren’t going well. Robbie, it was fun to have the fishes keeping us company in the office, even though some of them were quite suicidal and one of them was a bit too greedy. I wish you a successful PhD filled with tons of exciting schools and conferences and many more cool papers. You already are doing great in your first year! Enrico, thanks for the inspiration. We may not have met but I somehow felt connected as I was exploring the very rich aspect of a small part of what you started. Thanks to the students, Manon, Woody, Hidde, Joris, Fabian, and Jan, who in each of their own unique ways added even more color to life in the group. Hidde, a million thanks for translating my summary to Dutch on such short notice. I would also like to thank Mohammad who from time to time also joined the fun conversations over lunch and coffee. Special thanks to Gijsje and Karin, our regular VU-AMOLF meetings produced an excellent piece of work that we couldn’t have pushed it to its limits without your significant and highly appreciated contributions. It was a pleasure working with both of you. I would also like to thank Paul, Anne, Chase, Dave, Ming and Margaret for their hospitality when I was promoting my research in the US north-east and Chicago.

I would like to mention my words of appreciation for the people at the CoSY group, especially to the rowing team: Miriam, Denise, Greame, Niels, Fabio, and Ineke. I will
always look back to that summer of rowing with you on the Bosbaan with a smile. Thanks to Jona and Ineke, for coming up with the treasure hunt group outing. It was fun running up and down the streets and alleys of Amsterdam Centrum searching for clues with team Marian, Erwin, Aravindan, Andreas, and Jules. And of course the paintball match, my very first CoSY group day out: I know I’m terrible at shooting but after all these years, I wonder if I managed to hit Tjalle by chance (it must have been the other way around) that you still remember I was there when we met again at the Nyenrode business orientation week.

Words are not enough to express appreciation and gratitude to my circle of friends: Marian, Edcel, Jane, and Adonis. We have come from such long and separate ways, I would never have imagined then we’d be where we are right now and the places we’ve been to together. Wherever we may be in the coming years, those eight days of Icelandic adventures together will forever be tattooed in my heart. Thanks to Xavier for bringing our friends together to play music and just have fun with our extended circle Joy, Marc, Yoli, and Onats on our weekend band. To Cora, Harry, and Ralph, I still have a long way to go but thank you for being instrumental in making me see the strong person that I am. Many thanks to May Ann and Gerrit, Hermi and Piet, Carmi and Russ, Tessa and Ronald, Susan and Simon, and Connie and Eddy for throwing great parties. Even though I haven’t been to most of them (introverts need some time alone to recharge), they sure reminded me of the warmth of parties back home.

Finally I would like to dedicate these words to Mama, Auntie Anin, Manoy and Ann-Ann, to my sweet nieces Adrianne and Lizzie, and to all my family for their faith, love and support.

“The best use of life is love. The best expression of love is time. Time is your most precious gift because you only have a set amount of it. You can make more money, but you can’t make more time. When you give someone your time, you are giving them a portion of your life that you’ll never get back. Your time is your life. That’s why the greatest gift you can give someone is your time. Whenever you give your time, you are making a sacrifice, and a sacrifice is the essence of love.”

— Rick Warren