Epilogue

Acknowledgements
Train from Groningen to Amsterdam, a Sunday afternoon, June 2016

Gazing out of the train window, I watch the landscape slowly unfurl. I see the meandering Drentsche Aa, a little while later followed by the empty vastness of the Oostvaardersplassen. Large herds of deer, cows, horses, and other ancient herbivores graze peacefully together in the ‘new wilderness’, as they call it. My dissertation is approved, the defense is planned. It is early summer, and the green is fresh and abundant. Life is good. Nothing like the Italian Amalfi-coast, I imagine; Sorrento is far, far away. Still, my thoughts travel there for a minute, and I realize how time has flown by. Conceived that summer in 2008, SoMi is already eight years old, and has grown into quite a character.

SoMi? A person? Yes – the subject of my dissertation has become so familiar, and I spent so much time thinking about it since I started the project, that I (almost) started seeing its acronym as a true subject with a gender and an identity. To me, SoMi sounds like a girl, but please feel free to think otherwise. For she is not mine. Far from it – I just helped raise her. SoMi is a product of collaboration in every conceivable sense of the word. It is time, then, for some heartfelt acknowledgments.

Social mindfulness, as SoMi is called in full, was introduced to me by Paul Van Lange, my always inspirational mentor and supervisor. I vividly remember the day I stepped into his office, still a Research Master student. He sat me down, looked me in the eye, and explained that he had two topics in mind: Social noise and social mindfulness. I must have smiled when hearing the latter, because the next thing he said was: “I see you smile at social mindfulness, let’s do it.” And that was that. Paul, I am deeply grateful that I got to work with you, from designing our preliminary studies through the exciting final stages of my dissertation. I think that our collaboration has been extremely fruitful and gratifying, and I cannot begin to tell you how much I have learned from your way of thinking, your always positive feedback, and your clear – and astonishingly instant – insights in the things that really matter. Writing with you is sheer pleasure. Also, thank you for your accurate intuition by rather unmindfully assigning me the topic of social mindfulness. In many ways, that moment propelled me onto the right path into academia. As I will be taking my next step outside of the VU, I am looking forward to continue raising SoMi through puberty and beyond, together with you and all the others who have shown an interest in her.

Because there were others, many of them. Not in the least my other supervisors Jan-Willem van Prooijen and Joshua Tybur. This project would not have been the same without their active, inspiring, and extremely supportive yet critical input. Both, in their own individual way, kept me from being too broad and poetic, possibly a remnant of my previous life in the performing arts. Jan-Willem, I am going to miss your sardonic laughs when I did one of those – and thanks for reminding me that ‘junior’ is not the same as ‘young’. Josh, I am still amazed at how you can rephrase my words to say the same much more concisely – really classy.

Of course there were others, many of them. Not in the least my other officemates, who had to listen to me for all those years, steadily vocalizing the ideas that have crystallized in this book: Allen Grabo, Jelte ten Holt, and Andrea Pereira; thank you, you were awesome roomies. Allen, you have put up with me the longest, and writing articles will never be the same without your smiling face and ear-plugged head across my desk. Jelte, I think SoMi got her name in one of our endless discussions. Andrea, it was great to escape from research once in a while and talk French literature.
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