Epistemic modelling and protocol dynamics

Wang, Y.

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Writing this dissertation is like approximating a fixed point whose existence is not guaranteed at the beginning. At the end of this long journey, the formulas and proofs in this book turn out to carry more meaning for me than their apparent mathematical denotations. Like a glass of wine may let a winegrower recall those sunny or rainy days in the year when the wine was made, the content of this book reminds me of those good or bad days of my Amsterdam life, and most importantly it reminds me how lucky I was for having so many people around who were willing to help and enlighten me. Without them, I would not be able to put my gusts of thought together into a whole picture as it is presented in this book.

I am in debt to my promoter Jan van Eijck who gave me the PhD job, inspired me with many great ideas, and granted me the freedom to do what I wanted. More importantly, he showed me how to live a meaningful and happy life, and let me gradually understand that the pursuit of excellence (no matter what it means) should not be the goal of life in general, since it will lead to a zero-sum game where the unhappiness is guaranteed for most of the players. Thanks to the presence of Jan, Heleen and their lovely twins Gaia and Rosa, I felt so at home that I can mumble my naive thoughts about life whether in Amsterdam or in a no-name lake at a nowhere place in France.

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1To really understand what I mean here, please turn to Chapter 1 of this dissertation.
As a former member of the no-longer-existing group of SEN2 at CWI, I thank Jaco van de Pol and Wan Fokkink for their constant encouragements and efforts to interest this stubborn student in process algebra. In particular, Jaco acted as a very helpful daily supervisor until he left CWI in 2007, which did not stop him from sending very detailed comments on my work every now and then. I also would like to thank Erik de Vink, Sjouke Mauw, and Wiebe van der Hoek for their valuable advices on my PhD project.

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Despite the mathematical trappings, this dissertation may serve as a disguised photo album for me, which depicts a large part of my (academic) life for the past 6 years. However, there is also a significant part of my life that involves the Chinese community here in Amsterdam, which I have not mentioned yet. I probably need a separate appendix to list my good Chinese friends who helped me in one way or the other. For the sake of relevance and space, I can only mention a few of them who had direct impact on my Amsterdam life and this dissertation.

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I sometimes find myself dry in words (but wet from sweating - an iconic heritage from my father) and this is one of those moments: I am risking not mentioning all the people that I should mention here. Nevertheless, I want to take this chance to express my sincere love to all my close Chinese friends here in the Netherlands, and without loss of generality I suppose you feel the same.

This almost concludes my acknowledgements and my Amsterdam life. Finally, I reserve my deepest gratitude to my parents for their unlimited love, support, and understanding. I shall be around soon!

Yanjing Wang
Amsterdam, July 2010.

\textsuperscript{2} Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in the Netherlands, Amsterdam Branch