Acknowledgements

Those of you wondering about how one could end up with a PhD like mine, I will take back a couple of years to one of those birthdays on a Sunday afternoon where it is customary for Dutch families to gather around a small table laced with pairs of apple pies and coffee cups, themselves neatly organised around the sugar bowl. Our family was slightly different in respect to most others, in that my grandmother used to bring all the newspaper clippings she deemed relevant for specific members of her clan, collected over the interval since the last birthday. One of those, describing dolphin research in the Azores, had my name on it and marked the beginning of my research into whale behaviour, and later, this PhD.

It turned out later that ‘uncustomary’ would not only apply to the starting point of my thesis, but would typify its full trajectory (if you lacked a rode draad in this thesis: here it is). Finalising it would therefore never have been possible without the inventiveness, flexibility, patience and support of the many people that have contributed along the way.

Thank you all very much, what a great time!

If you enjoy looking for the resemblance between dogs and their owners, you may have noticed the migratory pathway of this thesis, northbound, not unworthy of a baleen whale, and the presence of many long-term stable associations, essential also to social cetaceans. I am very grateful to my supervisors, Jef and Graham, who have provided knowledge and guidance from day one, to a project outside of their direct area of expertise, outside of regular trajectories and to a PhD-student who was mostly out of the country. Jef, I have greatly enjoyed learning from your highly inventive scientific mind, your precision, and from our chocolate-laden manuscript-writing sessions (they will be dearly missed). Graham, you have provided key support at many essential stages of this project, from accepting me as an external PhD-student, to finding creative funding opportunities (in Greece!), collaborators and statistical solutions. Thank you for your many insights, and for providing support whenever it was needed.
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