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Converting lignin to aromatics: step by step

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Acknowledgments

When I started my PhD, I remembered that “the year 2014” sounded like a science fiction movie in a far away future. I guess a bit like when “2001: Space odyssey” was directed. Well now, it feels like yesterday! I have to say, that when I look back at this last four years, I realize that I met so many great people, accomplished so many projects and had such wonderful times professionally but also personally!

The first character of this journey is Prof. dr. Christian Bochet, who encouraged and helped me on starting my master thesis project abroad. His passion and gift for teaching chemistry inspired me and so many other students.

Straight after, comes my supervisor, Prof. dr. Gadi Rothenberg. I can not enumerate all the precious knowledge, skills, motivation, input and even life lessons that he shared with me, this would require an extra chapter to my thesis! I am truly grateful for everything, either for his supervision as for all the fabulous and lovely group outing we had. I will of course not forget my co-supervisor, Dr. Stefania Grecea who took time everyday for scientific but also personal discussions. She is a great example of talented women in science. I was extremely lucky to have both of you.

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I said this many times during my oral presentation, but all this work would not have been possible without the contribution of the technical and administration members. Therefore I will do it one last time, thanks to Paul, Norbet, Udo, Wim, Bert,

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Collaboration was an important part of my PhD where I also discovered the countryside of Holland (ou la broie hollandaise) in Wageningen. Thanks to Daan, Frits, Linda, Richard, Jaccinta and Jacco for this very nice collaboration and the fun time spent in conferences or project meetings. I also squatted your labs at the WUR for the very special ammonia project. Real challenge, but you made it possible. Thanks.

What made this experience so special is mostly the fact that, very quickly, I felt like home here! For this, I have to thank all my friends and colleagues from Amsterdam. At work, all the conversations, the coffee breaks, and our scientific (some times really not serious) lunch talks created an exceptional working atmosphere; Albert (such an inspiring, funny, rock&roll genius and thanks for the dutch summary Shakespeare-like in collaboration with Marjo), Enrique (the guapo of the group), Erik-Jan (the man that will always give you a solution), Hessel (or Mr suspicious), Line, Lev (our favorite room mate, we will meet for sure again in Tel Aviv or in Switzerland) Manuel, Marcella, Neetika (haaa those white people, loved whenever you were saying this), Piera (I will come one day to Sicily but as Santi used to say: so much to do in so little time), Venkatesh (or V), Helias, super Paula, Carlos junior (my little sweet Mexican Carlito!) and Carlos senior (I enjoyed so much the moving to science park with your powerful help) and many other students. The group changed a lot, first it was a “girls team” with my sweet Irene and Ana. What a great team!!! Going out for beers and discovering Amsterdam’s life, relaxing in Café Belgique was an everyday enjoyable obligation. Then, it became more a “Mafioso team” with Santi and Tinhò. Guys, you helped, explained and supported me so much...I am truly in debt. Your cooking talent and diners are unforgettable memories (and calories) of a great friendship. We didn’t work together, but we were still a team, the “trio team”! Rubby and Bartje, we had a lot of mini-smoking-group meeting outside, even though I think we had more party during the week-ends then meeting during the week.

Courses, conferences, workshop, diners and travel you also meet nice people like Annelie (will always be grateful for your precious help everytime I needed an expert opinion), Esther, Evgeny, Federica, Fred, Guidi, Georgi, Jasmine, Julien, Miguel, Peter Witte, Peter Spannring, Pierre, Sandra, Sophia, Rob, Romy, Wouter, Zohar (travelling between Israel festivals and Swiss mountains, allowed us to share a lot my great friend), Alinda, Aviad, Stella, Elles and Or (the Boom family), Ingrid (the sweetest neighbor/friend you can have) and so many people that I will probably forget someone (sorry about that), thank you all.

To my dear, great friends and paranymphs, Vlien and Annemarie. Girls, we had so many amazing adventures together. We shared so much between dinners, after work drinks, the movie marathons, parties, festivals, Israel, Portugal and Spain, Australia, Malaysia...Oufy so much indeed!!! Thanks Sweeties for those unforgettable memories and for being close to me all that time. If this whole quest (oh yeah, it was one) still leaves a smile on my face, it is also because I met both you!!! What ever is next, you girls will always have a special place in my heart and more fun is to come anyways. Due to some unexpected circumstances, my defense date became a bit complicated... But to save me from any misadventure, there is always my hero, the Dark Koala, aka Santi! I know I can always count on you and will feel even more proud to have you on my side for this special day.

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Mais jamais sans oublier "la famiglia... les Strass"!!! Bien entendu, en commençant par La Madre, à qui je dois une éternelle reconnaissance, sans elle, rien n'aurait été possible. Elle a toujours cru en moi, même dans les moments les plus difficiles. Merci à ma muminette d'amour et à ma grande petite sœur préférée, Sarah. Finalement Yasuko et Coralie. On a passé des moments merveilleux ensemble et d'autres beaucoup moins. Vous étiez là pour me faire rire, mais aussi pour m'écouter, me consoler et me motiver... Entre les moments passés à la route de bertigny 12b et ceux ici dans le grand Nord, je ne trouve pas les mots pour vous remercier de tout ce que vous avez fait pour moi. Vi voglio tantissimo bene !!!

Thanks a lot everybody. Merci à tous. Bedankt allemaal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lea', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.