Explorations of welfare and well-being
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Preface

People are people through other people. Xhosa saying.

Writing this thesis has been an adventurous ride. Let me thank my promotor Bernard van Praag for making the ride possible. He is the co-author of the bulk of the articles that make up this thesis. I have come to know Bernard as a good judge of character, a tough negotiator when it concerns the content of an article (especially the first page), open for new ideas, and unsparing with his critique though fair in his judgement. After some translation problems with each other’s manual, I believe we found common ground and I thank him for his support.

An empirically oriented thesis such as this one can only be as good as the data sets used. I therefore thank the sponsors and designers of the data sets used in this book: the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP, Germany 1982-1997), the Erasmus survey (Russia 1991), and the Russian National Panel Survey (Russia 1993-1997).


2 The GSOEP is a longitudinal household survey sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and organized by the German Institute for Economic Research (Berlin), and the Center for Demography and Economics of Aging (Syracuse University). We are grateful to these institutes and the project director Dr. G. Wagner for making this dataset available.

The 1991 Erasmus Survey was carried out by the Public Opinion Foundation in Moscow, then headed by Dr. U. Levada. The survey was designed jointly by B.M.S. Van Praag, Jan Berting and Ruud Veenhoven, all then at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). The EUR commissioned the survey and the authors thank the university for making the data set available to us.

The Russian National Panel Survey is carried out by the Institute for Comparative Social Research (CESSI) in Moscow under the guidance of A. Andreenkova and is financed by the Dutch Foundation of Scientific Research (NWO). It was commissioned
Writing this thesis was helped by moments of comic relief. I therefore want to thank all the colleagues at the Tinbergen Institute. Thanks Xander, Dirk, Dennis, Bas, Nina, Klarita, Udo, Egbert, Jaap, Luc, Pieter, Albert, and all the others. At the secretariat of the TI, Marian, Jeroen, and Elfie Bonke made it a good place to be. At the economics faculty of the University of Amsterdam, Susan, Edith, Aslan, Kim, Kea, Hettie, Siv, Moses, Frederik, Froukje, Rene and Robert were always there to help in case of problems and to bring a smile, for which I am grateful. I owe Susan van Velsen in particular a debt of gratitude for her help in proof-reading parts of this thesis, and for her friendship in general. I also thank Penny for correcting the final proofs, Michael for his help in the important stage of the project, and Peter Hop at the SEO for help with the data sets.

Adventures at work were shared and enhanced by family adventures. My two young children have made family life a funny, moving and noisy experience through their smiles, singing and shouting. Without their endless stream of good advice (‘eat daddy, eat’), I’m sure this thesis would never have been completed. Erika helped the writing of this thesis by our joined exploration of various aspects of welfare and well-being.

To all my colleagues, family, friends, hairdressers and sleazy bicycle-salesmen: I give you my thanks, my heart, my smile, my shampoo and my rusting bike. Enjoy.

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and designed by Willem Saris of the University of Amsterdam, whom we thank for allowing us to use the data-set.