Quantitative Analysis of Well-being with economic Applications
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Preface

Contrary to the cliché, the writing of this thesis has been full of moments of joy. I would like to thank the Faculty of Economics and Econometrics and the Stichting voor Economisch Onderzoek (SEO), both at the University of Amsterdam, for providing me with all necessary resources and such a nice working environment. During these three years and a half, I have gone to work with enthusiasm and pleasure.

Several people have contributed to make my research a success. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Bernard Van Praag for having confidence in me from the very beginning and for his willingness to always share his knowledge with me. I have learned to know Bernard as a person with original ideas, a great intuition, and the unwavering determination to achieve any goal.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the members of Bernard’s research group, WEBSS (Well-Being and Social Security), for creating a good and lively working atmosphere. WEBSS includes Marina Krasser, Peter Hop, Pedro Cardoso, and Adam Booij. In addition, I was very lucky to work one day a week for SEO. I especially enjoyed the teamwork, the policy relevance of the work, and the great koffiekamer.

Various people have helped me by providing editorial, substantial, and technical support. In particular, I thank Patricia Ellman for a marvelous editing job (which even applies to this sentence, except for the text in –or is it “in between”?– brackets), even when working under time pressure; Peter Hop for being ever-willing to assist with programming and software; Peter Wakker for insightful comments on two papers; and the members of the RUSSET panel for data support. I am very happy that Ibolya and Klara were always there to share similar academic and life experiences, all of us being foreigners in the Netherlands.

I would also like to thank all the people with whom I had the pleasure to work on joint papers. From all of them I have learned much about good economic and econometric research. I would like to thank Peter Berkhout and Jos Muskens for urging me to be consistent

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1 During the thesis period, I have written several papers that are not part of this thesis: Gowdy and Ferrer-i-Carbonell (1999); van den Bergh, Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Munda (2000); van den Bergh and Ferrer-i-Carbonell (2000); Berkhout, Ferrer-i-Carbonell, and Muskens (2001); Berkhout, Ferrer-i-Carbonell, and Muskens (2002); Ferrer-i-Carbonell and van den Bergh (2002); Ferrer-i-Carbonell and Frijters (2002); Ferrer-i-Carbonell, Muskens, and van Leeuwen (2002); and Hartog, Ferrer-i-Carbonell, and Jonker (2002).
and to develop an eye for detail; Paul Frijters for our fast and productive interactions; John Gowdy for sharing with me his broad knowledge; Joop Hartog for teaching me how to search for new ideas; Marko van Leeuwen for showing me how to present commercial projects within a fixed timeline; Giuseppe Munda for his crucial friendship; and Jeroen van den Bergh for pushing me to be precise about everything.

During my life in the Netherlands and in Amsterdam, I have been surrounded by many good friends. Moreover, modern technologies, such as the plane, e-mail and the telephone, have kept my friends and family around the world very close to me. I thank them all for having followed and listened to me all this time.

I thank my parents for having always encouraged and supported us in every imaginable way to achieve our (and not their) goals. I owe a deep gratitude to them and to my two sisters: Queralt for filling our life with joy and hope, and Zaida for her insatiable optimism and making me understand that differences in people are what makes our society rich.

For Jeroen, I came to Amsterdam in January 1999, after we had shared distance and an affection for whales. I would like to thank him for always trying to stimulate in me his own enthusiasm for work, his sense of responsibility, his thirst for knowledge, and his open mind. Life is very special when shared with an enthusiast!

The writing of this Preface and the final touches of this thesis were done while our baby kicked gently in my belly – a nice feeling and a welcome distraction.

Ada Ferrer-i-Carbonell
Amsterdam, June 2002