

## University of Groningen

### Priceless policies

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# Foreword

***haar*** (pronounced ***hahr***)

A ***haar*** is a type of cold mist or fog from the North Sea, which frequently occurs along the East coast of Scotland.

The word is of Dutch origin, coming either from Middle Dutch ***hare***, a biting wind, or Frisian harig, ***damp***.

Source: Scottish Dictionary, 2003

The *haar* is not an uncommon phenomenon outwith Scotland, but I'd never heard of it until I moved to Aberdeen. Let me expand a wee bit on my very first *haar* experience. The weather was magnificent during my first week at work: the sun shone, there was no wind and it must have been at least 20 degrees Celsius. I hardly enjoyed any of this glorious weather, as I did not want to give a bad impression during my first week. So, Friday 5.30pm I decided to go for a walk along the boulevard. It all started fine, but after I crossed King Street and headed for the sea, the *haar* entered land: compact clouds of fog rolled over the boulevard. Within 3 minutes I was entirely surrounded by a thick and very damp fog. All of a sudden, the other side of River Don had become invisible and temperatures must have dropped at least 7 degrees. I am sure that I could feel ice crystals piercing my skin. 'Wotterkôlle' was the only word that came to my mind – Groningers will know what I mean.

The *haar* reminds me of those periods that occur during every PhD: everything is going smoothly and according to plan, and then, all of a sudden, something goes terribly wrong - the *haar* has arrived. Particularly during those periods of a PhD you realise how important it is that you have people around you who support you. Lucky me, I had plenty of people around me – and I need to thank those who supported me.

First of all, I want to thank Charles Vlek and Talib Rothengatter. Unfortunately, both of you could not be part of the last phases of my PhD. Nevertheless, you taught me a lot about working in academia. Charles, thank you for all the time and effort you invested in me; Talib, I'll always regret that we didn't get the chance to discuss my second proposition.

Linda Steg is the only one who was there from the beginning 'til the end, which is an achievement in itself. Linda, your ceaseless optimism and confidence are very motivating. Frequent and very loud eruptions of laughter make working with you a joy; and working includes for me cycling to conferences, eating the enormous amounts of food you cook, and dragging around sand, paving stones and concrete bike racks.

My PhD was part of an interdisciplinary project. The collaboration during this project became my reference point for other collaborations; and that turns out to be a high standard. Erik, Bert,

Michiel, Dusica, Barry, Taede, and Dirk, thank you for the pleasant collaboration.

During my PhD I have worked in different places and departments. I began in Groningen at S&O and moved later to E&A (somehow a few 'E&A'ers' became 'S&O'ers' after I left – it's all too confusing!). Anyway, I'd like to mention Jan-Willem, Kees, Roos, Janet, Ebru, Berfu, Ellen, Martijn, Ben, Arjan, Karel, Dick, Ans, and Kyra. Every time I'm in Groningen you make me feel like I'm still part of the group – thank you! And Ans, by moving away I learned that what 'they' say is true: you are irreplaceable.

After E&A, I moved to Scotland, which turns out to be a good decision because I feel at home in this country. I realise that this is mainly due to my colleagues who made integrating very easy. Jillian, you make me feel at home because you laugh as much as Linda does; thank you for all your support in the past year. Thanks to everybody in The Maproom and St. Machar Bar – you make me forget that the *haar* exists! Paulus, I enjoyed our conversations over a glass of whiskey. Kate & Louise, I'm happy for the three of us that we are finished now! Angela & Marie, surfing, hill walking and camping trips in Scotland may be freezing cold, wet and usually involves gale-force winds, but that doesn't matter because you're there. And Angela, thanks for explaining the English (and Scottish) to me, cooking English breakfast (not to be confused with a Scottish breakfast), serving tea without milk, giving me a bed when I lock myself out, and all those hours in the Machar.

'They' also say that you make friends for life during your PhD – it turns out 'they' are right again. Wokje, Judith & Matthijs, despite the physical distance between us, you're my safety net. Thank you for all the times you have let me disturb you when I was in need of attention! Marieke & Jacqueline, thanks for sharing them with me.

My family, including in-laws, have always supported me in the background. Thanks for putting up with my bad moods and feeding me when necessary. Papa & mama, you're the ones who taught me how to put things in perspective – thank you for that extremely useful skill!

Judith & Roelof, lieve paranimfen, thank you for being there; it's a comforting thought that I have you around me. And Wokje, lieve schaduwparanimf, I'll miss you, but I know you'll be thinking about me, that is, after your first cup of coffee a few hours after my viva.

Mel, despite the fact that 1000 miles and a big pool of water temporarily separate us, you're the most important person in my life. But I won't thank you for that, because that's weird.

Having said all that let me finish my story about the *haar*. The *haar* meant the end of that glorious week and everything went back to normal: some bright and sunny spells, but also scattered showers, heavy at times, with south westerly winds and temperatures around 17 degrees. Which is not too bad, as they say up here. So, although the *haar* is a nasty thing, it will blow over and everything will be fine the day after. And to be completely honest, the *haar* doesn't occur that often: I've only seen it 4 times since I moved up here. Nevertheless, I've learned one important lesson: whenever the sun shines, get out of your office and enjoy - you never know when the *haar* arrives!

Geertje

Aberdeen, July 2010