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Computational studies of influenza hemagglutinin

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Acknowledgments

There were only two reasons to return to Groningen after a long journey around the world: the chance to graduate under the supervision of Prof. Erik van der Giessen and the appealing subject of this PhD research, as I had read in the proposal. Once settled in, I started this project with a steep learning curve on the biology of influenza viruses and on the intricacies of molecular dynamics simulations. Inexperienced as I was with these kinds of simulations, a struggle with unexpected results from various force fields followed, combined with challenges such as how to correctly setup the plethora of parameters and how to reach sufficient sampling. A link with our experimental collaborators seemed many lengthscales away. So, the question whether I would ever produce enough results to write a thesis, among other doubts that are not uncommon among PhD students, has lingered in my mind for three and a half years. However, starting at the end of the second year, the hard work started to pay off and from then on, a research subject got synthesized into a manuscript each year. Moreover, the efforts spent in literature research culminated in two literature reviews. This ultimately led to that moment of relief when you know that you will finish it; you only need to do it. And I did it; but not without the help, guidance, inspiration and support that I got from a number of people that I would like to acknowledge here.

First of all my supervisors, Prof. Erik van der Giessen and Prof. Patrick R. Onck. You both leave nothing to be desired from a supervisor, and then you add some more. I very much appreciate your trust in me, giving me the freedom and confidence to study, try and learn without feeling pressured most of the time. You both took the time to review my work, always in time, and to give constructive feedback. This worked especially well towards the end, when the inevitable pressure to finish the writing rose. Thank you for having your doors open so often, and for your prompt attention and honest response every time that I walked in with questions. Because we get along so well, our regular meetings were always a pleasure. Your style of supervision will be an example for me in my further career.

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Patrick, you would already turn towards the door when you heard my footsteps approaching your office, illustrating how open you are to (my) questions. You gave me the

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It is easy to feel comfortable among my fellow nerds (Not Even Remotely Dorky) in the $\mu\text{Me}\chi$ -group. Special thanks goes to Ali Ghavami, my go-to man for MD-related is-

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$$\sum_0^{\infty} \text{👉} \quad (\text{TNX.1})$$

in which 👉 summarizes the pleasure of attending and sharing coffees, cakes, lunches, dinners, meetings, outings, codes and not-even-remotely-dorky jokes with all of you. In addition to Equation (TNX.1), thank you for tolerating the pictures of random people with their thumbs held up that sometimes appeared in my email messages.

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