

Preface

I found great writing help in Van Leunen's *A Handbook for Scholars*, Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* and Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*.

Contrary to what has become the custom, I have written the thesis as a monograph, mainly for the following reasons:

- The work consists of too many small parts to be suited for the paper format. In addition, the pictures in Appendix B are key to understanding the context, and they would not fit in an article.
- When I started writing the thesis, I had already almost run out of time. Writing a monograph seemed quicker than writing papers, and, therefore, the best choice. In addition, had I written papers, I would not have received the peer reviews until after delivery. For someone who plans a scientific career, it's part of the game to continue working on the papers in overtime. For someone who has other plans, however, it just feels like a hell of a lot of painful, unpaid work.
- I resent the simplistic way scientific research is evaluated through the number of papers published and journals ranking. Writing a monograph is a way of taking a stand.
- Last, but not least, I want to keep control over my work instead of letting stockholders of a publicly listed publishing corporation make money on it and deny me the right to use it as I please.

In the beginning, I experimented writing the thesis as a wiki. Although it worked well for organising notes, it soon became unpractical: saving took too much time, attaching documents was complicated and backing up was a real pain. One of the reasons I tried it out, was to possibly obtain some kind of peer review by active visitors, but all I got instead was spam.

The observation work at Barryneset felt like true research, not knowing where it would lead me and requiring qualitative observations and getting a feeling of what was going on

before I could do any quantitative work. I may have been lucky that my observations were relevant enough to be published, and not knowing until the end if they would be, felt like taking a serious risk and made for some stressful moments. I wish the PhD would have left more room for taking risks and for serendipity. To paraphrase Carlo Petrini, I wish the PhD would allow for *slow research*. Unfortunately, I feel that the pressure on producing papers and on finishing in time gets in the way and, instead, leads to safe, but less exciting work.

When I applied for the position, I had great admiration for Store Norske and did not have the slightest afterthought about working with a coal mining company. After all, I was working in the oil industry. Since then, I have become a bit of an environmental fundamentalist. So how does one deal with working on the development of a coal mine the opening of which one is opposed to? I have no good answer. Personally, at some point, I made the decision that I would get out of the hydrocarbon-business but that I would complete the work I had started. On the positive side, as opposed to most environmentalists, I have been *on the inside* and met people who, even if I disagree with them on environmental issues, I have all the respect in the world for. That has led me to hope that they too, some day, will realise what a dead end we are pushing our species into.

Finally, I would like to raise a taboo, namely the mental health of PhD candidates. I have probably been all the more aware of it as I am struggling with a mental illness (bipolar disorder). Although outsiders may just have the impression that a PhD is incredibly difficult, few understand the mental loads of the deadline and of the loneliness. I can see that not anyone should be able to obtain a PhD, but there has to be a better way of selecting than destroying the lives of PhD candidates. Of the dozen PhD candidates at UNIS during my time there, I know of at least three, including me, who have or will quit academia after their PhD. When I talk with my peers, *hell* is the word most often used to characterise the PhD. Is that really how we want higher education to be? I suspect researchers are too busy with their own work to take part in fighting this psychopathic system. Raising the issue here is hardly a fight, but it is better than nothing.