

Epilogue

Penning an epilogue is a pleasure. It's not every day you can finish your thesis, polish the last words, attend your advisor's wedding in faraway Turkey, and sit back, relax, and feel just a little bit satisfied. Yet I can't help considering the irony! Academia teaches us to think *outside* the box, but this thesis ponders ideas *inside* the box.

In the preface, I alluded to a need to refrain from social commentary. I lied. I was attempting to put a finger on why I loved the Ph.D. process and the academic world. Indulge me while I share my perspective.

In contrast to the world at large, which is inherently unfair and holds us responsible for our moments of indecisiveness, irrationality, subjectivity, and prejudice, academic thought is (in principle) rational, objective, and idealistic. There's a certain utopian aura, a purity and *fairness* connected with the scholarly life. It can give joys that are (mostly) under your control, and even better, cannot be denied you. In many cases, and this is definitely true of most mathematical and analytical research, the only extremely portable tools you need are paper and pencil.⁶ Academic thought gives you avenues to be creative, feel challenged, and keep your mind active and engaged. Of course, one does experience frustration (*e.g.*, nine-tenths of a proof is worth not very much), but the genuine happiness of a handful of "Aha!" moments beats all the hedonistic joys of the wider society.

I'm not trying to raise academia above society, but merely making some interesting comparisons. This thesis, for example, tries to devise solutions for the Internet and solve pressing problems of building high-speed networks. But, it pales in comparison to the complexities of *human* networks.[†] What humans could learn from networked routers is that routers communicate easily, are seldom offended, don't mandate arbitrary mores, and aren't shy about sparking instant conversations.

While writing my thesis, I tried to be uncharacteristically asocial (because it helped me concentrate). Yet over these ten months of writing, I've had many opportunities

⁶Of course, not a pen. They tend to leak when you are traveling to Mars ...

[†]... Sorry, Cisco, there really is only one human network!

to meet wonderful strangers, and collect their interesting anecdotes and amazing experiences. These networking opportunities brought surprise benefits — complimentary drinks, a lunch, several free dinners, a historical photo tour of Tiburon, a small town just north of San Francisco, complementary museum tickets, a private showing by a local artist, an invitation to go flying, a standing invitation to visit Malibu, an invite from a Hollywood producer to visit the location for an advertising shoot, introductions to interesting people and folksy advice in the kitschy small towns of northern California. There were also some hilarious moments, aptly captured by an old Turkish saying (perhaps you have heard it?), “*What happens in Istanbul, stays in Constantinople*”.

And on that note, as I pen a roast on your wedding day, Asena and Nick, thank you for a wonderful wedding, and here’s wishing you a long, happy, fulfilling, and — what is that phrase? (see preface) — a stable marriage . . .

— Istanbul, Turkey,
July 11th 2008