

# Preface

Research is not an end in itself: to communicate results, methodologies and theories is so fundamental that publishing became an integral part of the research process. The global human progress is intrinsically linked not only to the *advancement* of knowledge, but also to the *diffusion* of knowledge. The dissemination of recently-acquired knowledge among stakeholders is also crucial to attract interest and, let's face it, funding. Likewise, academic researchers have the responsibility towards their sponsors and funding bodies to show the results of their research activities and their contribution to the advancement of the particular topics they are working on. The publication of new scientific findings is based on a peer-review process so others may comment on our work and positively contribute to the quality of the publications. As it happens, and for the better or for the worse, publication is often considered a metric of performance. Thus, it is useful nowadays, when starting a research project, to set up a publication strategy. Furthermore, the writing and submission of scientific papers is a valuable skill and an integral part of academic training. With this in mind, and following direct advice from my Ph.D. Advisory Committee, the contents of this thesis were as much as possible organised as a set of ready-to-publish materials, some of which are already published. This strategy is well-intentioned and has clear advantages, but some repetition and loss of continuity in this work may arise due to the intrinsic characteristics of a scientific paper (with its own introduction, scientific background, etc.). Notwithstanding these caveats, I have tried my best to follow a clear streamline and to ensure the logical connection between subjects. It is my hope that this was achieved, and that this thesis efficiently communicates the core of our findings.



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