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Doctoral Education and Postdoctoral Research in the Arts

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The artistic research practices within art universities is at the moment informed by two parallel dynamic processes whose mutual connection has neither been fully understood nor articulated. As I see it, the recognition of this link, and taking benefit of it, is crucial for the development of the field in the future.

The first of these trends concerns doctoral education. Today the artistic doctoral candidates constitute an increasingly autonomous and critical international community. This development is not surprising, given the amount of efforts and measures by which the art universities all around Europe have during the past decades invested in the development of the third-cycle education. However, now that this community exists, it also starts to lead a life of its own, which unavoidably informs the nature and dynamics of studies and research making. The community of doctoral candidates with stronger academic skills and self-identity challenge the pedagogical authority and skills of professors and other staff members responsible for education. The artistic research communities become pedagogically less dependent of external methodological or disciplinary expertise. The new modes of publishing, as connected to the development of media and data technology, set challenges to the degree regulations, curricula and dissemination of research. The cross-artistic dialogue between candidates has become a rule, at the same time as the new ideas and trends break through among them in real-time. This state of affairs can be considered a real educational achievement whose fruits should not be wasted.

Another, maybe less obvious but unavoidably growing area consists of postdoctoral artistic research which, as it expands, calls for new kind of supportive measures, infrastructure, financing and international cooperation. Instead of these requirements, which of course are important, I would like to draw attention to the way how, simultaneously, the postdoctoral phase starts to set new kinds of criteria, possibilities and critical limitations for the development of doctoral education and the proliferation of its modes. In this regard my point is very simple: insofar the requirements of doctoral education are concerned, it is topical to encounter and discuss them in postdoctoral perspective. The doctoral education in arts should provide the candidate with prerequisites for her work as postdoctoral artist-researcher. However, what artist-researchers actually do, or what they

could do, is still an open question to a large degree. The postdoctoral artistic research culture, as I would call it, currently assumes various forms, and the career of an academic artist-researcher is not the only, and not even the primary form. An artist-researcher can be a new kind of societal expert capable of creating new kind of practices at the interfaces between arts and society, in an applied or in an avant-gardist sense, or in both senses at the same time. She can be a completely new kind of artist or just an ordinary academic researcher or teacher. The education should open possibilities instead of restricting them beforehand, but it also should be capable of exercising critique between the modes of action it gives birth to.

Therefore, as I see it, these two domains under development, the self-organization of the doctoral community and the emergence of the postdoctoral field, should be brought to a closer dialogue and interaction. The development of the doctoral training and postdoctoral activities should not take place separately. In ideal case they would take place in same units, the postdocs would have an integral role in doctoral education at the same time as doctorates would find their place in postdoctoral research groups...

If this were to happen, the autonomy of the field would increase, at the same time as the different modes of research making would cease to compete with each other. The need for drawing identificatory borderlines would decrease to the same degree as the interest and appreciation towards the work of one's fellows increases. The questions considering the formal and medial criterial of research outcomes of doctoral degree, such as what is the function of the written academic discourse, or what kinds of elements a research outcome may consist of, will turn out to be of secondary importance as they are juxtaposed with the concrete goal of the degree, the postdoctoral phase. In the future, someone will always enjoy writing or theorizing, whereas someone else wants to communicate herself mainly within her own artistic medium or devote herself to the development of the pedagogy or technology of some particular art form. More important than to agree nationally or internationally on the proper modes or common criteria of artistic research is to create circumstances, where the different modes of making can develop in a critical mutual dialogue. The changes in the field result from the institutional negotiation, to which everyone participates by and through her own personal contributions. The postdoctoral perspective strengthens the societal aspect of this negotiation considerably. If the research education is re-organized in the future, this negotiation could become an integral part of learning and research, not just a matter of professional skills.

This said I want to express my support for the increase of organizational integration and communality, for the creation of more open structures of the academic units and degrees, and for the confidence on the self-governance and self-criticism of the collegial communities. I hope that the time of academic and disciplinary divides would soon be over and that Uniarts could provide proper conditions

for the free encounter and collaboration between practice-based artist-researchers, art research and pedagogical researchers both on doctoral and postdoctoral level.

Artistic research as an independent academic field of research means an accomplished utopia in the age when in many other academic fields the ideals are torn down. I wish that this utopia could live on.

I end my career as professor of artistic research at Uniarts in July 2018. With these words I thank everybody for these progressive and intensive years!

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