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The ambiguous space for recognition of doctoral supervision in the fine and performing arts

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In 2010, a new doctoral degree for the fine and performing arts was launched in Sweden (Lilja 2015). Simultaneously a national research school (Konstnärliga forskarskolan) was founded for five years, to guide the new group of PhD-students towards their degree. The students were admitted to the school from a large spectrum of artistic fields, like music, fine arts, film, dance and circus. Doctoral supervisors were recruited both from artistic departments in higher education institutions and from the artistic fields in question. During the five years, the supervisors met regularly. Their network was framed by a program consisting of three activities to choose from: a web based module about supervisors' responsibilities, ethics and formalities, a series of seminars and a writing project. Towards the end of the period the network published an anthology, in which the supervisors shared their experiences of supervising PhD-students and the different challenges they encountered (Frisk, Johansson & Lindberg-Sand 2015).

A theme surfacing in most contributions of the anthology concerns uncertainties in how the space for recognition of doctoral supervision in the fine and performing arts evolves. The wider cultural environments of artistic research are characterised by ambiguity towards its development. They are simultaneously both attracted and repelled by the prospect of a closer relationship with the academy, for which research education (and thus supervision) traditionally have fundamental functions. For research-intensive universities research education could be viewed as a boundary object (Wenger 1998) serving different aspects of the development of research, education and outreach to society (Elmgren et al 2015). In these institutions, the space for recognition of doctoral supervision is framed by a complex inevitability, as it rests assured by the necessity and prestige of research (Walker et al 2008). The same cannot be said about the space for recognition of doctoral supervision in the fine and performing arts, where it sometimes almost seem to dissolve. The supervisors may not rest assured. In this contribution, we go back to the texts of the anthology to further interpret how the space for recognition of doctoral supervision emerges in the supervisors' descriptions. Using perspectives from Giddens (1991) and Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practices for the analysis, we describe and discuss a possible spectrum of different spaces for the recognition of doctoral supervision, framed by variations in the perception of research in the institutional and professional contexts and communities of higher artistic education.

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