Discourses of Dissonance: Enabling Sites of Praxis and Practice Amongst Arts and Design Doctoral Study

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A Prologue

Ph.D. study occupies a fractional and anomalous space in the university. Indeed, in UK Higher Education (HE), not only do Ph.D. students almost exclusively represent the smallest student population, they also inhabit an uncertain identity somewhere amidst 'staff' and 'student'. Pedagogically, the Ph.D. too inhabits an ambiguous terrain that does not readily cohere with traditional views of 'teaching and learning'. In this context, this chapter contends that the Arts and Design Ph.D. (in particular that which incorporates artistic practice) inhabits a dissonant terrain that further disrupts normative frameworks of the academe and the landscape of doctoral research itself by encompassing various paradoxes, particularities, peculiarities and complexities. Based on a conceptual model of 'research-practice-pedagogy' in which I purposefully bring together the discourses of art practice research, doctoral pedagogy and

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research training, I draw on two interrelated bodies of research: the first, research concerning art practice research and the second, doctoral education underpinned by my role as Doctoral Training Coordinator in a Faculty of Arts, Design and Media. I propose that such territory can be understood as a multi-dimensional, plural, and heterogeneous topology, which enables transformational, performative and embodied spaces of learning, teaching and becoming to be opened up beyond fixed boundaries. Focusing in particular on non-accredited and fluid spaces of doctoral provision throughout the Ph.D. journey, such a model brings to the fore spaces of praxis and practice normally considered peripheral to the academe (and with it associated risk, creativity, failure and unknowing) as vital in eliciting 'doctoralness'. Whilst dissonance is normally conceived of as connoting conflict or a lack of harmony, the very dissonance of the Arts and Design Ph.D. is here reconceived as a site of empowerment.

Elucidated through examples at the intersection of research-practice-pedagogy, I argue that rather than resisting educational structures, the very spaces of fracture and dissonance are in fact embraced—by both learner and teacher—to enable an expanded understanding of practice and embodied knowledge as praxis for the researcher, allowing them to inhabit the academe as subjects amongst Arts and Design doctoral borderlands. The Arts and Design Ph.D. is here considered both as a form of para-dox in relation to academia's doxa and in light of Rolfe's concept of the *paraversity* as a subversive community of dissensus that 'exists alongside and in parallel to the corporate university' (2014: 2). It is acknowledged that there are global, disciplinary and other differences in doctoral programs, as well as nuances in what is understood by the term 'doctoral' itself. This chapter is rooted in a UK (and to some extent European) context and therefore positioned in relation to its particular policy frameworks and sector benchmarks. Whilst 'doctoral' is understood here as an expanded and porous territory, namely in terms of education, pedagogy and experience, I refer specifically to what in the UK is loosely called the 'traditional PhD' (that is, as different to the Professional Doctorate or Ph.D. by Publication) as a qualification. Notwithstanding, the Arts and Design Ph.D. disrupts this very categorization in which it most often falls outside the parameters

of a 'traditional' approach to academic practice and by its very nature challenges the conventions of the doctorate to effectively demonstrate 'doctoralness'. Working in the context of the Arts and Design has afforded me great creativity and flexibility in developing doctoral provision; it is my aim that this chapter provides possibilities for all those invested in (re)conceptualizing time and space in the neoliberal university beyond the contexts I discuss.

Para-Doxa, the Academic Precariat and the Landscape of Doctoral Education

Ph.D. students almost exclusively make up the smallest student population of the university. Indeed, in the 2016–2017 academic year only 4% of the 2.32 million HE students in the UK were studying for a doctoral degree (HESA 2017). This marginal proportion aligns with the global context of Ph.D. study[1] and thus could be said to reflect the doctoral landscape on a wider scale. As the doctorate is the highest qualification available, the small contingent of Ph.D. students is perhaps not unexpected. Yet whilst Ph.D. students are vital to the ecology and economy of the university (in terms of labor as well as intellectual and financial capital), doctoral study seems to be at odds with wider institutional frameworks, processes and logics and inhabits a fractional, anomalous and often precarious space, somewhat 'othered' in an undergraduate-centric paradigm. As Brabazon notes in relation to the prevalence of neoliberalism in HE, doctoral study is often a deeply neglected component of an institution (2016: 19).

The precarity of Ph.D. study is reflected in its necessarily flexible and fluid structure. In the UK, undergraduate and postgraduate programs are governed by credit descriptors that define the expected 'level of challenge, complexity, and autonomy … on completion of a defined and bounded learning activity such as a module or program of learning' (SEEC 2016: 1). Here, students progress through clearly delineated levels or stages determined by grades according to specific criteria, and that neatly align with regulated temporal frameworks such as the university

academic year. The Ph.D. on the other hand, whilst too defined by various descriptors—most prominently an original contribution to knowledge (SEEC 2016: 13; Quality Assurance Agency 2014: 30)—is not conceived in normative terms of modules, credits or even assignments. It instead culminates in the final viva voce examination after a significant period of independent study in which institutional progression points act as markers that assess doctoral progress rather than credits or modules per se. Ph.D. students also arguably determine their own subject-specific curriculum (signified in the Ph.D. project title). The fluidity and multiplicities of the Ph.D., even within smaller departments, thus could be said to be counter to the normative curricular structure and logic of the university.

The highly individualized nature of the Ph.D. is also reflected in the unique temporal framework of the doctoral journey; the Ph.D. is awarded, essentially, when it is awarded. Whilst there is a definite beginning and end point of the Ph.D., some students may complete before the standard full-time three years, others may take longer. Institutional administrative and procedural structures used to monitor progression and ensure timely completion therefore need to be flexible and reflexive to account for the inherently fluid nature of the Ph.D. For example, it is not uncommon (and possibly preferable for administrative and timetabling purposes) for viva examinations to be scheduled apart from one another rather than for a group of candidates to all be examined on the same day; not only are there multiple and simultaneous durations of individual Ph.Ds, temporally they are also in many ways unpredictable and inconsistent.

If undergraduate and postgraduate programs might be considered structuralist, then Ph.D. study might very well be understood as its unruly poststructuralist counterpart; fluid, multiple, iterative and reflexive. To return to Rolfe's *paraversity*, the Ph.D. could be argued to exist on its own terms as para-dox (2014: 4), running alongside and potentially disrupting the university's doxa. As I later elaborate, the Arts and Design Ph.D. arguably further fractures any sort of singularity and normativity within the Ph.D. itself in which what denotes 'thesis' and 'viva' for instance might take alternative forms. Yet, it is important not to romanticize the Ph.D. as inhabiting a space entirely removed from the neoliberal university: as well as being para-dox it also enacts a paradox

in that at particular moments it too is complicit in a neoliberal agenda. Indeed, the increasing emphasis on timely Ph.D. completions to meet funding obligations and sector requirements means that such a closely regulated doctoral timeframe (with more doctoral candidates and completions) commodifies the Ph.D., providing metrics for funding, ranking and other purposes. This is echoed in concerns that a managerial approach to completion rates mean performance indicators of efficiency are proxy for the quality of Ph.D. submissions, training and supervision (Park 2005: 194). As Brabazon spells out: 'Beginnings matter. Endings matter more. The number one priority for a PhD student, supervisor and university is a rapid completion, examination and graduation' (2016: 24).

Ph.D. students themselves can also be perceived as anomalous by inhabiting an ambiguous and uncertain identity in the university. In the UK, this is arguably in part because Ph.D. students are often grouped under the broad category of Postgraduate Researcher or 'PGR'.[2] Such a label risks homogenizing Ph.D. students under a singular identity, 'other' to students on undergraduate and taught postgraduate programs, as well as ignoring the specificities of the Ph.D. in terms of descriptors and frameworks. In addition, those undertaking the Ph.D. navigate multiple and ambivalent roles: they are both 'student' and 'researcher' expected to actively contribute to the university's research environment alongside staff 'peers' such as early career researchers and professors. The ambiguity of identity is confounded as funded Ph.D. students are 'employed' by the university, for example via funding bodies or teaching fellowships. However, they are neither quite students nor academic staff (as employees) in the normative sense and often there is a lack of access to benefits such as maternity and sick leave. Moreover, many Ph.D. students are simultaneously employed as staff in hourly-paid, sessional teaching and research roles. However, in an 'age of casualised academic labour' (Jones and Oakley 2018: 3), these roles are highly precarious: not only are they extremely competitive, but most often temporary, part-time, zero-hours and include "'Fellow' and 'Associate' job descriptions invented to describe non-salaried academic posts" (Garland 2014: 74). Whilst assuming the identity of staff, these Ph.D. researchers can be argued to be part of the 'academic precariat'

where 'as precarious as this material existence is - arguably because of it - they have little choice not to be' (Garland 2014: 74).

Within established academic hierarchies, those undertaking Ph.D. study might be considered to be 'at the top' as students, contributing to university's research environment (and shaping teaching agendas). However, whilst students they might also be more adept as researchers than staff whose primary responsibility is teaching and thus directly challenge traditional staff/student hierarchies. Moreover, although some students arrive at the Ph.D. through a fairly linear trajectory—progressing through different levels of the education system—many are professionals highly respected in their own fields. They thus might be more 'expert' than staff in their subject area whilst simultaneously being 'students'; not only does this disrupt epistemological academic hierarchies but Ph.D. students most often have the same privileges as their undergraduate counterparts (i.e. student email accounts and security access). The prevalence of practitioners undertaking research in the Arts and Design also enhances this complexity whereby the very category 'researcher' might extend to artist-researcher, designer-researcher, composer-researcher and so-on. Not only do Ph.D. students inhabit a precarious and liminal space in how their identity sits amidst 'staff' and 'student', but they reveal a complexity in how they are positioned—and often challenge—established power structures amidst the governance of labor and intellectual capital.

The Ph.D. is also pedagogically unique. Whilst the Professional Doctorate incorporates a substantial taught element (Quality Assurance Agency 2014: 30), in the UK at least, Ph.D. supervision traditionally forms the central mode of support. Supervisors together perform a number of roles that are highly fluid changing at different points during the Ph.D.; for example, project manager, enculturation, critical mentor, disciplinary expert, facilitator (Lee 2008). However, whilst Ph.D. supervision is recognized as a form of pedagogy, it does not cohere with 'teaching and learning' in the normative sense whereby the teacher teaches and the learner learns; rather than 'teaching' relevant subject matter as such, the supervisory team instead could be said to facilitate doctoral thinking. Indeed, as Manathunga notes, team supervision supports students' engagement with new knowledges that cross institutional,

disciplinary and epistemic boundaries (2012: 29). Whilst the supervisory team might provide subject specific expertise, a successful Ph.D. student also arguably emerges as more of an expert in their area of study through their contribution to knowledge. This disrupts the neoliberal economy of the university in which large numbers of students are the consumers of new knowledge. The Ph.D. in fact, reverses this model; it is the learner that creates new knowledge, in which there are multiple staff supporting one Ph.D. student. In this sense, the Ph.D. embodies a pedagogical para-dox in which precisely by demonstrating 'doctoralness', it eschews traditional understandings of teaching and learning where students act as their own teacher to create both new knowledge and determine their own curriculum of doctoral development.

'Doctoral pedagogy' too remains an ambiguous terrain understood primarily in terms of the Professional Doctorate (Bourner and Simpson 2014; Maxwell 2003) and Ph.D. supervision. However, the increasing emphasis on doctoral training to meet UK policy and sector benchmarks,[3] means that institutions are also required to support the development of their researchers, prompting a shift from the Ph.D. being the creation of the doctoral thesis per se. To follow Park, there is a distinction between the Ph.D. as a product and the Ph.D. as a process (Park 2005: 198). Unlike the doxa of teaching as understood in undergraduate programs, doctoral training provision for the Ph.D. tends to be both non-accredited and elective, instead running throughout the Ph.D. in a more fluid manner to develop the 'knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and … realise their potential' (Vitae 2015: 1). Such courses are often run by Graduate Schools (or similar) to cohorts of doctoral students or PGRs across the university and provide generic rather than discipline specific research training alongside Ph.D. study. This is often complemented by training that is accredited in the form of a concurrent qualification (such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods) in addition to the Ph.D. proper; structurally and pedagogically, it is both part of the Ph.D. yet at the same time separate to it. However, the paradigm of *training* researchers tends to adopt a rhetoric of a 'how to' approach, for example centered on research methods, preparing to submit the Ph.D. thesis and careers development in preparation for an increasingly competitive job market. Whilst these

skills and behaviors are vital in preparing Ph.D. researchers and doctoral training is now recognized as important in supporting researchers alongside supervision, it does not necessarily elicit doctoral learning on a deeper and transformative level.

A Dissonant Terrain? Practice *in*, *as*, *through*, *and* Research in the Arts and Design

As we can see, the Ph.D. inhabits a distinct yet equivocal space within the university; structurally, pedagogically, hierarchically, spatially and temporally. Whilst alternative spaces are often made to accommodate doctoral study, they nevertheless are often precarious as well as less visible or at odds with the university at large. Within the discourse of doctoral study itself, I would argue that the Arts and Design Ph.D. occupies an even more uncertain and unruly territory even within the meta-structures, processes and protocols of smaller faculties or departments. This is in part due to the significant increase in practitioners undertaking Arts and Design Ph.Ds, and in particular in those incorporating artistic practice *as* research, which encompasses certain particularities, peculiarities, tensions and complexities. In my own institution, this is evident through an increase in practitioners undertaking Ph.D. study prompted by their own practice and directly informing this practice upon completion. There has also been an increase in practitioners undertaking research in which practice forms a key part of the research enquiry. It is also the latter, that I would argue is invariably more messy, complex and difficult to comprehend both by Ph.D. researchers themselves but also by the academe and has been the subject of much debate over the past decade (Barrett and Bolt 2007; Gray and Malins 2004; Macleod and Holdridge 2006; Nelson 2013; Sullivan 2005; Wilson and Van Ruiten 2013).

The increase in Ph.Ds incorporating practice has resulted in a myriad of terms being used (see Fig. 1), something that Teikmanis usefully refers to as 'typologies' of artistic research (2013: 163).[4] This has largely been driven by a need to define what is a relatively emergent research

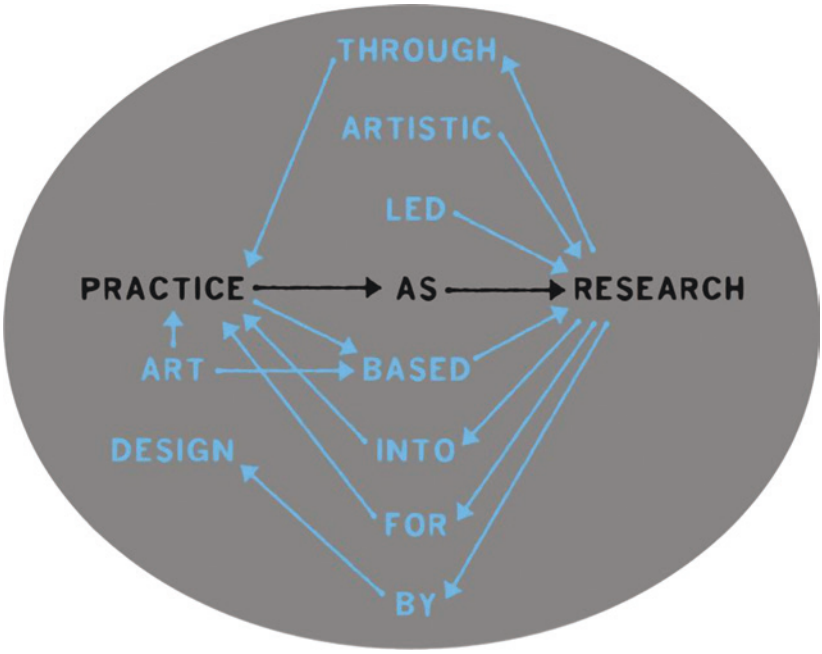

Fig. 1 Typologies of practice as research, Paul Norman and Jacqueline Taylor (2018)

paradigm and which often rethinks the very boundaries of research and the Ph.D. itself. For example, the designation 'practice-led research' (Mottram et al. 2007) is often used in the UK and is the term employed by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the primary funder of Ph.D. research in the Arts and Design. 'Practice-based research' (Candy 2006; Rubidge 2004) is also frequently used across institutions and more recently 'practice as research' (Nelson 2013) has been adopted as a more overarching term. The multiplicity of terms varies by discipline, institution and in different global contexts. Moreover, many of these terms have been subject to critique even by Arts and Design researchers themselves. Indeed, as Emlyn Jones argues, 'practice-based research is too loose a term to be useful' (2006: 228). In addition, as I have argued elsewhere there are also contradictory definitions amongst the same terms (Taylor 2018). The multiplicity and divergence

of these typologies themselves in fact encapsulates the inherent slipperiness and instability of the very discourse of Arts and Design research. Precarity and dissonance might be seen in positive and empowering terms, to echoe Rolfe's notion of para-dox and the *paraversity*, in that: 'Dissensus is not dissent … thinking in parallel is to keep discussion and debate open and alive precisely by avoiding coming to agreement' (2014: 4). Dissensus as a practice and dissonance as a condition (perhaps an alternative habitus) highlights the very richness of Arts and Design research and its commitment to thinking alongside and in parallel to multiple ways of working. It could be said to be dissonant in itself, let alone to wider research, institutional and pedagogic structures and discourses.

In the context of this chapter, I use the term 'art practice research' to encompass and acknowledge the multiplicity of approaches and terminology used to refer to research incorporating creative practice in the Arts and Design. Eschewing practice-led or practice-based here removes any potential simplistic reading of practice leading or being the basis for research but instead positions the two as having a mutual relation (Taylor 2014). Whilst the discourse of such research has emerged very specifically out of the artistic disciplines (in particular, performance, creative writing, dance and fine art), both 'Arts & Design' and 'art practice research' are considered here as expanded fields including architecture, curation, jewelry, design and theater to name just a few. I contend that art practice research can in fact be defined precisely by its resistance to be defined and by its fluidity, multiplicity and heterogeneity in which practice is highly nuanced and individualized (Taylor 2018). Indeed, many students undertake research in relation to their creative practice. Practice may more explicitly refer to the creative practice and artistic work *as* the research itself. It may *lead* to research or be the *basis* for the research enquiry. Practice might also refer to methods, the articulation of the thesis and the final submission itself. The practice might, following Candy, result in the production of a creative artefact or end product as the basis of a contribution to knowledge (2006: 3). Equally, practice might be understood as a process imbricated with the research in which the end object (or indeed performance, artifact or design) are not

important. It can also extend to one's professional creative practice and associated discourses, for example as a designer, curator or performer.

Frequently, the art practice research Ph.D. requires the parameters of what constitutes 'thesis' to be expanded in order to most appropriately articulate and position the practice in question. A solely textual submission might suffice even though practice has been vital in the production of new knowledge. Equally, the Ph.D. often deviates from this tradition taking many different forms encompassing textual, material, visual, sound or performance-based elements. Writing too may take different forms that enact the argument embodied in the thesis; for example, Hayley Newman's thesis (2001) took the form of a self-interview which she identifies as a performance in itself. The viva voce examination too might also include an exhibition or exposition and incorporate practice alongside the submitted thesis or that reconceptualizes the physical properties of the traditional thesis. It is therefore difficult to generalize on the position of practice in the art practice research Ph.D. as it is unique to its doctoral and creative context. Arguably precisely what is doctoral is articulating, positioning and critically grounding the practice itself.

As the Ph.D. is primarily defined as a contribution to knowledge, the incorporation of practice *as* or *part of* the research also raises epistemological tensions and ambiguities. In particular, there has been much written about praxical, embodied, tacit and material knowledge bound up in art practice research (Bolt 2007; Vincs 2007). The unknown has also been identified as a crucial part of the artistic process, yet it is commonly understood as a negative lexicon as *un*certain, *in*visible and *in*comprehensible (Fisher and Fortnum 2013: 7). Within the doxa of 'research' and the 'doctorate' it is thus at odds with both the academe and the communication of new knowledge required by the Ph.D. To follow Haseman, the 'material outcomes of practice represents research findings in their own right' (2006: 104). As a result, such research has been argued to be thorny in that its goal is not primarily communicable knowledge (Frayling 1993: 5). Indeed, the AHRC themselves note that practice-led research prompts 'vexatious' epistemological and ontological questions (Mottram et al. 2007: 11). Developing mechanisms to make visible and effectively communicate this knowledge thus become

especially important, rather than assuming that artefacts (and their processes, performativities and materialities) articulate themselves. Art practice research could be said embody a para-dox in that this necessary self-reflexivity means some element of dissonance is in fact a condition of the research itself.

To add to this complexity, there is no one established method to undertake art practice research; rather, Ph.D. students are often required to appropriate various methodologies to come towards new knowledge by knitting together new ways of working from across paradigms, approaches and fields. My experience in working closely with Ph.D. students in the Arts and Design has revealed that the methods that emerge from research incorporating practice often embody the conceptual and theoretical ideas being grappled with. For example, a painter exploring ideas concerned with liminality might inhabit and push the boundaries of various methods to conceptualize a liminal methodological space, in turn thinking through and providing new insights that feed into the research. Most likely, this is because practice also functions as praxis; that is, a lived and embodied experience and its knowledge emerges through its practicing. This further highlights the precarious epistemological nature of art practice research. Indeed, as Sullivan points out, art practice is not necessarily captive to existing frameworks of knowledge but instead open-ended and exploratory reflexive action, and encourages a working from the unknown to the known where 'serendipity and intuition … direct attention to unanticipated possibilities' (2009: 48). Such a process too resonates closely with the performativity of research in which the practitioner-researcher tends to dive in and commence practicing to see what happens (Haseman 2006: 101–102). Methodologically and epistemologically then, art practice research presents a direct challenge to and is dissonant with established value systems of research and knowledge production and does not sit easily within the wider landscape of doctoral study.

In addition, many Arts and Design Ph.D. researchers negotiate multiple identities beyond those of 'staff' and 'student' as outlined previously but which the ambiguity and precarity of this identity is enhanced as it extends to creative, professional, practitioner and academic. Many could be argued to aspire to be 'para-academics' rather than 'academics'

per se in which they position themselves both inside and outside academia on their own terms (Taylor and Vaughan 2016) through purposefully maintaining an array of creative and professional activities in addition to or as research. Interestingly, the para-academic as a broader term has been conceptualized as being aligned with the concept of the *paraversity* and para-doxa in which 'para' signifies an ongoing and transformational process (Wardrop 2014: 15) that enables mobility 'in/outside and – in spite of – the academe' (Garland 2014: 78). The traditional narrative of linear 'progress' for Ph.D. students relating to assumptions of an academic career is disrupted by the position of the para-academic in general but also in the more multifaceted aspirations of Arts and Design researchers in which practice (and practicing) are complexly intertwined with and inflect traditional understandings of academia. Moreover, progress from one academic category to another is precarious, whereby the traditional perspective of the postdoc as a transitional role from Ph.D. to academic lectureship is changing in response to fewer permanent jobs (Jones and Oakley 2018: 3).

I would argue that by its very nature the art practice research Ph.D. challenges the conventions of the Ph.D. itself as part of its 'doctoralness' is in testing out, justifying and making valid appropriate and robust methods, modalities of articulation, the forms that the thesis may take and epistemologically grounded relations between theory and practice. There are a great many risks for the researcher (and supervisor) in undertaking such practice as what is 'new' also extends beyond the knowledge gained through the intellectual enquiry itself. This also extends to the examination of the art practice research Ph.D., where to follow Elkins, the 'problem' of evaluating such doctoral study can only be solved if examiners move beyond strict disciplinary boundaries and their normal interpretive habits and that whilst this makes such research exciting, it is also exactly what ensures that it cannot be commensurate with other degrees (2009: 163). As a result, the Arts and Design Ph.D. forms a complex and contested territory, elusive for those who do not know how to go about it or what it comprises (Nelson 2013: 4). Echoing Elkins above and considering the descriptors outlined previously as conventionally underpinning undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and even those of Vitae's Researcher Development Framework,

it is interesting to note that Wilson raises concerns about attempts to confine art practice research to a set of descriptors as it risks obscuring the many fields of practice it might encompass (2008: 2). I would like to argue that the unruly, incongruent and troublesome nature of the Arts and Design Ph.D. forms a discourse of dissonance. One underpinned by tensions between on the one hand producing, framing and articulating practice *as* research as robust, rigorous and valid (not just practice as practice and artists doing what they do) and on the other retaining its integrity as emergent, experimental, cross-disciplinary, performative, innovative and individualized. Rather than resolving these tensions, they are instead a very quality of Arts and Design research and crucial in claiming recognition as research within dominant frames while at the same time troubling or reworking those frames.

Research-Practice-Pedagogy

There are huge implications for how the Arts and Design Ph.D. can be conceived pedagogically. In particular in reconciling how it might function as a productive para-dox with the dominant paradigm of Researcher Development and the centralized structures of the Graduate School model which favor generic provision, training *how to do* research or gaining certain skills based on assumptions of career trajectories, identities and academic aspirations. My own institution comprises four Faculties: 'Arts, Design and Media', 'Business, Law and Social Sciences', 'Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment' and 'Health, Education and the Life Sciences'. Whilst the university's Doctoral Research College is a centralized structure that provides some university-wide research training, doctoral education is developed on a local level in each Faculty; whilst there is indeed porosity between this provision it is able to be developed and adapted to its disciplinary contexts. The Faculty of Arts, Design and Media encompasses the largest cohort of Ph.D. students at the university. Whilst numbers fluctuate, there are around 160 students working within and across eight specialist disciplinary schools of Art, Architecture and Design, English, Fashion and Textiles, Jewelry, Media, Music and Performing Arts (the Royal

Birmingham Conservatoire) and Visual Communication. The boundaries of these disciplines are highly permeable; indeed, a Ph.D. student working in the area of design might easily find themselves in the Schools of Art, Architecture and Design, Fashion and Textiles, Jewelry or Visual Communication depending on their research. In addition, cross-disciplinary supervisory teams provide fertile ground for Ph.D. students to work across multiple Schools and under the University's STEAM agenda, which encourages cross-disciplinary collaboration between the Arts and STEM subjects, a number of Ph.D. students also work across faculties.

Arts, Design and Media Ph.D. students thus form an extremely diverse cohort. There are a number of students who do work in fairly traditional projects and draw on established methods and approaches. Yet the vast majority undertake research that deals at least in some part with the messiness of practice; from those approaching their artistic practice *as* research, in which creative work is submitted as part of the thesis, to practice forming part of the research process and practitioners undertaking more 'theoretical' Ph.Ds that interrogate an other's practice. Many actively critique established research paradigms, conceptions of knowledge and the thesis itself. Whilst the discourse of the art practice research Ph.D. has emerged specifically from areas of performance, creative writing, dance and fine art as I have discussed, Arts, Design and Media students appropriate and draw on elements of art practice research in relation to their own contexts. The Ph.D. as incorporating creative or artistic practice is not set up as separate to the 'traditional' Ph.D. Rather, all research is approached as part of a spectrum in which there are different nuances of practice to avoid setting up a binary between research involving creative practice and that which does not, and risk 'othering' practice against more traditional research. Within the context of the Arts, Design and Media then, Ph.D. students can be seen to inhabit a dissonant terrain. One the one hand, they disrupt the cohesion and 'purity' of art practice research found in discrete disciplinary areas such as the visual arts or performance. On the other hand, areas such as Media and Cultural Studies, which might otherwise draw heavily on conventions within the Social Sciences, are themselves disrupted with the positioning and framing of practice as crucial to the research.

For the last five years, I have developed doctoral education in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media at my institution as an academic (or indeed artist-researcher or para-academic). Doctoral provision is underpinned by two primary areas of pedagogic practice: the 'Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice' (PGCert), a formal accredited course for Ph.D. students and 'The PGR Studio,' a non-accredited and more fluid space of provision throughout the Ph.D. journey. The PGCert is a mandatory course for all new Ph.D. students across the university. It has a university-wide course structure underpinned by a set of learning objectives relating to the theoretical, methodological and practical dimensions of the research, as well as critical reflection of the development of the researcher. Whilst administered centrally by the university's Doctoral Research College, its development and delivery is entirely devolved to each of the university's four faculties. This has afforded a unique and crucial opportunity to develop the course specifically in the context of the Arts, Design and Media that exposes the complexities and dissonance of art practice research alongside the many nuances of research practice extending beyond the arts into areas of professional practice (for example, journalism, curation and museology) and where practice might function heavily but not manifest in and through the creation of artistic work per se.

The PGCert runs over a ten-week period and includes a mixture of seminars, talks and smaller group workshops. These cover the principles of research, such as positioning oneself as a researcher (in terms of literature and within wider communities of practice), developing research questions and ethics. Importantly, in the very first week there is a focused session on praxis and practice making this aspect of research visible from the outset in reference to the discourse and complexities of art practice research I have previously discussed. Rather than limit this discussion to the first week, it is unraveled as a thread to be unpicked throughout the course so as to provide another—potentially contrary—lens for students to approach their research. Grounded by this discussion, the definition of 'literature' for example, is critiqued as potentially also including compositions, exhibitions and artistic work. Longer interactive workshops are facilitated by two members of the core course team, who (deliberately) represent different approaches to these

principles themselves and thus do not always agree. Colleagues and I act as provocateurs to encourage students to unthink what they think they know, challenge assumptions and actively critique both emergent and more established ways of working to push epistemological boundaries and the various doxa intertwined with the fields, paradigms and practices in which they are working.

Sessions interrogating the 'principles of research' are followed by talks by invited researchers centered upon an exploration of these principles in practice alongside those focused on 'methods in practice'. The ethos of provocation and indeed eliciting critical sites of para-dox is continued in these sessions. Rather than teach researchers *how to do* research, the talks instead aim to *expose* students to the multiplicities of approaches that peers—from professors to fellow Ph.D. students—have developed. These could themselves be said to purposefully represent a sense of dissonance whereby 'the practice of dissensus is a commitment to thinking alongside and in parallel to another with no pressure to reach agreement' (Rolfe 2014: 4). Talks range from creative approaches to using fairly traditional methods, such as using archives and ethnography, to performance-lectures that enact alternative forms of articulation, writing and dissemination, for example research *about* and *through* art writing articulated via art writing, and everything in-between. Within broad methodological themes such as 'working with participants' and 'dealing with the performative, reflexive and experimental,' speakers that explore established ways of working are deliberately juxtaposed against those that embrace, question and push the boundaries of art practice research to prompt critical discussion. The facilitation of enabling learners to learn how to learn and thus do doctoral research (in the most part by the doing itself through sites of praxis in the course and critical reflexivity) is arguably here what elicits doctoralness itself. In doing so, the PGCert establishes an inter/multi/cross/trans-disciplinary and cultural Arts, Design and Media community and critical collaborative collective that brings researchers together from smaller disciplinary schools (themselves split geographically across the City over a number of sites). The course at once sits within and respects the parameters of the university-wide course structure and the academe, yet at the same time it is purposefully dissonant

and sets up the conditions to challenge and rupture the normative structures and conventions of both research and researcher development through facilitating sites of praxis enacted through debate, conflicting points of view and by pushing pedagogical boundaries themselves.

This provision is complemented by The PGR Studio, which forms doctoral provision throughout the entire Ph.D. journey, as well as facilitating routes into and out of Ph.D. study. It is an experimental, creative and practice-based space that resonates across all the academic schools and disciplines in the faculty (though not specifically for practice-based researchers). Studio here can be seen as a generative space associated with new thinking and the cross-fertilization of ideas removed from the power structures of the university and might be interpreted in any number of contexts such as writing, film, visual art, theatre, music, radio. Importantly, The PGR Studio is not a physical space per se; that is, an actual studio with a fixed location inhabited by Ph.D. students. Whilst indeed a number of institutions do have spaces for Ph.D. students, these are difficult to secure and often under threat as space allocation is instead prioritized for undergraduate students as the dominant student population and consumers of the university. These spaces also tend to be in the form of PGR hubs for all postgraduate researchers and are often university-wide spaces situated in Graduate Schools or equivalent. There has been much written about the importance of community in the formation of identity, particularly for practitioners transitioning to being doctoral researchers (Hockey 2008: 117). Whilst there are benefits to the crossdisciplinarity afforded by university-wide doctoral cohorts found in Graduate Schools, there is a risk that this undermines the richness of more delineated communities of practice that are inflected by the specificities and complexities of discourses such as art practice research and their potential as a pedagogic space. Indeed, if a Ph.D. student in the area of music composition is located within a Conservatoire, they are too positioned amongst peers in their field that can facilitate their integration into a research community and enhance their professional identity formation within that particular field. The fluid nature and conceptualization of The PGR Studio as a spatiality is thus open, inclusive and porous yet disrupts the potential

homogenization of students under the label of 'PGR' in their physical habitus within the university; rather it enables them to be embedded into the academe as an expert on their own terms.

As a faculty-wide entity aimed at students across Arts, Design and Media, The PGR Studio facilitates *opportunities* and *moments* within its spatiotemporality for crossdisplinarity, as well as the unknown, creativity, experimentation and risk. Provision is nomadic and takes place across multiple sites both within, outside and on the peripheries of the physical university in which students across different schools are brought together. There is also an online space (comprising a professional website and growing social media presence) and so the spaces of learning and teaching that are opened up are multiple and fluid. Across these spaces doctoral learning might be explicit but more often than not is embodied, tacit and praxical. The PGR Studio does not cohere with the logic of the academe in that it is not-quite-a-course and not-quite-a-program, yet at the same time this is arguably precisely what affords a great amount of freedom in which The PGR Studio can exist on its own terms both within and against the structures, processes and understandings of research in the university. In many ways, it embodies the very concept of the *paraversity*. To refer to one of its online hashtags, The PGR Studio is 'a safe place for unsafe things'; thus the para-academic may very well cohere, in their very incoherence, to *become* doctoral. Structurally this facet of doctoral education can be seen to resonate with the dissonance of art practice research in which its very dissonance creates spaces of learning, teaching and becoming for the Ph.D. researcher.

Rather than running a program of events 'on the ground' normally found within Researcher Development provision, I have developed a conceptual framework of 'research-practice-pedagogy' that underpins Arts, Design and Media doctoral education. As I have argued elsewhere, this framework can be understood as a multidimensional, heterogeneous, plural and fluid topology (Taylor 2018). Structurally, it is malleable and comprises various components and interrelations that remain unaffected by reflexivity and flux amongst its parts. As I will elaborate, a multicity of transformational, performative and embodied spaces of learning and teaching are opened up through formal, informal, implicit

and explicit pedagogic events. Such a topology allows for an element of reflexivity, performativity and the emergence of relevant provision subject to repeated adjustment like the qualities of art practice research itself. Rather than separate provision for those explicitly engaged with artistic research, all of The PGR Studio's activities are underpinned by an ethos that all research, regardless or not of its relation to practice, is indeed research and its relation to practice represents a spectrum of approaches. In developing an expanded understanding of doctoral training *as* pedagogy, this lens enables doctoral education to be approached as embodying, celebrating and acknowledging the nuances of practice in the context of the Arts, Design and Media and thus as enfolded into the fabric of the topology of research-practice-pedagogy as signified in the imbrication of these normally separate fields.

This *Is* Research: Opening up Sites of Praxis and Practice

The provision facilitated by The PGR Studio incorporates a mixture of workshops and explicit training alongside happenings, events and 'stuff' that encompass more performative and tacit spaces of doctoral learning. In the same way that it is acknowledged that there is a plurality of ways to understand practice as part of the Ph.D., there are a plurality of activities to meet the needs of such a diverse cohort. Indeed, training opportunities (i.e. how to use particular referencing software) are set alongside workshops including articulating research through spoken word, Ph.D. writing retreats exploring different aspects of the writing process with space to write, and viva survival where students, viva 'survivors' and an experienced viva examiner navigate different aspects of the viva through a discursive and interactive format. Rather than having strictly social events per se, happenings, events and 'stuff' enable Ph.D. researchers to engage with aspects of Researcher Development via social and/or creative means. They could in many ways be seen to form an alternative habitus as a site of learning. For example, pop-up 'Coffee & Chats' take place across various coffee shops on site as well as those peripheral to the campus. Researchers are invited to meet and chat; this

provides a way to interact with peers in what can otherwise be a potentially isolating experience and thus enhances wellbeing. At the same time, it is a way to share information on the ground and often promotes discussion around the Ph.D. experience itself in which students can listen, share experiences and connect with peers in their wider research environment and thus enhances the skills of researchers such as networking and knowledge exchange. As part of a larger and more formalized framework, there is also a peer mentoring scheme (see Fig. 2) that runs throughout the year where Ph.D. researchers at different stages in the Ph.D. are paired with one another. This provides both psycho-social

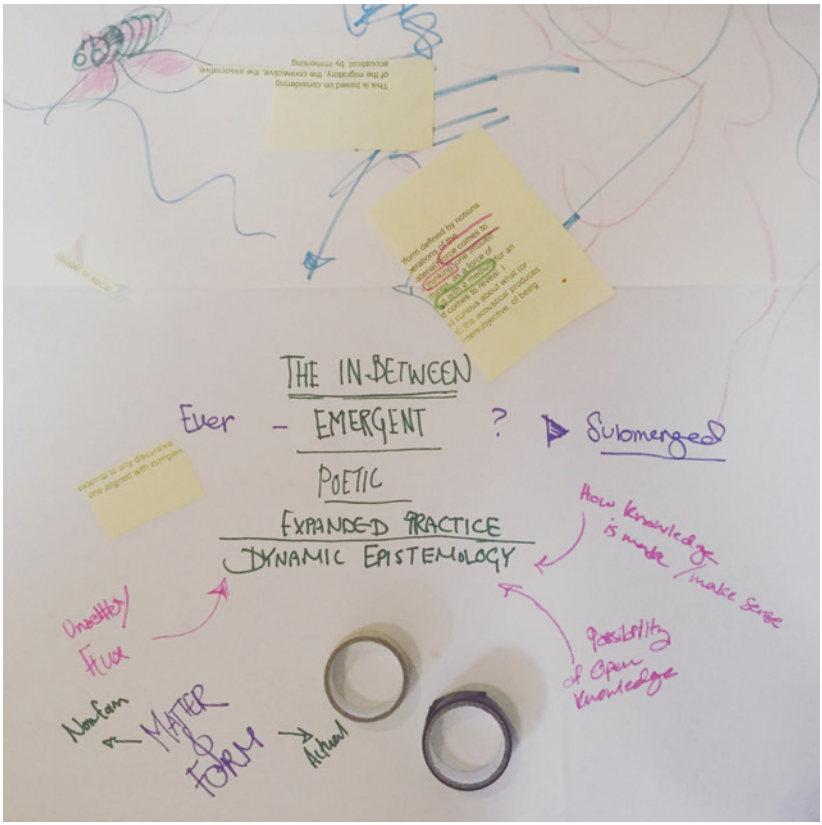

Fig. 2 Images gathered from participants as part of the Arts, Design & Media Ph.D. mentoring scheme

support in addition to the supervisory team but also enhances the skills of mentees and mentors (Boultwood et al. 2015). These events also subvert the normative neoliberal logic of being too busy to care for oneself by opening up time and space for 'radical care' (Hawkins 2018).

More structured and formalized happenings that at the same time are spaces of fluidity are also set up, such as a mid-year Ph.D. festival in which students share their work in progress in the form of pecha kucha-style talks, provocations and poster presentations lasting no more than five minutes each. Students are invited to apply via a proposal including a single image and what they will present in under 280 characters (akin to a tweet). Rather than teaching Ph.D. students *how to* present their work, think creatively, write proposals or indeed *about* disseminating their research as tends to be adopted in Researcher Development Programs, the conditions are set up where this happens praxically and students learn by doing, as well as learn about learning by learning. Moreover, the festival—called Inside//Out—provides a platform for researchers to get 'inside' ideas 'out' there, thus enacting, making visible and celebrating the different methods, modes of articulation and approaches to research in the Arts, Design and Research through its performative utterance. Indeed, previous events have included research in the field of experimental opera articulated through the medium of opera and research exploring the body in film art and virtual reality incorporating an actual virtual reality experience. The sheer creativity of the event is embodied in participants receiving festival wristbands on arrival, as well as coffee vouchers, pizza and drinks in red party cups (even for those who consider themselves to be undertaking 'traditional' research) and facilitates a generative space that embodies the potential of 'studio' itself that also enables criticality, socialization and community-building.

The pedagogic possibilities afforded by the festival are enacted on a larger scale through the PGR Studio annual conference, encapsulated in previous themes such as 'Research Matter(s)' and 'Beyond Borders?' (see Fig. 3). The conference, attracting around 100 delegates including Ph.D. students within and beyond the university, and from within and beyond the UK, is conceived as a significant curriculum event similar to the Arts and Design degree show. The conference rethinks the

Fig. 3 Selected images of speakers at 'Beyond Borders: Approaches and Pathways to Arts, Design and Media Research' conference, July 2017

conventional conference format and provides a vital platform for students to experiment intellectually, as well as in the dissemination and form of the research itself. 'Curriculum' as conceived here—as well as 'teaching and learning'—thus does not cohere with that of the

neoliberal university; spaces are set up for Ph.D. students to expand their sense of doctoralness through being exposed to, questioning and dismantling various conventions and thus arguably learn without being taught as such. Underpinning this provision is something I have called a 'hidden employability curriculum'. Rather than teaching students *how to* apply for, chair or organize conferences (to enhance one's employability as a researcher), these activities enable sites of practice and praxis. These activities can be comprehended in a temporal sense in that they are scheduled and can be understood as discrete entities. Yet it is within this temporal framework that multiple spaces are opened up that facilitate nuances of teaching and learning on an ontological and epistemological level. Indeed, for Atkinson, flexible teaching-learning spaces—or pedagogic events—not wholly contained by learning outcomes accommodate unpredictable or unexpected directions in learning where both learners and teachers take risks, and form real learning through a new or changed ontological state (2013: 138).

Crucially, all of this work is approached *as* research; through pilot projects, action research and mechanisms such as surveys and interviews to elicit data in its various forms, for example through visual images, social media, narratives and the 'stuff' itself. Indeed, in the 'Beyond Borders' conference (2017), a special journal issue was created in the space of a day including creative work made during or in response to the conference itself (Hamilton and Raine 2017). This unveiled and captured valuable data from participants that revealed its pedagogical dimension; as one participant, a visiting Ph.D. student from a Nigerian University stated in the journal: 'It will be a summer to remember … when I stepped over the intellectual border into a new world of possibilities.' In order to effectively approach this work as research, The PGR Studio comprises a staff-student team who are all active researchers engaged with the different nuances of practice and represent different disciplines. This includes two members of staff (including myself) and the employment of Research Assistants from the Arts, Design and Media faculty who are current or recently completed Ph.D. students. This system to some extent challenges the concept of the academic precariat as outlined previously in establishing paid recognized positions

that enhance the employability of students and postdocs in an increasingly competitive market and where applicants are mentored through the process (i.e. in workshops and through feedback). Moreover, rather than enforcing a top-down approach, working in collaboration with Ph.D. students and postdocs themselves (who have in turn collaborated with other Ph.D. students to develop events) means that PGR Studio provision is informed and shaped by its community itself and maintains its grassroots ethos. Evidencing, theorizing and conceptualizing this work, and disseminating it in the sector does not necessarily mean that permission has been granted to do certain things. Rather, I have been emboldened to do them anyway with the knowledge that this evidence supports a pedagogy which is dissonant, disruptive, messy and unruly in a positive way. In another sense, such evidence also justifies failure and testing things out. After all, this *is* research.

Following Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger 1957), humans are innately driven to hold attitudes and beliefs in harmony to create cognitive consistency. By nature, we try to remove dissonance. Indeed, operationally, administratively, financially and otherwise, dissonance would create conflicting processes as well as behaviors and attitudes. The university would be in chaos. Rather than resisting educational structures, I would like to propose that thinking about dissonance as underpinned by the intertwining of research-practice-pedagogy, can be thought of in positive terms and as a site of empowerment; for Ph.D. researchers themselves, the Arts and Design Ph.D. and in developing doctoral pedagogy that acknowledges and respects structures yet at the same time politely disrespects them. This relates to Atkinson's 'Pedagogy of the not known' (which he also notes could be called 'Pedagogy against the state' or 'Pedagogy of the event') whereby learners and teachers are positioned as pedagogical subjects through specific discourses and practices that constitute learning and teaching in which they are formed, regulated and normalized (2013: 136). Following Atkinson, in order to challenge the power of the norm when it is no longer useful we must shift from the subject as an *effect* of discourse to being formed critically *in relation to* norms. Rather than teaching *how to do* research, the framework I have developed and its activities and spaces value

community, collaboration, mess and crossdisciplinarity in which students as subjects—understood pedagogically on an epistemological and ontological level—actively shape their own paradigms of learning and development. Within the terrain of doctoral education I have laid out, pedagogic events can be seen to enable not just learning and teaching, but also becoming—and on an onto-epistemological level—whereby embodied experiences enable the self to be organized, recognized and constituted within this framework no longer understood as norms (Atkinson 2013: 139).

In reference to credit descriptors as defining what is expected of a learning outcome in terms of 'a defined and *bounded* learning activity [my emphasis]' (SEEC 2016: 1) as discussed previously, doctoral education in the Arts and Design can instead be understood as defined and *unbounded*. I contend that the Arts and Design Ph.D. could perhaps be said to comprise doctoral borderlands and is underpinned by a counter-cartographic logic (Rogoff 2000: 75). It instead purposefully occupies a spatiotemporality not defined or separated by boundaries, territories or indeed dichotomies (such as practice-led/non-practice-led); neither conforming to nor totally in opposition to narratives of linearity or dominant epistemologies, but a fertile space of criticality and of creativity. Indeed, to follow Rolfe, the para-doxical is not inside/outside the orthodoxical university, the perversity doesn't exist 'in space' as such—it operates like a rhizome and is connected with anything other, entangled with as many people and projects as possible (Rolfe 2014: 4). It could be understood as a space where 'rules' exist differently on their own terms in relation to the wider institution. There is a disruption to the norms, structures and assumptions. Yet for Arts and Design Ph.D. study this disruption promotes rigor, facilitates criticality and could indeed be said to be doctoral.

Notes

1. Whilst it is difficult to disaggregate numbers of doctoral students in the US based on publicly available data, Australia has the same proportion of doctoral students as the UK at 4% (Australian Government Department of Education and Training 2016). In Europe the percentage

is slightly higher for example, with 2015 figures in Germany at 7%, and Sweden at 5% (Eurostat European Union Statistical Office 2015).

2. Postgraduate Researcher or PGR encompasses a broad range of research-oriented degrees at postgraduate level and above, including Masters of Research (MRes), Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.), Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Ph.D. by Publication and the Professional Doctorate (ProfDoc).
3. Quality Assurance Agency, Arts and Humanities Research Council, Research Councils UK, Vitae, The Concordat to Support the Development of Researchers.
4. These include practice-led research, practice-based research, research through practice, research for practice, research into practice, art-based research, art practice as research, research by design, art practice research, research-led practice, practice as research.

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