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BOOK REVIEW: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH ASSESSMENT IN ARCHITECTURE, MUSIC, AND THE ARTS - DISCUSSING DOCTORATENESS

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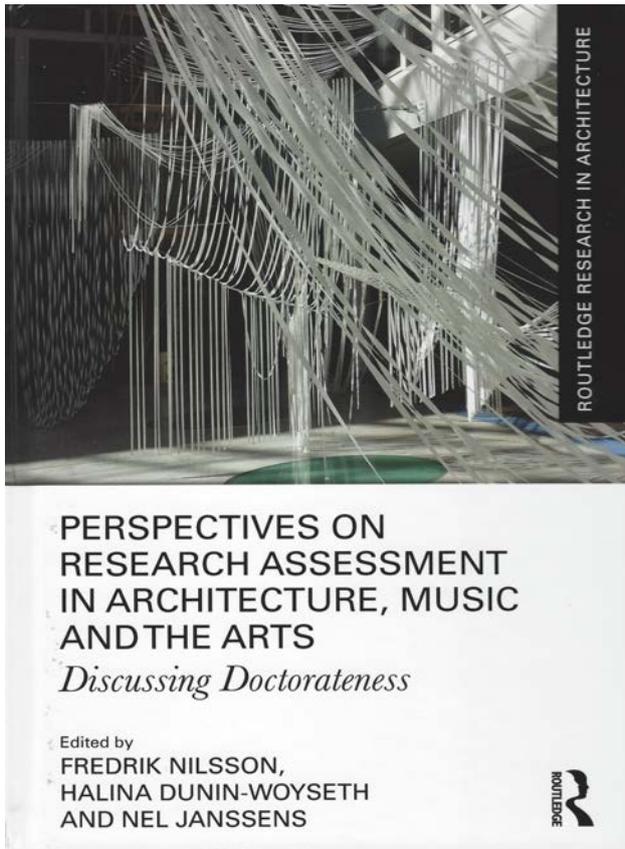
Abstract

'Perspectives on Research Assessment in Architecture, Music, and the Arts – Discussing Doctorateness,' edited by Fredrik Nilsson, Halina Dunin-Woyseth, and Nel Janssens, is a new important undertaking that re-establishes the essence, values, and needs of research in architecture, music, and the arts. Divided in three sections that accommodate twelve contributions, the book encompasses arguments, frameworks, experiments and experiences written by a group of eminent scholars, academics, as well as doctoral researchers, from various fields that include architecture, urban design, global culture, music, art and design, and management and social sciences. The book is trans-disciplinary in nature and breaks the boundaries between the overarching disciplines of these fields. What this book offers is an invaluable resource for educators, academics, practitioners in the relevant disciplines, and higher education institutions needing to reconsider their assessment methods of doctoral research to meet emerging demands within the creative and cultural industries. A series of conceptual and practical inspirations that stem from a wide spectrum of concepts, arguments, case studies demonstrate experimental and innovative assessment approaches of 'Doctorateness.' This is not all, while the book paves the road to openly discuss innovative assessment approaches of doctoral research, it also provides the basis for thinking about tenure and promotion criteria for academics in architecture, music, and the arts.

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'Perspectives on Research Assessment in Architecture, Music, and the Arts – Discussing Doctorateness,' edited by Fredrik Nilsson, Halina Dunin-Woyseth, and Nel Janssens, is a new important undertaking that re-establishes the essence, values, and needs of research in architecture, music, and the arts. Divided in three sections that accommodate twelve contributions, the book encompasses arguments, frameworks, experiments and experiences written by a group of eminent scholars, academics, as well as doctoral researchers, from various fields that include architecture, urban design, global culture, music, art and design, and management and social sciences. The book is trans-disciplinary in nature and breaks the boundaries between the overarching disciplines of these fields.

The first section of the book involves three contributions by Michael Biggs, Halina Dunin-Woyseth and Fredrik Nilsson, and Anne Solberg. The section is a contribution towards understanding the notion of

'Doctorateness.' it starts by 'Doctorateness: where should we look for evidence?' a chapter from Michael Biggs, an emeritus professor of aesthetics and a leading figure in arts research. Biggs instigates a critical discussion on the dialectic relationship between the societal context or what he calls 'social authorisation' and the professional/academic context and its underlying values and norms in which doctorates are developed and assessed. Biggs generates important arguments about competence and contribution of doctoral research and proposes four essential quadrants through which evidence can be examined towards an institutional theory of artistic research. Arguing that such an institutional theory is a product of rhetorical and social factors, the quadrants involve extrinsic/intrinsic and generic/specific aspects. Primarily, Biggs appears to dismiss the idea that specific criteria should be used for assessment of doctorates but calls for meaningful evaluation, which is defined within the framework of the values and worldviews of the specialist community of a disciplinary area. Interestingly, he maintains that while the outcomes should be meaningful and significant for a discipline and that they differ across disciplines, they share certain common characteristics that qualify a candidate for Doctorateness. While I believe Biggs' argument enriches the discourse on research in the arts, it does not depart dramatically from mainstream practices in assessing doctorates, at least in architecture.

The second chapter is by Halina Dunin-Woyseth, professor emerita at Oslo School of Architecture and Design with expertise in epistemology of architecture and Fredrik Nilsson, professor of architectural theory and Head of Architecture at Chalmers University of Technology with interests in interdependency of theory, conceptual thinking, and design practice. Building on their experience from various doctoral programmes in Western European institutions, they offer conceptual frameworks for understanding 'Doctorateness' as a concept and presents ideas that establish rules for appropriate assessment mechanisms



unique to the discipline of architecture and potentially allied fields. Utilizing four cases which clearly validate the frameworks they conclude that doctoral projects can be assessed through the recognition of ‘mastering multiple practices’ while emphasizing the synergy between these practices, critics and practitioners. A key component of their work demonstrates the need to introduce new quality criteria while calling for continuously redefining ‘Doctorateness’ within evolving and adaptable frameworks. This chapter is important in many ways, but specifically in the sense that it widens the debate through advocating the culture of evidence within emerging epistemic communities.

The first chapter can be viewed as abstract/intellectual in nature and the second can be regarded as theoretical but utilizing cases as validating mechanisms. Unlike these two chapters, the third chapter by Anne Solberg, ceramic artist, art jurist and PhD candidate in cultural studies, looks at the formal process for assessing doctoral research within the European Union. Her work places emphasis on the challenges facing the third cycle of education—‘Doctorateness’ in architecture, design, and the arts in the context of EU Bologna Declaration and Dublin Descriptors. She interrogates how higher education institutions and the relevant communities are receiving these accords and declarations, while considering the factors of obligation and commitment. Solberg’s postulation that assessment of ‘Doctorateness’ lies within academic expertise and thus both the academic community as well as doctoral candidates are defining what constitutes ‘Doctorateness’ is open for discussion. Palpably, the three chapters of this first section offer important insights and comprehensive perspectives on the way forward with research in architecture, music, and the arts.

The second section of the book is constituted in six contributions that offer experiences on the development and assessment of doctoral research within various disciplines. One key contribution, by Oya Atalay Franck—architect, educator, and architectural historian—examines doctoral programs at Swiss schools of architecture and highlights the commonalities and differences between a doctorate and a doctorate in architectural design as well as key issues related to design-triggered research process and research by design process. In concluding her contribution, she makes a strong reference to the classical piece of Nigel Cross on the “*Designerly Ways of Knowing*,” where fundamental criteria are considered essential for all and any research work: *purposive, inquisitive, informed, methodical, and communicable*. In essence, these criteria should form the basis for making judgments about doctoral research. Oya’s contribution can be regarded as a prologue for subsequent chapters in this section, especially the experiences and examples presented by Murray Fraser on UCL and Westminster in the UK and by Colin Fudge and Adriana Partal on RMIT, Australia.

Murray Fraser, professor of architecture and global culture at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, outlines the development and evolution of two doctoral programmes in two key institutions in London, but with a focus on practice-based research. He calls for openness and for allowing room for experimentation and discusses the criteria involved in this. However, while this call can be endorsed by many in architectural academia in the sense of developing responsive knowledge and engaging with practice, one can argue that the case is different in many educational institutions in the UK where practice-based research is not fully recognized as a clear form of research, and in many cases falls within the boundaries of consulting or knowledge exchange activities. Along the same line of thinking, the two chapters on practice-based music research and doctoral scholarship elaborate on the notion of performance as a primary criterion for assessment. The ending chapter of this section argues for the ‘social’ in design research and how this can form a type



of research that has a critical social dimension where specialists and stakeholders co-create knowledge. The chapter argues for engaging with social and societal issues while incorporating artistic and design-based methods. The third section of the book presents three futuristic views on the process of knowledge building and generates questions about how current transformations in various disciplines could influence the way in which research in architecture, music, and the arts will be conducted and assessed in the future.

While I would have liked to see a discussion on how various futuristic approaches are contrasted with mainstream thinking about doctoral research, this book is a deliberate contribution that offers a new angle on how doctoral research may shape the future of creative industries. Looking at architecture as a professional and academic discipline one could pose the question of how architectural and building science research or architectural humanities, or architectural research that draws from social science techniques can be mapped into this new perspective and whether there will be a space for these. These issues can establish the basis for developing another contribution where additional questions can be interrogated.

While this is a concise and quick review of an excellent contribution, it must be stated that it does not give sufficient justice to the ideas, concepts, examples, and visions introduced in the book. By and large, the book offers a comprehensive set of perspectives on knowledge building and revolutionizes conventional conceptions and assessment practices in doctoral research in architecture and allied disciplines. What 'Perspectives on Research Assessment in Architecture, Music, and the Arts – Discussing Doctorateness,' offers is an invaluable resource for educators, academics, practitioners in the relevant disciplines, and higher education institutions needing to reconsider their assessment methods of doctoral research to meet emerging demands within the creative and cultural industries. The editors must be congratulated on their effort in articulating a series of conceptual and practical inspirations that stem from a wide spectrum of concepts, arguments, case studies that demonstrate experimental assessment approaches of 'Doctorateness.' This is not all, while the book paves the road to openly discuss innovative assessment approaches of doctoral research, it also provides the core for thinking about tenure and promotion criteria for academics in architecture, music, and the arts.

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