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Titel:  
**Tensions and legitimacy: a doctoral candidate perspective on  
artistic research in academic contexts**

Erschienen in:

Zeitschrift: Hochschulmanagement (HM)  
Erscheinungsjahr: 2021  
Ausgabe: 3  
Jahrgang: 16  
Seiten: 83-89  
ISSN: 1860-3041  
Verlag: UniversitätsVerlagWebler  
Ort: Bielefeld

DOI: 10.53183/HM-2021-3\_83

**Impressum/Verlagsanschrift:** UniversitätsVerlagWebler, Reepeweg 5, 33617 Bielefeld

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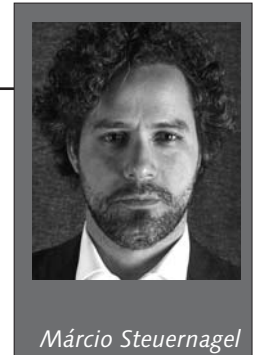
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## Tensions and legitimacy: a doctoral candidate perspective on artistic research in academic contexts



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In this paper I examine characteristics, advantages, and challenges of artistic research as an institutional path for a doctoral qualification. I do so from my personal perspective as an artistic doctoral candidate in a European university in the context of the Bologna process. I discuss the tension between academic demands and artistic practice from an institutional and personal perspective, and how this affects the reasons, choices, and possibilities available for doctoral research in the arts. Finally, I reflect on the practical outcomes of pursuing an artistic-scientific doctoral qualification, including considerations on meeting quality standards, employability, funding acquisition, and participating in the institutional consolidation of a new epistemic frame, which transforms institutional deadlocks into productive tension, bringing a legitimacy proper to artistic research.

Back in Brazil, where I come from, I hold two positions in two different universities: I serve as orchestral conductor at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) and hold a professorship at the State University of Paraná (UNESPAR), teaching conducting and composition. In both positions – especially in the latter –, there has always been a sense of unease: a tension between my artistic formation, field of expertise and interests, on the one hand, and the formal requirements of an academic institution on the other. In short: a tension between being an artist and being an academic. But I am, firstly, a composer and conductor. My strongest assets are eminently artistic. Before taking up the first of these positions, I had already invested almost twenty years in my musical formation, starting well before higher education, as is common in this field. But the requirements of the academia tend to be of an altogether different nature. I am not referring so much to the teaching. Teaching music has, in fact if not in principle, historically been an integral part of musicianship. Being an active artistic practitioner is seen as adding value to the artist also as a teacher (Schwartz 2011, p. xxix). In this capacity there is a historically naturalized convergence between artistic practice and teaching. I am also not referring to the rather mundane demands of management and bureaucracy, which are unavoidable aspects of most institutionalized work. The main point of tension lies in this other pillar of the university's *raison d'être*: research. Because it is not only a question of everyday work (as is the case with teaching and bureaucratic demands), but ultimately a question of legitimacy of knowledge. More to the point: a question of the legitimacy of specifically artistic knowledge, and the place and role of this knowledge in academia, particularly in relation to its validity as research. Writing from the personal perspective of an artistic doctoral candidate in a European university in the context of

the Bologna process, in this short essay I argue that artistic research holds a promising and potent key in transforming institutional deadlocks into productive tension. Using my Brazilian context as a framing background, but focusing on the European scene, I discuss the tensions between academic demands and artistic practices from institutional and personal perspectives, and how these play into the reasons, choices, and possibilities available when seeking a doctoral degree in the arts. Finally, I reflect on the practical outcomes of pursuing an artistic-scientific doctoral qualification, including considerations on meeting quality standards, employability, funding acquisition, and participating in the institutional consolidation of a distinct epistemic frame. Although I engage with scholarly literature on artistic research, I do so from my subjective perspective as a participant in the scene. Therefore, I do not presume to offer an objective theoretical chapter. Such a separation would go against the perspective adopted, and arguably against the very frame of knowledge artistic research specifically offers. Instead, the form of the text continuously alternates between scholarly argumentation, reflexions on aspects common to other doctoral students in the arts, and my own personal context and perspective. The latter repeatedly returns, performing the function of a musical rondo.

### 1. Tensions and institutional uneasiness between art and academia

#### 1.1 The academic drift: shifting institutional relations in the context of the Bologna process

The uneasy situation I described is not uncommon, nor specific to the Brazilian academia. Henk Borgdorff starts his chapter on "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research" by recognizing this tension and uneasiness in the relations between arts and the academia (Borgdorff

2011, p. 44). Whether by consequence of the Bologna process or by other more local, contextual and older reasons (Kälvemark 2011, p. 8), countries in Europe and UK have, in the last three decades, experienced a convergence between institutions of artistic education, such as *Kunsthochschulen* and conservatoires, and academic institutions, including universities. In some cases, this happened by merging a number of smaller art schools; e.g., in Switzerland (Kälvemark 2011, p. 7). In other cases, art schools were absorbed by universities, or created in the context of already established universities (Kälvemark 2011, p. 20). Certain countries have been more resistant to the Bologna process by stressing the autonomy of art schools and specifically artistic formation. Germany is, perhaps, the strongest example of this stance (Kälvemark 2011, p. 9). This tendency is not limited to Europe and the UK. Torsten Kälvemark mentions similar processes in Australia and in the USA in earlier decades, and on substantially different terms (Kälvemark 2011, pp. 4-5). The same process applies, I would add, also to Brazil. In Europe, notwithstanding the different approaches, the model of organization of education in three cycles that lies at the heart of the Bologna process clearly derives from the academic universities format. This is the axial paradigm around which the model gravitates (Wissenschaftsrat 2021, p. 56). Frequently "[art schools] were encouraged to define their activities in terms of the historical and general academic distinction between teaching and research," leading to "an 'academic drift' in the search for a research equivalent" (Kälvemark 2011, p. 4). This frequently leads to intensifying the tension between the artistic and the academic, as it may be increasingly expected that artists by formation be required to double as academic researchers. As many conservatoires and *Kunsthochschulen* become or coalesce into universities (Kälvemark 2011, pp. 19-20), many artists are required to become academics as well.

### 1.2 Schizophrenic configurations: navigating differing systems of values and demands in the pursuit of a doctoral qualification

This tension plays a vital role when it comes to choosing and pursuing a doctoral or doctoral-equivalent degree. In my case, as a conductor and composer, my training and expertise lay firmly in the field of artistic practice. Especially as a composer, however, this has always included a component of inquiry and discovery, of expansion of horizons, gravitating around specific interests – even though this all was rather tacit, lacking a research paradigm under which to organize it. At the Federal University of Paraná, acting as a conductor, my artistic formation seemed adequate for my work. But even in this context I experienced increasing demands that I frame my activity and the activity of my orchestra in terms of "research." This came as a consequence of larger institutional tensions regarding the role and legitimacy of artistic groups inside the university. As a professor in the State University of Paraná, the demands for research were clearer, and in line with an academic institution – even if what counts as research in the context of artistic programs in Brazilian universities remains very much an open question. Thus, frequently, the little research I pro-

duced felt as a simulacrum, created only to justify academically the very existence of my artistic production. As "it is by no means obvious that whoever is a master in the creative field, is also a master in the analytical one" (Kjørup 2011, p. 26), the feeling of falsification was hard to expunge.

Given this scenario, a main concern when choosing a doctoral program to pursue was the relationship between my artistic production and improvement and the academic development that the course of study would require and cultivate, and which would be in turn expected and harvested by both Brazilian universities when I returned with a doctoral title. To put it even more plainly: from an institutional point of view, the main requirement and expectations of the universities in acquiring a doctoral title were those linked to a traditional and scientific PhD. From a personal point of view, I wished to advance and deepen my artistic practices. This certainly involved academic engagement with scholarly literature connected to my artistic interests. But I had no wish to relegate the artistic components to the appendix of my dissertation. I had no interest to "stop being an artist" for three or four years in order to get a title which would just perpetuate this schizophrenic configuration. My own experience is by no means unique, or even an exception. These tensions appear time and again in conversations I have had in the last fifteen years with fellow musicians turned doctoral students,<sup>1</sup> most of which pursued their graduate studies in Europe, some in the USA, and a few in Brazil.<sup>2</sup> The stories repeat themselves, with small variations. Composers who have felt compelled to get a PhD in musicology in order to be validated inside traditional academic institutions, only to later feel like double impostors: a composer who attempts to do musicology for the "true academics," a musicologist who attempts to compose to the "true artists." Conductors dedicating years to writing a dissertation on musical analysis, while maintaining their true interest – their artistic practice – "on the side." Creative artists who want to advance artistic knowledge in their artistic practice within the context of universities, only to find that what is understood as "research" in narrow academic circles excludes or marginalizes the very artistic practice which started at centre. Or, on the other hand, performing artists that kept focused on the artistic practice in doctoral programs in the model associated with the American DMA – a substantial concert or portfolio at the centre, a small written technical commentary on the side – but later struggled to fit into the academia, feeling the lack of appropriate research tools or not having their artistic practice validated as research in the university context. It could be tempting to reply to the dilemmas above resorting to established divisions between "artistic practice" and "academic research": conservatories and

<sup>1</sup> I thank my fellow composers Igor Leão Maia and Felipe de Almeida Ribeiro for the recent conversations around this topic. In the same spirit, I would also like to thank my artistic doctoral colleagues at the KUG for the many conversations throughout the last three years, which have in one way or another fed these considerations on the subject of artistic research from a doctoral candidate perspective.

<sup>2</sup> In the Brazilian academia, the tension I discuss also appears at a Master level, which tends to be more academical, research-oriented and akin to a smaller version of a Doctoral program than in the European universities.

*Kunsthochschulen* on one side, universities on the other. To each their own, as it were. But this response would be insufficient, if at all possible. From an institutional point of view, it would ignore the ongoing institutional convergence between the artistic and the academic fora, mentioned above. But perhaps more importantly, it would require ignoring a substantial corpus of discussion regarding topics such as the nature and types of knowledge, trans – and interdisciplinarity, and other related issues. In short, to resort to this binary division would require ignoring the burgeoning discussion on artistic research from the last 30 years (Biggs/Karlsson 2011, p. xiv), if not longer (Kjørup 2011, p. 39). If “no fundamental separation exists between theory and practice in the arts” (Borgdorff 2006, p. 7),<sup>3</sup> it would mean capitulating to a division that most likely stems from institutional restraints, rather than from the demands of the artistic research itself.

## 2. The pursuit of an artistic-scientific doctoral degree: motivations, profiles, and domains

### 2.1 Multiple motives: a personal perspective of generalizable reasons

My decision to pursue a doctoral degree was nurtured by at least six factors: (1) a general desire to complete my formation and progress in knowledge with a third-cycle education; (2) a specific desire to be able to dedicate time and attention to the development of my compositional practice in integration with my roles as conductor and performer in a context which provided artistic possibilities at the highest level, including performer musicians to collaborate with, research resources such as a specialized library and electronic resources, and qualified feedback from professors, supervisors and peers of the highest possible level; (3) an intuition that the aspects of my creative practice that I intended to research had the potential to advance knowledge that promised to be of interest to other artists and to a larger community; (4) the opportunity to live in a cultural context of world-class artistic production; (5) the institutional expectation, especially from the State University of Paraná, that I, as a professor, should acquire a doctoral title to enhance the academic qualification of the faculty; (6) and, last but not least, the financial benefit that such a progression would entail for me. Points one, two, and five, point to a proper academic doctoral research context, even though these expectations could at least be partially fulfilled by a DMA-style program (regardless of title granted), either in a university or in a *Kunsthochschule* or similar institution. But depending on the details of the program, the risk remained that the criteria would not be completely adequate to the formal expectations of the institution.

From my perspective, other colleagues' motivations to pursue an artistic research doctoral title can also be described as a convergence of different factors. On one hand, the common profile of the artistic doctoral candidate is that of an artist who does not want to stop being an artist in order to become an academic. The few cases I know that do not really conform to this profile could perhaps be described in terms of “transcending”: col-

leagues that no longer want to be limited by their own artistic practice, but desire to take into their field of research diverse modes of knowledge that are non-discursive, non-conceptual, tacit or embodied, intuition-based, i.e., modes of knowledge that do not conform to standards of scientific knowledge. On the other hand, artistic researchers are not satisfied with only practicing their art. These artists have questions. Their interest extends beyond “doing” and “making,” and frequently encompass other fields of knowledge, some quite distinct from common domains of art. Finally, there are the practical reasons for pursuing this qualification: artists, professors and academics that desire to progress towards a doctoral qualification in order to advance their careers inside universities, or to be able to secure a position in this structure. This includes financial advancement, as well as institutional demands for qualification. And, of course, the very down-to-earth possibility to secure a job in a university or other higher education institution. This may sound rather pedestrian, but is practically relevant. In fact, the concern that graduates from artistic institutions that do not hold a PhD or equivalent doctoral title may be in significant competitive disadvantage in the job market is one of the elements that can and have pressured educational systems towards change, and specifically towards offering artistic research doctoral programmes (Wissenschaftsrat 2021, p. 58; Källemark 2011, p. 9).

### 2.2 Domains: academic institutions, artistic institutions, and the art market

The concerns expressed above might not be an issue when pursuing non-academical artistic jobs, such as a position in an orchestra. In the European context, having an academic qualification in general, and specifically a doctoral degree, is just one of many paths for artists to work towards job security. Nevertheless, along some of these paths, the “academic drift” described by Källemark has arguably made this requirement increasingly pressing. In other contexts, however, it is frequently the case that universities are the only major environment in which it is possible to pursue specific artistic interests with a minimum of financial security, both as a means of living for the artist and as funds for art production and research. There are lines of artistic production and inquiry that, while vital to the art world, simply do not survive if subject only to the rules of the market. The case of contemporary concert music is exemplary of this. In many contexts in Brazil, it is questionable whether this “free-market for the arts” exists, or at which level of maturity and financial self-sustainability. A public-funded art-practice oriented educational system akin to European conservatoires and *Kunsthochschulen* normally also does not exist or is marginally small. Even proper artistic institutions, such as orchestras, dance companies and museums, are frequently rare and constantly struggling financially. In such a context, universities become the safest option for securing a job as a productive artist,

<sup>3</sup> This is still a big “if”: Borgdorff is not stating this as his own conclusion, but rather using this axiom as an argument for defining “research in the arts” (Borgdorff 2006, pp. 6-7).



and even more so as a researching artist. And these institutions require specific qualifications. This discussion certainly exceeds the intent and possibility of this essay. But to ignore these aspects would risk naivete, by disregarding some of the fundamental reasons that may lead an artist to pursue a doctoral title.

The fact that certain artistic pursuits cannot thrive if left only to the market should not be read as weakness. To construe this as a flaw is to accept a certain worldview, arguably a capitalist, neo-liberal one. But there are other worldviews, other ways. Deniz Peters points out that "artistic research can but does not need to care for the interests of the conventional art market" (Peters 2017, p. 24). To advocate for ontological and institutional legitimacy of artistic research amounts to creating a place where these different and multiple narratives can converge, and be at home. If the diversity of reasons by which artists pursue a doctoral degree feel somehow mismatched both in the established domains of scientific academia and properly artistic circles, including the art market, new domains must be found and constructed. In taking the path of artistic research into simultaneously inhabiting and constructing this growing domain, the artistic doctoral candidate can re-signify the tensions of not-belonging in positive terms.

### 3. Positive intrinsic multiplicity in artistic research: challenges of quality assurance with open criteria

The multiplicity of reasons by which a student pursues an artistic research doctoral degree is reflected in the multiplicity of artistic research itself. In "Pleading for Plurality: Artistic and Other Kinds of Research," Søren Kjørup defends that this is a positive aspect of artistic research, and one that should be maintained, explored, and defended (Kjørup 2011, p. 24). Yet, accepting this multiplicity does not mean denying that all sorts of tensions persist. Rather, this fundamental openness brings challenges of its own. The need for quality assurance is a good example and a critical point in this discussion (Nowotny 2011, p. xx). "Quality assurance, peer-review procedures and research funding" are more problematic than accepting the more theoretical epistemological and methodological validity of artistic research (Kälve-mark 2011, p. 11). That quality standards must be somehow verified and assured as a requisite for granting a doctoral title is beyond dispute. But what exactly are these standards cannot be completely defined a priori, according to the intrinsic multiplicity that Kjørup defends. The criteria, therefore, must be defined at each level of institutionalization for each research project. What the standards of artistic research are for each doctoral program, for each potential supervisor, for the specific demands of each project, must be, to some extent, always defined anew. This does not amount at a superficial ad hocism, for these specifications are based on an already substantial scholarly discussion, particularly regarding the ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies of artistic research. Nevertheless, even if they are built using such criteria, the standards of quality assurance cannot pre-

viously be defined by closed concepts. As Kjørup argues (Kjørup 2011, pp. 34-36), the situation is akin to a Wittgensteinian "family resemblance": we cannot definitely say what artistic research *is*, but only discuss examples, and conclude by saying: "These and similar things are called artistic research." When Peters states that his six propositions are "sufficient rather than necessary" (Peters 2017, 24), he is also setting in motion mobile principles for evaluation.

The practice of this fundamental openness can be challenging. To enter an artistic-scientific doctoral program, such as the *Dr. artium* programme I pursue at the *Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Graz* (KUG), requires meeting certain criteria. Thus, partially, a specific institution defines, from the multiplicity of possibilities, what artistic research is in the context of that institution, setting out specific standards. Still, the program in itself wishes to preserve the fundamental openness that characterizes the field. Thus, the same tension between fundamental openness, context-specific determination, and quality evaluation, that applies to the entry process, applies throughout the program, up until the final *rigorosum*. In the program at KUG, we have a yearly evaluation, with a special focus on the assessment after the first year. In these evaluations, the doctoral candidate can fail or pass, and receives grades. But the qualitative standards he or she must meet are not clearly defined a priori. I do not point this out as a critique, but only as a statement of inevitable tensions: if a program, institution, or field, desire to maintain a fundamental openness as to what is possible, they cannot at the same time set standards that are inflexible or too specific. Yet, some sort of quality control is in order, to maintain the quality of input, output and indeed formation and, ultimately, to justify the very existence of the field of artistic research inside the academy. The positivity of the openness therefore does not come without cost. The tension remains – only now multiplied into multiple axes of tensions.

### 4. Productive tensions, and how they operate in my own research

The path of artistic research, however, does bring a substantial change to the nature of this tension. In the first scenario I described, one of opposition between academia and artistic practice, the tension is arguably unproductive or even counterproductive. At the worst, it sets the artist in opposition to the academic, leading to a gridlock, a dead end. At best, the person manages to "live two lives," so to speak: to be an outstanding or at least sufficient artist by artistic standards, and to be an outstanding or at least sufficient academic by scientific standards. This is possible, but understandably rare. Nonetheless, the cost in time and energy demanded by each distinct path takes a toll on the other, and on the artist/academic.

What artistic research offers is a route to transforming the tension into productive tension (Borgdorff *apud* Kälve-mark 2011, p. 21). To understand multiplicity as convergences is more productive than to understand multiplicity as parallel doublings or opposing cancellations. This amounts to a change in legitimacy: the tension is no

longer a symptom that something is wrong or misplaced, but an expected and even desired consequence of the fundamental openness of the field of inquiry. This change does not come without cost. The insecurity of dealing with quality evaluations by standards that cannot be previously set is one of these costs. But it is, from my experience, a price well worth paying.

In my own research, this turn towards a legitimate productive tension has resulted in openly and unapologetically placing my artistic practice at the centre of the inquiry. I research imperfection in music as a fundamental performative and compositional dimension. The topic of imperfection/perfection is evidently philosophically fraught. From the beginning of my research, there was a risk that aesthetics and other highly academic discourses on music could hijack the investigation. This would bring a further risk of simply explaining away the whole topic as a historically outdated straw man. Nonetheless, this approach would not address the fact that perfectionist reminiscences continue to exist and operate strongly in the musical praxis of creation and performance. Multiple senses of imperfection appear and operate in the artistic practice. Therefore, this is the forum where these senses are best discerned and elucidated. By exploring different senses of imperfection in each composition, and video-recording the working sessions with the performers, I generate referable data on which to base discussion of the topic. These discussions naturally bring in all sorts of academic discourses. But the fact that the artistic creation is firmly placed in the centre allows me to navigate the tensions that arise from the relations to multiple other types of knowledge. Furthermore, though anchored and demonstrated in practice, the gain in knowledge is not limited to my own compositions, nor has the artistic creation as its final goal. Rather, the deeper and clarified understanding of musical imperfection that emerges from my artistic practice is a generalizable gain in knowledge. It simultaneously engages in self-reflection and allows for further reflection by others, beyond my own research. It impacts the practice of other artists and fosters academic discussion. As legitimate artistic research, it harvests my artistic expertise and grounds my scholarly inquiries. Tensions converge.

## 5. Down to earth: some practical consequences of artistic research as a doctoral path

### 5.1 Funding sources

The multiplicity inherent to artistic research may sometimes seem overly theoretical. Philosophical terms regarding ontological, epistemological and methodological multiplicity abound in the written discourse on the subject. Yet, this plurality can have a strong impact on the ground, in the practical work of a doctoral candidate. One of these aspects is access to research funds. In a best-case scenario, artistic research has the potential to access funds from three different types of sources: scientific-academic funds, artistic grants, and resources earmarked specifically for artistic research. These last have been growing in recent decades, as the discussion on ar-

tistic research matures (Nowotny 2011, p. xxiv; Kälve-mark 2011, pp. 6, 13, 17). Such growth is, in part, a natural development, but one that should not be taken for granted: if it is evident that a field that did not exist as such could not have received direct funding before it was established, it could be the case that the field developed despite not receiving any funding. Fortunately, at least in Europe, this does not seem to have been the case.

As for the first possibility – scientific-academic funds – one should be cautious. Clearly, the specific requirements of some sources may in fact limit them to scientific-academic research proper, putting them effectively out of reach for artistic research. But other funds initially designed for scientific research may have more flexible requirements, becoming accessible to artistic research projects. In this respect the possibility of institutionally granting a doctoral or doctoral-equivalent degree in artistic research may be a vital difference, as some projects require the applicant to have a PhD in order to be able to receive funds (Nowotny 2011, p. xxiv).

Finally, access to funds earmarked for artistic production demands little justification, as the main requirements in this case tend to focus on artistic expertise and artistic production as a result. Most artistic research will have these as a matter of formation of the artist and a component of the research. As common terms for the field, such as “practice-based” and “practice-led” research, make clear, it is easier to demonstrate practice than to justify its nature as research. However, not all artistic research projects are suited for funds originally planned for artistic production. As Peters points out, a distinction of artistic research in relation to artistic practice is that the former does not necessarily require a work of art (Peters 2017, p. 24) – neither as a definite part of the research process, nor as a final product. Artistic research projects with this profile would be evidently less capable of accessing funds originally dedicated to artistic practice.

Nonetheless, the multiplicity of artistic research opens a related multiplicity of funding possibilities. As an example, the *SONify! Festival of Music and Artistic Research* organized by my doctoral cohort at the KUG was funded by a mix of sources from academic institutions, grants that specifically contemplated artistic research, and sources aimed at artistic production. Yet, this multiplicity of possibilities also requires that each case be evaluated separately. This same flexibility may lead to a specific project which, due to its very specificity, has difficulty in meeting the specific demands of specific funds, and struggles more to find funding than a project that fits comfortably inside an established research tradition, with its respective earmarked source of funding.

### 5.2 Professional perspectives in current institutional state of artistic research

A final practical consequence of the state of artistic research is the professional perspective. To attempt a very superficial generalization: the discussions of the 1990s (or earlier) were rather exploratory; those of the 2000s were systematically speculative, aimed at defining *what artistic research is*; the 2010s saw a growing institutionalization of artistic research. Universities started offering doctoral titles (not least my own, in 2009), and

establishing departments dedicated to artistic research. With unique differences in each case, in Europe this happened especially in the Scandinavian countries, UK, the area of Belgium and the Netherlands, and Austria with Switzerland (the partnership between the KUG and the ZHdK emphasizes this connection).

If this generalization is roughly true, the following years bring two promising aspects. One is that the multiplication of artistic research doctoral programs, on one side, and the emergence of a larger number of doctors in artistic research (student's that graduated specifically from an artistic research program) on the other, creates promising hiring conditions: there are programs wanting to hire, there are still few but already enough graduates for the hiring. As a recipient of the SARA (Society for Artistic Research Announcements) mailing list, I can say that the frequency with which paid positions aimed at qualified artistic researchers are offered is noteworthy.

The second promising aspect arises from the first: at least two of the biggest "markets" of artistic practice and education have figured timidly in this discussion, or not at all: France and Germany. In the case of the latter, there is evidence pointing to an imminent growing institutionalization of artistic research in Germany. The recent publication "*Empfehlungen zur postgradualen Qualifikationsphase an Kunst- und Musikhochschulen*" (Wissenschaftsrat 2021) provides evidence pointing in this direction. Thus, especially for those awarded artistic research doctoral titles in Switzerland and Austria, which frequently carry the extra advantage of German fluency, it is a promising moment to be a doctoral candidate in the field of artistic research.

My prospect of going back to Brazil is of an altogether different nature. Even though the discussion about artistic research in my country has been happening for many years, it is still not nearly as thought through nor institutionally structured as in Europe and the UK. The Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) is part of a consortium that publishes the English-Portuguese bilingual "Art Research Journal." But a perusal of the published articles shows that it is still very much an assemblage that includes all types of research related to the arts, including many that would sit comfortably within the academic universe of musicology. The few articles that directly discuss the subject of artistic research in a structured way are written by authors that do not live or teach in Brazil (e.g., Fortin/Gosselin 2014). In a similar fashion, the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR) entry "Breve História – Artistic Research in Brazil" also shows no reflection on the specificity of artistic research. All sorts of art-related research and visual arts graduate programs are simply collected and listed, bundled together (Prado et al. 2018). That is not to say there is not already an intensive production in artistic research *de facto*. But a structuring process that traverses theoretical reflection, the practice of individuals, and the institutionalization of artistic research, is still to be done. Once undertaken, this promises to lead to a powerful flowering of artistic research in Brazil, if the political situation in the near future allows for adequate support.

## 6. Conclusion: legitimacy, risk, promise and excitement on the border of a field in process of becoming

Even though enthusiastic of the field of research I have now grown into, I would not like to paint an excessively idealistic picture. The tensions that played a role in the establishment of the field have not, I repeat, ceased to exist. Neither have the tensions that brought me and other colleagues into this field. But, in artistic research, they are converted into potency. They find a newly given legitimacy, in which the flexibility, ad hoc nature, multiple paradigms, and different scales of value situation, becomes a positive aspect: this requires the effort of constructing the argumentation anew for each project. But this can, now, be done unapologetically.

One can draw comparisons to the process of establishing the humanities within the scientific world in 19th and early 20th Century, as does Søren Kjörup (Kjörup 2011, pp. 28-30). Establishing a different epistemic field requires a process of maturation that may take decades. Even after almost two centuries of this process in the humanities, there are still ongoing discussions. If the openness of artistic research is on one hand ontological, it is also historical. A decade ago, Kjörup claimed that "artistic research is still a pre-paradigmatic activity" (Kjörup 2011, p. 38). The more recent efforts of Peters to establish, if not closed paradigms, at least exemplary cases of artistic research, might be aimed at filling that gap (Peters 2017). It is perhaps a natural ambition that my own work and that of my colleagues might contribute to the maturation of the field, both by embodying modes of convergence that are specific to each research project, and, in doing so, by simultaneously providing generalizable examples to the field: concurrently constructing and refining what artistic research is, and what it can be.

As a field in process of establishing itself, artistic research can benefit from further inquiries undertaken also from the perspective of other established disciplines. The question of artistic research as a doctoral path, or even my own case as a study, could be examined through lenses external to artistic research. As an example, the tensions I exposed and discussed here could be examined within the theoretical frame of principal-agent theories. Yet, one must be cautious in this analysis. Susan P. Shapiro exposes some of the limits and caveats of applying principal-agent theory as originally formulated by, among others, Stephen A. Ross in 1973 (Shapiro 2005, p. 269) to situations other than the original economic frame from and for which it was designed (Shapiro 2005, pp. 263-284). In the case we have been examining here, such a strictly economic approach would be problematic. First, it would be reductive to simply assume that, in my case, the Brazilian universities I work for are the principal, and I am the agent. The complexity and self-regulatory nature of a university, in which a great variety of elements and members (myself included) define the very interests of the institution as a principal – and therefore my role as agent – already defies this clear assignment of roles. Shapiro argues that "looking beyond the abstract, cloistered dyad [...] reveals that ac-



tors are not just principals or agents, but often both at the same time" (Shapiro 2005, p. 267). In bureaucratic institutions such as universities, the agents may "outlast their principals," shifting "the balance of power between principal and agent" (Shapiro 2005, p. 269). The indirect role of financial incentives in many universities also does not align with the strict economic understanding which underlines the original frame of this theory, bringing challenges to the analysis (Shapiro 2005, p. 272). An approach both broader in scope and tending towards the sociological, instead of economical, framework could, however, prove useful. This approach would need to contemplate not only the complexity of the principal-agent relationship in the context of universities, but also the intentional and intrinsic open multiplicity of artistic research as a field: while the analysis of any doctoral context must take into consideration that "indeterminacy [is] intrinsic in highly specialized tasks" (Sharma 1997, p. 771), artistic research is a case in which "the contract is exceptionally vague by design" (Shapiro 2005, p. 267). Therefore, such an enterprise would require a complex and nuanced approach, one that would have to be undertaken by a true sociologist, constituting a research in its own right. As a musician and artistic researcher, I could be the object of such an inquiry, but am certainly not qualified to be the examiner.

Regarding the scope of this paper, I have spoken from my personal perspective as a participant in the scene at this specific moment. As such, I frequently feel the insecurity, risk, and excitement of inhabiting a type of liminal borderland. Operating in a field that is still open, multiple by vocation, continuously relating to both artistic practice and to scientific-academic world in a multiple and convergent productive tension, brings a new-found sense of legitimacy to my artistic research. Yet, despite the productivity of the tension, it remains difficult. It is hard to navigate a world yet to set its own standards, even more so when it defines itself as a sea of shifting sands. But it is exciting. This type of "epistemological foundation" or "birth of a dimension of knowledge" is rare. It is a privilege, a pleasure, and a unique opportunity to participate in this becoming.

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