



CASE STUDY

Budapest, Hungary, June 2012

This case study included a site visit to the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME), Budapest, where discussions were held with Prof. István Ferencz, Head of the Doctoral School, Júlia Gáspár, Coordinator for the Doctoral School and Assoc. Prof. Márton Szentpéteri, who hosted the site visit. This visit was very important in challenging the assumed dominance of Northern European institutions (specifically the UK and Scandinavia) in the development of doctoral education in the arts. Budapest presented a highly structured doctoral model that had been developed independently by art and design educators working through successive iterations of doctoral education over a 15-year period. There are currently 50 doctoral researchers working on the three-year doctoral programme at MOME. The importance of international connectivity in creating a research milieu was emphasised by the research educators at MOME, who pointed to 114 partnerships with international universities and the contributions of 22 visiting professors over the previous academic year.

Distinctive features of the MOME model include an emphasis on sustained group contact and a structure of teaching inputs that covers all three years of the programme, while maintaining an emphasis on the major research required for the doctoral exam. The pattern of contact is roughly one day a week during semester time, meaning that there is a very strong community of doctoral students and a strong identity for the doctoral school as one of the main pillars of the university. The content of the weekly programme is very varied and includes cultural history, sustainability, literary studies and economics, thus ensuring a wider educational perspective beyond art and design practice. During discussions, recurring emphasis was placed on the wish to have both depth and breadth in the doctoral level of studies, so that graduates achieve mastery in their own discipline and a more general grounding in intellectual and visual culture.

Respondents made a strong connection between the success of the doctoral programme and the level of partnership and experimentation taking place at the masters level. Although there was a clear separation between the second and third cycles, an extremely rich milieu had been created within the small university (less than 1,000 students in total), engendered by a sustained partnership with Mercedes Benz, Miele and others. The small university environment was seen as flexible, by being responsive to partnership opportunities and establishing the personal and professional ties needed to secure partnership projects over many years. This, in turn, created a platform within which interesting and ambitious doctoral projects could be undertaken.

An issue that arose here, which is increasingly prominent across Europe, is that of measures of achievement. The problem of a single monolithic system of bibliometrics was identified by respondents, who noted the work that had been done in trying to build recognition for the kinds of outputs that are relevant in an art, design or architectural research context. They noted that this was an ongoing task, in Hungary as elsewhere, and cited several different attempts to develop models that they were following with interest.

One of the most striking things about the situation at MOME is the degree of internationalism maintained by educators and researchers within a relatively small organisation. This international connectivity has been built over many years, rooted in the modernist internationalism that is evident in the university's name. It is also noteworthy that the original foundations of the academy were in the higher arts education reforms of Victorian England, prompting a Hungarian experiment in higher arts education with the founding of the Hungarian Royal Institute of Arts and Crafts in 1880, the ancestor of today's MOME. Throughout all the case-study visits, international connectivity emerged as key to the local arts educational milieu, regardless of the level of development of the third cycle at any given site, especially a connectivity that was multidimensional (academic, industrial and societal). One respondent noted that, given the tensions emerging in the wider European project, because of the loss of belief in a merely 'economic' Europe, it would be worth re-asserting the intellectual and cultural resources of the arts and arts education as both bearers and beneficiaries of particularly rich traditions of internationalism.