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Problematic changes? The handling of interruptions and reorientations in the PhD process

Doctoral education is characterised by specific conditions and challenges not least because PhD students are both students, who take courses and receive supervision, and colleagues, who are part of the local academic environments. As research has shown, the rather complicated position PhD students have can be even more complex for those doctoral students who are part of multidisciplinary graduate schools, as they usually belong to several academic environments (cf e.g. E. Brodin & Avery, 2020; E. M. Brodin & Sonesson, 2022; Geschwind & Melin, 2016; Mili & Towers, 2022; Mobjörk, Berglund, Granberg, & Johansson, 2020). One context in which the complexity of the doctoral student position is often realised, is when interruptions and reorientations occur during the PhD process. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the management of such interruptions or reorientations by supervisors and doctoral education environments, from the perspective of alumni from multidisciplinary graduate schools.

The presentation is based on an ongoing research project on alumni from multidisciplinary graduate schools and their experiences from the doctoral education as well as their career paths and career choices afterwards. The empirical material consists of qualitative semi-structured interviews and the theoretical framework is based on the concepts of agency (Ahearn, 2001; Holland, Lachicotte Jr, Skinner, & Cain, 2001) and an

emotion-theoretical perspective (Ahmed, 2004; Hochschild, 2003; Wetherell, 2012). The presentation will discuss different types of pauses and interruptions that may occur during the doctoral education, such as parental leave and medical leave, but also reorientations and delays that may be due to conflicts with supervisors or within the

environment, or to PhD students choosing to work for a period of time with something else, for instance as assistants within research projects or outside of academia. How do graduate school alumni describe the role of their supervisors, doctoral education environments and themselves in these processes, and how has this affected their career choices and future opportunities?

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