

The hard work of preserving the value of doctoral education. The case of the Ph.D. in Regional and Urban Planning at Sapienza, Rome

Valentina Alberti

Ph.D. in Regional and Urban Planning

Department of Planning Design Technology of Architecture – Sapienza
University of Rome - Valentina.Alberti@uniroma1.it

ABSTRACT

The Ph.D. programme in Regional and Urban Planning at Sapienza (University of Rome) underwent some significant changes during the last thirty years. A large part of these changes was requested by mutations in the higher level education system and in the planning discipline at the European scale. During last decades, indeed, the doctorate became the third level of higher education and it no longer qualified researchers only for academia, but for a broader labour market. Moreover, the planning discipline developed a common language between the different European schools.

Despite changes, the value that the doctorate represents for education of researchers seems to be unchanged.

This work aims at visualizing some possible problems in pursuing the value of doctoral education. The purpose is to identify some events that can help or contrast the value that each doctorate should be able to provide.

Four sections structure the article. The first part presents the most significant background transformations that promoted changes in doctoral education. The second part offers some elements to define the value of a Ph.D. The third part highlights discrepancies between purposes and outcomes in promoting the value of the doctorate in the evolution of the Ph.D. in Regional and Urban Planning of Sapienza. The last part collects principal issues linked to the pursuing of the value of a doctorate, and identifies the role of the “intellectual out of academia” as one of the foremost concern to preserve the value of the doctorate training.

INTRODUCTION

The process of Europeanisation that involved both higher education and planning discipline during the last decades produced significant changes for doctoral education in the planning discipline. Doctorates become the place for educating researchers not only for an academic career. Indeed, they tend to reach a comparable system of education and to level out standards in the European countries. Thus, planning discipline seeks to assume a common language and to find a European dimension. These changes required an improvement in the training structure of doctorates and furthermore an acquisition of a shared disciplinary language.

1. THE DOCTORAL EDUCATION IN A CHANGING BACKGROUND

Italy introduced Ph.D. in 1980¹, later than other European countries. Italian law gave few recommendations to universities for the doctorate organisation. Each department was able to manage autonomously the doctoral activities. Doctors received the title for a proved research activity that produced original outputs (Fubini, 2009).

At that time, doctorates were the first level of academic career, and the training of researchers was mostly functional to academic research. The institution of doctorates helped to develop disciplinary fields, although it happened in a different way among the European countries (Davoudi & Pendlebury, 2010), generally without a strong connotation and clear boundaries (Fubini, 2004). In Italy, the planning discipline grew largely from the architecture field. Therefore, it paid attention mostly to physical aspects and in fact it was deeply tied to city design. Planning tools that regulated the shape of cities and territories were not yet sensitive to the city complexity (Gabellini, 2008).

The institution of doctorates helped to review the discipline and to redefine boundaries. Planning started to link different disciplines and to be interested in dynamics of local development (Gabellini, 2008). However, from the institution of Doctorates to nowadays, many changes took place both in education and in the disciplinary field of planning.

¹ The edict that instituted doctorates in Italy was the DPR 11 Luglio 1980, n.382 “Riordinamento della docenza universitaria” (Reorganisation of university teaching).

Doctorate as the third level of higher education

The event that deeply changed European higher education was the Bologna Process, which formally started in 1999, through the Bologna Declaration (EHEA, 1999). Twenty-nine countries signed the covenant that recognised the centrality of universities in developing European cultural dimension. Uniformity in European countries education was supported to straight competitiveness and attractiveness of European education. At that time, also doctorates took part in the reform.

Doctorate became an integral part of higher education across Europe, one of the two pillars² of the “knowledge-based society” (Christensen, 2005), the one that holds the training process. This fact changed the previous vocation of doctorate, and it needed deep mutations both in training and in positioning doctors in the employment market.

The ten Salzburg Principles collected the major innovations that the Bologna process produced in the Ph.D. education (Christensen, 2005). In particular, in this context it is important to remember three of them:

- *Doctoral candidates as early stage researchers.* The doctorate is no longer the starting point of the academic career. It becomes the third level of the higher education; nevertheless, doctoral candidates are considered both student and workers. Abilities to develop are related to the advancement of knowledge through original research;

- *Achievement of critical mass and innovative structures.* The Ph.D. candidate, as early stage researcher, entails that doctorates become a hotbed of new ideas. For this reason, doctoral education should promote schools of doctorate³ in which different disciplines and

² European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA) are considered the two pillars of the knowledge-based society.

³ The Schools of Doctorate gather together different disciplinary fields of research. They usually organise under the same structure affine disciplines in order to

specialities work together. Experienced researchers and supervisors should ensure wider competencies, to create an “intellectual community” (Walker et al., 2008) inside departments. In the growing process, this community has to relate itself to the new European knowledge context;

- *The employment market becomes wider than academia.*

This aspect requires that topics and methods have to be continuously up to date and related to multiple needs.

While higher education aimed at strengthening the European cultural dimension, at disciplinary level the will to find a common language for the planning discipline was emerging.

Attempts to Europeanize the planning discipline

The need for European countries to find a common language for the planning discipline forced to compare different disciplinary definitions to highlight boundaries and to raise new issues for planning. Although a debate about spatial planning as a European issue began in the 70s, it was almost unknown in Europe until the years of the past century (Kunzmann, 2006).

In 2004, the scenario that AESOP described⁴ was extremely heterogeneous. Only in few countries (like Germany, UK and Netherlands), planning had a strong identity. In other cases (like France

empower the field of investigation. In Italy, the first school of Doctorate were born in Turin, in countertrend of the proliferation of courses due to the process of autonomy of University.

⁴In 2004 the Association of European School Of Planning (AESOP) published a report on planning education in Europe (Fubini, 2004). It highlighted still deep differences both between planning practice and research.

and Belgium), there was a sort of ambiguity between *aménagement* and *urbanisme*. In most of the European countries, planning was not an independent discipline (Finland, Norway, Spain, Greece, Bulgaria), and in Italy, even though it was essentially identified as urbanism, it was strictly linked to architecture.

In the last decade the attempt to find an European language for the planning discipline continued. Italy tried to orient planning research towards a multi-disciplinary approach, closer to the Anglo-Saxon attitude, which furthermore includes the discipline in the range of the social sciences. Nevertheless, some critical issues appeared both in the disciplinary literature and in the relation between practice and research. For the research product “the risk is that the areas of concern to the discipline will be expanded by the addition of new topics and the accumulation of new methods and tools without evidence being provided of their relevance and effectiveness” (Zanon, 2014; pp.48). On the other hand, practice struggles to follow progress of the discipline and it tests new approaches only in some experimental context.

2. THE VALUE OF THE DOCTORATE IN PLANNING

The mentioned changes that made the doctorate the highest level of education and the tools through which to promote a European identity of the planning discipline did not significantly modify the value that the doctorate should be able to provide. Since its establishment, the doctorate aimed at the formation of researchers (Walker et al., 2008), and although the potential employability of the researcher changed (as a result of Bologna process the employment market for doctors is wider than academia) the attitude of this education process continues to be unvaried: doctorate arranges the way to think and to organise ideas in order to produce new knowledge.

If we assume that research is a creative work that is undertaken on a systematic basis of knowledge, and that leads to new insights, effectively shared (Silva et al., 2015), the value of doctorate can be identified as the capacity to develop the attitude of producing new knowledge by means of creative and rigorous work. The creativity takes place in the innovative way to talk about disciplinary issues while the methodological rigour validates the precision of thought in relation to disciplinary principles. However, it has to coexist with relevance in order to maintain the disciplinary value of the research output (Campbel, 2015).

Therefore, doctoral education is more than a disciplinary training process: the acquisition of a deep knowledge in a disciplinary field is only a first step to develop the discipline. The researcher is the one who knows how to make questions and how to link arguments to improve knowledge, and this requires the development of a state of mind that demands a deeper process of self-education. Beyond academic and technical skills, doctoral education helps to develop intellectual, personal and professional management skills (Bogle et al., 2011). “These skills should enable and enhance the doctoral graduate in three complementary domains:

- competence: acquiring specific expertise, knowledge, technology and methodology to conduct and understand research within a discipline and across disciplines;
- achievement: gaining personal effectiveness, time, project, and self-management, developing a problem solving attitude and assuming a leadership role;
- relationship: developing a team work attitude, collaborating and communicating with specialists and non-specialists” (Bogle et al., 2011; pp.40).

In reference to the competences, the training process foresees a learning-by-doing method. The most important skills needed to be a

researcher cannot be acquired only by attending courses, but by performing research, and reflecting on the process. “That means doctoral structures should not organise taught courses on skills, but should offer, more than impose, a positive environment for students to development their awareness of the skills they could gain by performing research without overcharging the load work” (Chambaz, 2008, p.13).

In this kind of formation, the role of the supervisor and the intellectual community acquire great importance. These are the means that candidates use to verify their habits, work, and ideas, and to acquire achievements beyond competences. During their process of learning, candidates establish a *learning alliance* with their supervisor, a kind of

“contract between the supervisor and student, and is akin to the collaborative ‘therapeutic alliance’ between a patient and clinician to work together to diagnose the illness, pursue therapy and achieve recovery. [...] The learning alliance is based on responsibility and relationship rather than rights and rules; is grounded in concrete circumstances rather than abstractions, and is expressed as an ‘activity of care’ rather than as a set of principles” (Halse & Malfroy, 2010; pp.83).

Otherwise, the intellectual community is “not simply a matter of potlucks and hallway conversation; it is “the hidden curriculum”, sending powerful messages about purposes, commitment, and role, and creating (or not) the condition in which intellectual risk-taking, creativity, and entrepreneurship are possible” (Rogers, 2008, p.10).

In discovering activities and relationships that give doctoral education its value, therefore, we can identify:

- the activity of the Ph.D. candidates as action in doing research, that offers a progressive development towards increasing independence and responsibility;
- relations between supervisor/professors and candidate, that means collaboration with peers and faculty in each stage of the process;
- development of a network (critical mass and intellectual community), for integration across contexts and arenas of scholarly work (Walker et al., 2008).

These points can be assumed as potential parameters to investigate how doctorate programmes support the value of doctorate.

The mentioned Europeanization process considers the importance of these aspects (see as example the Salzburg Principles) but it does not provide any tool to assess doctorate programmes from this point of view. In the following paragraph, we can observe difficulties of a Ph.D. programme in pursuing the value of doctoral education in order to understand if, apart from specific problems, general responsibilities can be identified.

3. DOCTORATES CHANGE. WHICH IS THE DIRECTION? THE CASE OF ROME

The experience of the Ph.D. in Regional and Urban Planning at the Sapienza University of Rome is an attempt to put in practice the European directions. It underwent some significant changes during the last fifteen years. In particular, in the 2003 and 2013 the educational programme was subjected to deep mutations in its structure.

This paragraph examines the way in which this doctorate changed and how these changes supported the attitude to produce new knowledge through creative and rigorous work.

The study of this experience has been conducted from a double point of view: who made changes (professors) and who attended the programme (students). This approach allows the comparison between purposes and outcomes and it leads towards a better understanding of the potential improvement of the aforementioned values.

The analysis of indirect and direct sources introduces the dynamics of changes occurred during the years. While some publications about the history of the Ph.D. programme (Nigro, 2004; Bianchi, 2004; Bianchi & Talia, 2004; Bianchi, 2005; Bianchi, 2012) describe motivations of the deep reorganisation, the annual pamphlets aim at introducing the training path to students showing in which terms changes actually happened.

Some interviews supported the analysis of experience. Professor Giovanna Bianchi was interviewed for reporting the point of view of *who made changes*. She was the coordinator of the Ph.D. from 2008 to 2013 and she followed doctorate evolutions since the beginning. Moreover, some interviews are conducted with Ph.D. students of the last five cycles for collecting the point of view of *who attended the programme*. The focus of the interviews was the education provided. The interviews aimed at clarifying the level of comprehension of the general training programme (purposes, methods, intentions) by students, and the correspondence between what programmes proposed and what students have done and learned.

Training frameworks in evolution between plans and actions

The Italian Ph.D. programme consisted of three years in which students freely deepened a disciplinary topic together with their supervisors. They were not required to attend classes neither about research method nor thematic ones. Candidates were free to choose the research topic in the whole discipline, although the Ph.D. learning

approach was mostly oriented to planning process generally understood as architecture of the city (Gabellini, 2008).

The Ph.D. in Regional and Urban Planning at Sapienza was born in 1984 in the first cycle of Italian doctorates. As mentioned before, Italian departments and universities were free to manage independently education programmes. Thus, doctorates acted as mentors assisting the future teachers to lead original reflections about disciplinary issues. No training courses were foreseen for the improving of planning discipline (Fubini, 2009).

Until the early 2000s, not many changes occurred in the Ph.D. programme, but in 2002, the XVIII cycle was not activated. The reduction of the university's resources and the new arrangement of the Department encouraged to redesign the doctorate programme. Professor Nigro, who succeeded to prof. Malusardi as coordinator of the Ph.D. in the year 2002, introduced a training plan and a teaching programme, which are partially in use still today. The purpose was to give a methodological and disciplinary framework to students. The doctorate continued not to be thematic but disciplinary.

Since 2003, the training plan ensured four training steps:

1) *The introduction training* provided some basis for the research methods and techniques. Training is provided during the first year. A special attention was paid to the increase of the classes on research methods and techniques at least until the XXVII and XXVIII cycles. They consisted in twelve lessons concerning: rudiment on the conceiving of a research project, the correct use of references, the epistemological issues, the establishment of the research framing, and the assessment of the research.

2) *The updating of the discipline* offered the basis for the disciplinary learning process. It provided thematic lessons (led by the professors of the Department), and seminars for the updating of specific disciplinary

fields (led by experts that share their experience with students). The activities were held during the first and the second year.

3) The *advanced training* consisted in conference papers submissions and attendance and in the organisation of the Cycle Seminar⁵. Ph.D. students were encouraged to attend conferences, workshops and seminars in an active way to share findings, reflections and points of view and to gradually build a network of researchers in their specific research field. As regards the cycle seminar, candidates were required to organise a seminar on their dissertation topic and to invite prominent scholars in the field to give presentations and stimulate the debate. Such activities were required to be held during the second and the third year of the Ph.D. programme;

4) The *development and preparation of the doctoral thesis* was a process that was to be developed during the three years. In the first year, they defined the research project. During the second year, students started to work with a supervisor and to develop parts of their thesis. In the third one, they worked for the conclusion of the thesis. Periodical reports assessed research progresses. Every two (for the first year) or three months (for the second and the third years) candidates presented their work and discussed it with the Doctorate Board.

However, the training plan only partially describes the doctoral education. In fact, interviews with students helped to have a wider view of the process and highlighted that:

⁵ The Cycle Seminar is a seminar that students of the same cycle and with similar themes organize to test their research with experts, to share the first results of their work and to build their research network.

- the involvement of the Doctorate Committee decreased during the last years⁶. This fact greatly reduced the possibility of interacting with professors and consequently the benefits of the meetings.
- Not all the students organised the Seminar of the Cycle. Although this initiative was appraised both to improve skills of candidates and to develop a network, it was not easy to organise it for all cycles. The research topics were often very different (we have to remember that the doctorate chose not to give thematic directions to the research) and it was difficult to link them together in single event.
- The thematic lessons were specific about some aspects of the researches run by the professors who presented them. This approach seems to be in contradiction with the peculiarity of the doctorate since the professors should provide general disciplinary basis in order to place pillars for the construction of personal research rather than focus the attention on very specific issues.
- The lack of general disciplinary lessons also entailed limitations considering students background. Only few of them had a degree in planning and even if most of them were architects, their previous academic experience supplied them with no more than some rudiments of planning. Students were free to deepen only their research field, but this approach did not let them consider the complexity of the discipline and left them without a common background of disciplinary knowledge.
- Methodological lessons offered rudiments for research, but Ph.D. candidates had very few occasions to deepen disciplinary methods and

⁶ The number of professors that participated to the meetings decreased from seven-eight (for the meetings of the 24th cycle) to four-five (for the meetings of the 28th cycle).

techniques. Generally, this occurred during external seminars or periods spent in foreign universities.

In general, an increasing disinterest of professor in the doctoral education during the last years of the programme compromises the activity of the Ph.D. and the exchanges between students and professors. Moreover the discrepancy between purposes and outcomes let emerge divergent positions between the professors on the educational asset of the PhD. In the end, it is possible to identify a weak attempt to promote networks for students through the Cycle Seminar that, however was organised only for a limited number of years.

The doctorate in Regional and Urban Planning becomes part of the Ph.D. in Planning, Design and Technology of Architecture

In 2013, further reduction of University resources and new standards for reconfirming doctorates⁷ encouraged a new reconfiguration of the Ph.D. programme.

At that time, the Department of Planning Design and Technology of Architecture (PDTA) had two doctoral programmes⁸, but the new rules excluded several professors from the Doctorates Boards: the legal number was not reached. Mainly for this reason, the two Ph.D. programmes merged into a new doctorate: the Ph.D. in Planning,

⁷ The Ministerial Decree of the 8th February 2013, n.45 (“Regolamento recante modalità di accreditamento delle sedi e dei corsi di dottorato e criteri per la istituzione dei corsi di dottorato da parte degli enti accreditati”) gave new indications for validation of new doctorate cycles. It fixed at sixteen the minimum number of members of Doctorate Board, and only a quarter of them could be researchers.

⁸ The Doctorate in Regional and Urban Planning (Pianificazione Territoriale e Urbana), and in Environmental Design (Progettazione Ambientale).

Design and Technology of Architecture. It intended to give a doctoral programme to each disciplinary component of the Department⁹: it holds together the three curricula, one for each disciplinary component with just one Doctorate Board. The new training programme was born for promoting interdisciplinary exchange and for testing a common space in which the three curricula could collaborate. These goals were not easy to achieve. Different methods in conducting research and the rarely experimented collaboration between the disciplinary fields needed a long process to finalise the training programme.

In the same year another innovations promoted by the Minister of Public Education was the introduction of ECTS¹⁰ and the evaluation of the research products also for Ph.D. candidates. They put into effect the guidelines of the Bologna process and for all practical purposes doctorate became the third level of education. On the other hand, the department improved old training programme and it tried to find a contact point between the three disciplinary fields.

⁹ The Department of Planning, Design, Technology of Architecture was born by several unifications of Departments that had different disciplinary orientations. The last change happened at the end of 2013 (although the new Department was instituted in the 2014), when department members decided to clarify orientation of departmental research by renaming it with the three main fields of research: planning, design, and technology of architecture.

¹⁰ ECTS stands for European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. In Italy it corresponds to CFU (Crediti Formativi Universitari).

Table 1 - Training programme of the XXX cycle of the Ph.D. in Planning Design and Technology of Architecture.

Activities	ECTS / year		
	I	II	III
Advanced institutional courses	16	0	0
Seminars and workshops	22	12	0
Activities linked to the research	22	32	50
Elective activities	0	16	10
Total	60	60	60

The new doctorate provides four types of activities:

- 1) The *advanced institutional courses* introduce the research methods and the main disciplinary issues. They are an evolution of the *Introduction Training and Updating of the discipline* provided in the previous programme, but the number of lessons has decreased. They characterise a significant part of the first year work while they are not foreseen during the second and the third years;
- 2) *Seminars and workshops*. Twenty-two ECTS for the first and twelve for the second year are provided for specialised, in-depth analysis of the discipline presented in occasion of seminars and workshop. For these activities, students have to prepare specific reports;
- 3) *Activities linked to the research* are developed with increasing responsibilities during the three years. These include research activities in the department labs and research groups framing and discussing the research project with the Doctorate Committee;
- 4) *Elective activities* are different for the three years. They include participation in conferences, research presentations, publications and participation in architectural prizes. These activities required a high level of performance and involvement that could be seen as a brand new signal for an improvement of the student activity.

The training programme also displays another aspect that never explicitly emerged previously: mobility. The new programme makes a list of universities with which students of the previous years had exchanges. The Doctorate Board considers to support both national and international mobility if the exchange can confer quality to the research work.

The interviews with students highlighted:

- The availability of professors to support exchanges with foreign universities, but they also underlined difficulties of international students to attend courses and meetings completely in Italian.
- The difficulty to manage together the research processes in planning, design and technology of architecture. The more practical and product-oriented nature of the research in design and technology entailed a reduction of methodological courses and lower the consideration for disciplinary issues about methods and research techniques.
- For the XXIX cycle, the periodical meetings are foreseen only for the curriculum in planning. Therefore, the interaction during the meetings happens just inside the same discipline: from this point of view doctorate loses its interdisciplinary character. Only one activity (workshop or literary exercise¹¹) during the first year foresees an exchange between the three disciplinary curricula.
- The XXX cycle is testing a more integrated training. Students of the three curricula attend together methodological lessons (that are less numerous) and seminars, that try to give suggestions to the three disciplinary fields. Nevertheless, the reduction of planning professors

¹¹ Committee members chose a list of books to read and discuss during doctoral meetings. Ph.D. candidates were also demanded to do a written critical review of books, and some of them were published.

(from twenty, for the XXIX cycle, to six, for the XXX cycle) in the Doctorate Committee does not facilitate the interaction with professors and researchers of the planning discipline. Mostly for this reason, the interest in planning research is reducing.

Doctorate changes: which place for the “added value”?

The evolution of the Ph.D. programme highlights a fluctuating trend in the updating of the education towards the straightening of the value. The experimentation of a training programme before ministerial directions (in 2003), and a progressive upgrading of it during the years, affirmed the purpose of improving the Ph.D. candidates experience. Especially for the Ph.D. programme characterising the cycles until the XXVIII, the interest to develop training activities seems to consider some changes in background. In the new doctoral configuration (2013), interdisciplinary characters take into consideration only partially changes of the background (paragraph 1). In the disciplinary Ph.D. programme, courses on methodology were improved over the years. Although they were not thorough, in comparison with the variety of methods and techniques of discipline (Silva et al., 2015), they provided the student with some disciplinary rudiments of research, progressively reduced in the new doctorate. The reports and meetings with the Doctorate Committee are a useful tool for improving communication and interaction with professors. They represent a periodical deadline by which testing the research work. They were regular and usual in the old doctorate, less frequent for the last cycles. Other modalities of exercise (like critiques of books) replaced them. They are less related to everyone's own research topic and have a more general approach to the three different disciplines.

The way to interact with the experts of the discipline changed over the years. The Cycle Seminar was an occasion to improve and test the initiative of candidates with outside experts while during the last years the mobility can be considered the most supported activity to interact with experts from other Universities or research centres.

Overall, the attempt to promote interdisciplinary characters weaken the disciplinary field and also the skills that should support the added value are not still valued in the disciplinary doctorate.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The process of Europeanization, that involved the higher education and the disciplinary field of planning, promoted changes in the way doctoral education is organised. Ph.D. programmes need a further structure since doctorate corresponds to the third level of education and planning discipline aims at European shared language to foresee European disciplinary development.

Despite these changes, the doctorate continues to represent the principal means for disciplining the attitude to produce new knowledge through creativity and rigorous work. The ability to develop this attitude can be considered the *value* of doctorates: it changes the way to organise thought and to move forward in knowledge. It is undoubtedly a value for Ph.D. candidates, that increase professional and personal skills but it is also a value for the scientific community, that thanks to creativity and rigour can further develop discipline. This way to develop knowledge can be considered a value also for other managerial positions, outside academia. Mostly intellectual, personal and professional management skills are transferable as value for other high professional figures.

To sustain and promote this value, the education process foresees a high commitment of the candidates, which have to learn by doing research and to maintain a deep exchange with supervisors and the intellectual community.

Although the mentioned Europeanization process did not modified the value of doctorates, it required a more structured education process and it enlarged geographical boundaries in which to build an intellectual community and a network where could be shared ideas and results tested.

Despite some European directions, changes were welcomed in different ways by the doctoral programmes. Experience (of the Ph.D.

in Regional and Urban Planning, at Sapienza) reported in the article helped to understand that is not easy to support the value of doctorate, but it is possible to reflect on some issues, in order to face possible problems:

- Planning discipline has a quite recent European identity, and still nowadays differences persist between countries. A more accurate knowledge of these differences should help to develop discipline at the European level. To increase knowledge of planning discipline of different European countries could contribute to facilitate the rigour required in research activities that nowadays have not a clear framework of reference. The same can occur for the disciplinary research methods, which are not completely defined and supported by the educational system. We've seen that doctoral education is a complex process of personal and professional growth, and disciplinary and methodological courses are not enough for ensuring doctoral value. Nevertheless, in order to facilitate the reach of mentioned skills rules could be fixed for ensuring the acquisition of disciplinary and methodological basis.

- Interdisciplinary is considered a value by Salzburg Principles, but the selection of disciplines to put in touch cannot be accidental, or decreed by exigencies of unification in faculty departments. If it happens doctorate can lose value instead of acquiring it from the joining of different disciplines.

- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System ensures comparability between educational programmes in terms of hours of work, but it does not provide any information about the nature of the activities. The participation of the Ph.D. candidates, the relation between professors and students and the creation of a network are not measurable parameters by ECTS.

In general, we can say that definition of contents and boundaries in planning education is one of the most important issues to improve

research and to strengthen planning from a geographical and disciplinary point of view. However, for saving the value of doctorate is also crucial to take care of activities and relations of the Ph.D. candidates. Nowadays, the preservation of the value of the doctorate is threatened from external hindrances like reduction of economic resources, so it is difficult to find out which features to promote. Assessing the activity of Ph.D. candidates in hours of work makes training more important than education. Moreover, the relation between professors (in particular supervisors) and students, a crucial point of the education process, is not usually considered.

In order to modify this trend and to consider the academic value of the Ph.D. as the focus of changes in doctoral education, we should ask who has an interest at stake and who cares about the intellectual features of the research results. This way it should be possible to promote the discipline beyond its technical aspects, and to reconsider the doctorate in planning as the means to innovate practices while preserving it as a disciplinary field in academia.

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