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**"A Sort of Collaboration":
Challenged Conceptions and Negotiated Temporalities
in Supervision Practice at a Reform University**

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Abstract

This paper examines supervisors from an under-researched setting of a reform university where most supervision concerns undergraduate and Master's students' team-based semester-long project work. Drawing conceptually on Grant's (2018) understanding of being a supervisor as an ongoing process of assembling oneself, and empirically on interviews, it focuses on the role of this institutional framework as an "outside" element in this assembling process. I argue that it shapes the conditions of that assembling through the changing conceptions and temporalities of supervisory practice. While supervisors continue to aspire to the original conception of supervision as a distinct pedagogical mode that is - even for undergraduates - akin to apprenticeship, palpable quickening and demands for instruction-like supervision endanger this conception. This temporal compression, together with the prevalence of short-term cyclicity of projects and co-negotiation of multiple longer-term temporal frames of becoming a supervisor, makes for a temporally multi-layered and particularly intense supervisory practice.

Keywords: supervision, project work, practice, temporality, reform university

Introduction

Over the past few decades higher education policy in much of the global North has focused on expanding the numbers of students enrolled in research programs, and at the same time making students complete their degrees within the standardized time frames (e.g McCallin and Nayar 2012; Green and Usher 2003). Research supervision has concomitantly gained increased attention. It has become both, more explicitly conceived of as a part of the pedagogical practice (Vereijken et al. 2017; Bruce and Stoodley 2013) by university managements, and a growing topic within the educational and pedagogical research. Due to the centrality of effectiveness of supervision in this new regime of higher education, much of this research has focused, prescriptively, on outlining what ought to occur in supervision (Halse 2011) and on developing models “for supervision” (Maxwell and Smyth 2011; Boehe 2016). While this work has provided also new and more explicit conceptualizations of supervision (Åkerlind and McAlpine 2017), much less attention has been paid to how supervisors themselves experience, understand and reflect on their supervisory practice. More recently, however, supervisory experience has started garnering hermeneutical and critical research attention (Grant 2018; Halse 2011; Vereijken et al. 2017; Maritz and Prinsloo 2018, 2015; Bruce and Stoodley 2013).

This paper seeks to contribute to this growing critical research by examining supervisors, novice and senior alike, working in an under-researched institutional-pedagogical context, namely that of a non-traditional, reform university¹, represented here by the Roskilde

¹ Reform university is a term used by a number of post-1968 European universities founded in response to the popular critiques of traditional academia in the late 1960s. They share the goal of challenging academic traditions, especially the traditional forms of learning. Instead their pedagogy promoted experimental and student-centered and -led learning through project learning, seminars or tutorials rather than lectures. Focus on interdisciplinarity, critical thinking and social engagement are also often very strongly present. The concept of reform university was acknowledged institutionally in 2020 at the EU level with the decision of the European Commission to include amongst the newly funded university networks also the European Reform University Alliance.

University in Denmark (RUC). Conceptually, I draw on Grant's (2018) understanding of the supervisor as an assemblage that is recursively composed through a myriad of connections that are co-produced through, amongst other things, institutional frameworks and changes thereof. RUC's framework differs from that of traditional research universities in three ways in regard to research supervision. First, supervision here accounts typically for about half of the teaching time of faculty members at any given semester. Second, while possibly also involving supervision of Master's and doctoral theses - paid attention to most often in the existing literature - most faculty's supervision at RUC concerns primarily the "research-like" project work (Andersen and Dupont 2014, 123) conducted every single semester by all students. Finally, unlike most research supervision that is "conventionally...conceptualized as an individualized activity" (Dysthe et al. 2006, 29), at RUC faculty supervise 2-6 member teams of students working collaboratively on a joint project.

In order to situate and conceptualize this research, the paper briefly reviews the existing work examining supervisory experiences. Following a brief outline of the pedagogical context of RUC and sources of data, it moves to the presentation of findings, focusing first on supervisors' conceptions of supervision and then their reflections about their actual practice of supervision and contemporary conditions for it. I then discuss specifically the intensely negotiated temporalities of supervision at RUC, drawing conceptually on Sarah Sharma's (2014, 9) understanding of the temporal as lived time. Temporality denotes here time as experienced by a subject who negotiates and navigates a variety of temporal frames, including institutional ones. In the conclusion I discuss this project's findings about the role the reform university context played in the supervisory practice in relation to the existing research on the contemporary conditions of research supervision at universities more broadly.

Becoming(-)Supervisor, Practicing Supervision

Thanks to an increase in pedagogical training for academics (Hay et al. 2013; Brew and Peseta 2017) the previously prevalent experience of new staff having to simply plunge into lecturing without any training (Warhurst 2008) is less wide-spread. When it comes to research supervision, the situation often differs. Embarking on a supervisory practice often amounts to an "ego-shaking experience" (Hay 2013, 592). Novices have to learn to supervise "“on the fly”" through the discovery of "inherent rules, epistemologies and ontologies in becoming and being supervisors" (Maritz and Prinsloo 2015, 974). It is thus through the "immersion in and habituation to the values, behaviours, attitudes and practices" (Halse 2011, 592) that they learn about the 'rules of the game' of supervision. This process often feels isolating (e.g. Vehviläinen and Löfström 2016), often anxiety- and shame-ridden (e.g. Maritz and Prinsloo 2018). One reason for that is a deep worry about being seen as a sufficient authority; another one the need to learn to deal with a new "dilemmatic space" of decision-making about competing concerns regarding the "regulation, student needs, supervisor-student relationship and supervisors' professional identity" (Vereijken et al. 2017, 534).

Both new and more experienced faculty draw on their own experience with doctoral or other supervision from their student times in doing supervision (Vereijken et al. 2017). Together with one's conception of supervision, this experience is amongst the key factors influencing supervision (Lee 2008). Additionally, the supervisory practice of any individual supervisor varies over the duration of the supervision. Drawing on Dysthe's typology (2002), Harwood and Petric (2018, 12) found an MA supervisory relation moving through four distinct phases and styles: from a) an initial partnership model during the topic exploration, through b) a "more controlled period" of directed feedback and status difference associated with a teaching model, and c) a partnership during the discussions of research findings, to d) more directive writing phase. Such shifts depend on the two main dimensions of supervision,

namely product and process, each of which articulates different competencies (Boehe 2016; Maxwell and Smyth 2011), shifting in importance throughout the supervision. Another impetus for adjusting supervision practice within the same relation, despite many a supervisor's preference for one particular style, are personal needs and capacities of students, such as when a student might need a more pastoral style to get through a temporary crisis (Gatfield 2005).

Supervisors are clearly aware of the varying demands of and roles in supervision. Åkerlind and McAlpine's (2017) interviewees, for example associated each specific purpose they were after in their supervision, such as research self-sufficiency, innovation and individual development, with a specific pedagogical approach of training research skills, fostering ability to develop novel ideas and enabling students' enjoyment of doctoral program respectively. And while supervisors at times might feel uncertain about whether a particular role is appropriate (Grant 2010), they tend to be particularly aware of the need to balance student autonomy with supervisor direction (Vehviläinen and Löfström 2016).

Simultaneously critical research in higher education documents how the broader conditions of possibility for supervision affecting that balance have changed. Traditionally, (doctoral) supervision has been likened to an apprenticeship where supervisors offer stronger support and direction in the early stages while promoting student autonomy, and thus their "emancipation" (Lee 2008) later on (Deuchar 2008). Yet this model, which is centred on the training of research skills and standards, critical thinking, and the enculturation into the disciplinary communities of academic practice (eg Lee 2008), is being overtaken by a managerial approach to research (McCallin and Nayar 2012). Supervisors are more likely to deploy a more directorial and structured style in order to cope with the expanding tasks, performativity discourses and stricter degree completion deadlines" (Deuchar 2008, 490). Usher and Green (2003) call this model, focused first and foremost on the timely degree

completion, "fast supervision". They point out how the growth of the knowledge economy has led not only to the expansion but also a competitiveness-based transformation of research degrees, and with it, supervision (ibid, 49).

Such a utilitarian approach to higher education forms likewise a background for Grant's (2018) recent call on supervisors to introduce new practices, objects and relations into their supervision to resist the current norms of fast supervision. In this paper I am inspired by her conceptualization of supervision as a process of assembling, whereby supervisor is never a finished identity but always in a state of becoming, a "becoming-supervisor". While Grant homes in on the recursive nature of supervision as emerging in relation to a myriad of other humans, objects, affects, places, or procedures, she understands that this assembling unfolds amongst the "rigid lines of stratification and sedimentation" (ibid, 362) that normalize supervision in particular ways. Such lines are produced in part also through institutional frameworks with their expectations, deadlines, histories, rituals and so on, and this paper examines how supervision is practiced, experienced and assembled with, around and against the lines of the institutional framework of a reform university.

Institutional Context and Methodology

RUC was established in 1972, adopting radical pedagogical ideas, such as the eradication of coursework in favour of an exclusive focus on group-based project work. While introducing coursework eventually, its pedagogy continues to centre the interdisciplinary, collaborative and active learning (Olsen and Pedersen 2011). This means in the first place that students spend the first three semesters specializing not in disciplines but rather at one of the four basic studies: social sciences, humanities, humanistic-technological or natural sciences. Second, it means that half of RUC students' credits are acquired through problem-oriented, participant-directed and group-based project work (Andersen and Heilesen 2014). Project work is derived

from a problem-based approach to learning but differs from it in that students themselves choose the topic and direction of the project (Nielsen and Danielsen 2012). Additionally, RUC's model is collaborative which means that students work in self-organized groups of 2-6 members, submitting collectively a 40-80 pages long project report at the end of the semester. The report, which includes sections on philosophy of social science, methodology, theory and literature review in addition to the analysis and discussion of collected data and a conclusion, forms the basis of an oral examination by a supervisor and an additional examiner that takes between 30 and 180 minutes. Project work is thus structurally similar to (post)graduate students' research due to the requirement to produce new knowledge and learn to be reflexive about it. This is reflected also in the role of supervisors whose primary responsibility is in supporting students in “developing competences in knowledge creation” (Jensen 2014, 146).

This paper, based on a study conducted as a research requirement of a pedagogical training program for assistant professors, draws empirically on semi-structured interviews with eight staff members teaching at the social sciences basis. The sample consisted of two professors, four associate professors and two assistant professors, with an even distribution in relation to gender and undergraduate experience with RUC or lack thereof. This sample was chosen through a mixture of convenience and purposiveness. In regard to the former, I interviewed nearly all my post-PhD colleagues from within the same overlapping teaching and research group circle ². In regard to the latter, I sought purposefully to recruit a heterogenous sample in regard to the three categories listed, in order to gain different perspectives on the process of becoming a supervisor and conceptions and practices of supervision. Interviews were audio-recorded, and transcribed by a research assistant before

² The university structure is complex in that there are no traditional departments, only institutes of hundreds of academics. An academic staff is a member of (at least one) interdisciplinary research group and at the same assigned to several, (usually) partially overlapping different educations/"disciplines".

being manually open-coded by the author to prepare them for a thematic analysis.³ Each interview opened up with a question asking supervisors to describe what their usual approach to supervision was, before moving onto the discussion about their career-long experiences with supervision, the relation between supervision, lecturing and research, and their respective challenges in supervision. Interviews addressed these themes as they came up naturally in the flow of our conversations rather than necessarily in the order described here. My own position as interviewees' junior colleague, having transitioned from more traditional university settings to that of the reform university, enabled me not only an easy access but also additional autoethnographic reflections.

Doing the Supervision: Conceptions, Challenges and Temporalities

Conceptualizing Supervision

If, in a problem-based paradigm, supervisors, usually referred to as facilitators, tend to have a vague understanding of what their role entails (Savin Baden and Wilkie 2004), supervisors examined here do not share this lack of understanding. They are in fact very clear on what they see themselves as doing when they supervise, most likely due to the centrality of project work supervision in the university's pedagogical model. Lotte⁴, an assistant professor in her mid-30s with a long experience at RUC, for example described herself as "a midwife", focused on "performing the format of project work" for students and generally "revealing the process" for them. For Martin, a professor in his late 60s, supervising means having "a dialogue with students who try to train themselves in being researchers, and I treat them as researchers"; while for Mette, likewise a professor with multiple decades of supervision experience, it is "to make you as consistent as possible in the approach you choose". Her

³ Seven of them were conducted completely in English, with the remaining one conducted bilingually wherein the author spoke English and the respondent in Danish. All the translations from Danish to English are author's. Use of italics reflects interviewee's emphasis unless noted otherwise.

⁴ These are pseudonyms.

conception of a supervisor as someone whose focus is to get the students to achieve and reflect on the consistency between their chosen research question (called problem formulation in problem-oriented project work) , epistemology, methodology, theory and analysis, while at the same time following students' direction in terms of the subject matter and general approach, was mentioned in most of the interviews. It is in particular this concern with the consistency that leads most to focus on asking questions - while also presenting options - rather than on simply providing students with answers. Thyge articulates this clearly when he describes himself as "adopting this inquiring role, you know, the really annoying one, I keep asking why, why, why".

My interviewees' conception of their role as a supervisor was in fact highly consistent with the concept of supervision as appearing in RUC's pedagogical model. In this model students are the primary drivers of the process and the ones responsible for making decisions, while supervisors function as discussion partners, who support the acquisition of students' "academic expertise through different types of questions, be it investigative, concretizing, challenging or evaluative" (Andersen and Dupont 2014, 130). In this tradition supervisors are seen as combining three roles in their process of giving feedback to students: that of an expert, facilitator and social mediator (Nielsen and Danielsen 2012). The Danish term used, *vejledning* - while translated in pedagogical research into English as supervision but meaning more precisely guidance (or literally "leading the way") - hints likewise at this connotation of more an expert facilitator and less an overseeing authority.

This sense of the distinctiveness of supervision at RUC took several years to emerge for all my informants. They stressed the repetitive practice of supervising a number of groups every semester for the first two to three years as crucial in coming to an embodied understanding of supervision as a novel and particular pedagogical competence. While Grant (2018) understands all supervisors to be constantly in a process of becoming, the emergence

of this sense was in fact palpable in the narratives of more experienced supervisors, and was tied to a certain feeling of "having arrived as a supervisor", and with it a shift in one's pedagogical self-conception (Wilkie 2004). Erik, an associate professor in his late 40s, described this process in our discussion of supervision as a part of his pedagogical and academic practice in the following way:

As you supervise more projects it becomes more and more easy to take on the role of the supervisor and less a teacher. I can withdraw myself from the decision process. The first times around you get more involved. You want the project to go in a certain direction, you want them to do well, and now I...well, it's not that I don't care, I care a lot for my students, but at the end of the day it's their decision, you know, so kind of detaching yourself from the process of making decision, just presenting the options: This is what you can do. Now go and choose...It is difficult in the beginning. [Because] You want them to do well. You want to reflect well on your colleagues, not presenting a really weird project and everyone is going to say 'Oh, he doesn't he know how to...' and stuff like that.

While Erik's narrative echoes the importance of feelings of anxiety that are commonly part of the assemblage that is the novice supervisor (see eg Vehviläinen and Löfström 2016), it highlights in particular the changes in the supervisor's investment and engagement in student projects, something commented on by several informants. Thyge, likewise an associate professor in his late 40s, for example confided how in the first years he "was overpreparing, [I] spent hours and hours, sitting the whole weekend really, was reading very closely" upon projects' topics and spending many more hours than he was allotted, trying to gain area expertise to assist groups with their projects, something I recognized strongly from my own first years at RUC. Realizing both unsustainability of this approach as well internalizing that the main goal of supervision did in fact not relate to the research area expertise, he, like Erik above and others, is now more aware of the autonomy of the two sides of the supervisory relation and the need to maintain it.

Besides the autonomy, as Erik also points out, it is the sense of not just understanding but also acting on the understanding that in supervision, especially in the undergraduate supervision, it is students who have primary agency and are in control of the process. Already

the insistence that it is students' responsibility to establish the very first contact with the assigned supervisor is particularly telling in this respect. Nancy, an assistant professor trained at a traditional North-American university, related for example the following during the discussion of her first experiences with supervision at this reform university:

I wrote to the students straight away, myself, because I thought that...to me when I got the email saying these are the groups you've been assigned, well I thought that the next step in this was for me to write to them.....and quickly realized that that was not the normal style that people were engaging with their supervisors. I tried to take a real leadership role right at the beginning.

This realization was in Nancy's case ushered in by a repeated reminder of senior colleagues, that, with the exception of the first semester students, it is students who need to take the initiative and contact the supervisor. Such a particular sense of ownership and responsibility for learning in the supervisory relationship gets also often explicitly articulated to students by supervisors who, like Thyge, tell students, "This is not just an [exam or course] essay. This is *yours*. It is like art." Or to quote Erik again, who tells his supervisees:

"It's *your* responsibility, it's *your* project, it's *your* decision"....I'm very aware of not taking responsibility for their report, the actual product. That is their own responsibility...I don't correct their hand-ins. I don't go in and put in the red comments and give it back with red comments. I don't do that. That's completely their responsibility.

Feeling compelled to communicate to students explicitly that the responsibility for project work is theirs, as Erik does, might hint at the fact that, at least some students lack this understanding. Yet as Nancy, supervisor trained in the North American context, reflected:

More often than not, students are eager to take that leadership role or that role of responsibility for their own projects. They really see this as their domain and don't want to have a heavy-handed supervisor. It is very different from other kinds of supervision models that you might have elsewhere in the world.

There is also a spatial element making the distinctiveness of supervisory practice as a separate sphere of pedagogical practice emerge. Namely the "small setting"-nature of supervisory events, enables, according to Lotte, that "the whole dialogue in supervision is very different...and you can be more personal". For some, like Ditte, an associate professor in

late 50s, this means that it creates room for a relationship that is "like researcher to a researcher", reminiscent of the apprenticeship model known from doctoral supervision (Deuchar 2008), despite the short time-span of these semester-long relations and different level of research ability. At the same time the more intimate scale can and often does prove challenging as it accentuates a stronger need for other than strictly academic or subject matter competences, such as good communication skills and approachability and especially emotional intelligence. For Ulrich for example, an associate professor in mid-50s, who now focuses more on the social and emotional aspects of his supervisory practice (see e.g. Halse 2011), reading students' emotional responses in a feedback-giving situation is one of the biggest challenges in supervision, as he described it:

That can be paralyzing because you cannot see it on the person or because that person does not respond otherwise but in reality, it is a crushing criticism.....So, the thing with giving the right dose of criticism, that I think can be a challenge. When to be very critical and when one just needs to insinuate for them [the students] to get it. Sometimes you are in a situation and you do not think they understand what you say and then your criticism becomes stronger and stronger, [thinking to oneself] "Oh, just get it already!".

While for Ulrich the fact that supervision entails working with groups of students working on a joint project mitigates the potentially crushing impact of his critique, in other aspects it provides for an additional challenge. On the one hand the supervisor is providing guidance to a group as a whole but s/he needs to be also properly responsive to the diverse needs within the group (Nielsen and Danielsen 2012). Furthermore, especially more senior colleagues, feeling otherwise rather skilled in their supervision, were concerned about the group dynamics, and more specifically their own sense of being ill-equipped as supervisors to deal with the problems in how well groups worked. Discussing the subject, Thyge shared how he sometimes feels compelled to draw on his partner's expertise as a psychologist when trying to address issues that arise in regard to, for example, a potentially vulnerable student in a group he is supervising. This exemplifies how the relations with other university-bound humans - staff, students and even administrators - as one of the elements in the assembling process of

supervision are sometimes complemented with relations to those subjects conventionally thought of as standing outside that supervision, like non-academic partners. Generally though, for most supervisors the collective aspect of supervision, together with its relatively short span of a semester and at the same time a stronger sense of autonomy amongst senior supervisors seems to help minimize the need for engaging in the "emotional boundary work", familiar especially to doctoral supervisors (Strandler et al. 2004).

Encountering Actually Existing Supervision

In contrast, the boundary between what the academic staff consider a mode of engagement appropriate in the classroom, namely instruction (*undervisning*) and supervision is much harder to maintain in actual practice. The sense of distinctiveness of supervision discussed above, is in fact very much tied to its perceived difference from instruction (referred to in Danish by the same word that means teaching more broadly,) as already alluded to by Erik in the first interview excerpt. Yet in fact both get performed in supervisory situations, as Lotte outlines here in response to my wondering whether the distinction she perceives between supervision and other types of teaching in fact holds:

I *do* sometimes switch to teaching when I feel that these things you ought to know... then I can sometimes spend 5-10 minutes going through something. And that again is about performing my expectations, to show how to do project work and if you do not know what the difference between empirical work and theoretical work is, then I tend to put on the teacher's cap and etc...and this is just as much to state 'We should *not* be having this conversation'.

What strikes here is Lotte's dissatisfaction with having to switch to her instructor persona, a theme that reverberated throughout the interviews. Instruction, seen to belong properly to a classroom rather than a meeting room or one's office, was associated widely, as Lotte also lays out, with an instructor-controlled explanation of subject matter, reminiscent of a transmission model of teaching and learning. While such a conception of classroom teaching might seem old-fashioned given the turn to more active teaching and learning strategies in

coursework in most of the academy, it most likely results from RUC's particular history where coursework was introduced only some fifteen years ago, at first as a small complement to project work. Over time, however, it had become more focused on subject matter lecturing and thus increasingly separated from project work both conceptually and practically.

Overall, supervisors accept that the supervision of first year students necessitates more of a hands-on guidance and regular shifting to the instruction mode, but they find it frustrating when they encounter what they see as students' lack of progression, necessitating lapsing back to the role of an instructor when one should properly be supervising. This can happen due to institutional reasons⁵. More broadly, project work is seen as not working as effectively in case of groups composed of weaker students. It is here that the actually existing supervision comes at times short of the concept of supervision as "this knowledge-based, and scientifically orientated dialog with the students where I also learn a lot", as Martin put it. Most supervisors are aware that this is an idealized type of supervision, as Ditte clarifies:

The nice thing about this project work at RUC and so on is that you are, at least, *in theory*, you are supervising somebody who is also doing research. You research from day one so you're exchanging experience and I find that quite rewarding.

Having gotten inspired methodologically or introduced to new literature by stronger groups in the past, she appreciates when supervision works as "a sort of collaboration somehow", impacting directly her research. This sense of inspiration is also articulated vividly by Ulrich:

What I've done research-wise over time yeah there's a lot of traces of what students had done. It can happen that a year goes by and I remember "Oh, yes, we had that discussion in that group about that and that"....I have a mass of flashbacks to situations in supervision that I used later in an argument, for example, or a construction of a particular research narrative in an article.

And finally, Nancy reflected on how just a few years of supervision have made her much

⁵ Institutional complexity at RUC enhances namely potential for students' diversity of study experiences, and for example resulting in a student coming to a social science for the first time in their fifth semester while only having been exposed to humanistic-technological studies in the first two years, where they tend not to get trained in theory or state of the art components of project work.

more reflective about her own research process:

In order to teach someone, you have to understand it better. You just do it, your research, but when students ask you, you have to reflect on it. It seems straightforward but once you start teaching it, that process, I learnt so much though. It also forces me to speak in much less abstract terms. And it taught me so much about how we grow as learners.

This deepening of knowledge that comes through having to "translate...intuitive knowledge into concrete forms" (Halse 2011, 568) that Nancy's quote exemplifies does not, however, depend necessarily, or even for the most part, on the most excellent students.

Yet especially the supervisors with long-term experience at RUC opined that the ideal(ised) dialogue-based research-like supervision is challenged as the "daring" (Ulrich) and "independent" (Mette) students are getting rarer. More students are seen as requesting "the right answers, more handholding" (Erik) and "fixed models" (Thyge) than did a decade or fifteen years ago. Asked to reflect on the reasons behind this development, Erik suggested, in line with other informants, that the "ever-growing focus on meeting the expectations... [means that] the student gets more and more sensitive to what the specific demands are". While he stressed that students learn this already in their pre-university education, he also thinks that "we've pretty much played into it as well" through contributing to ever more detailed formalisation and technicalisation of student learning (e.g. Buciek and Hansen 2017). In the process he sees students reframing university, including supervision in terms of schooling, as he, disapprovingly, summarised:

They tend to speak of themselves as *pupils*. They tend to speak of this *place* as the school. They speak of us as *teachers*. *Hey, we* sometimes speak of ourselves as teachers!

Mette, on the verge of retirement, was the only one who reflected on how she might be possibly idealising the past. Yet the growing scholarship today, as mentioned in the first part of this paper, does confirm precisely how recent transformations of university systems across the global North centered increasingly on efficiency, quality assurance impact in conjunction with students' changing attitudes towards higher education everyday conditions

for supervision. Additionally, RUC's transition from 1-year long projects to 5-month projects had exacerbated these broader transformations. All supervisors with long-term experience had underlined how this shift, together with an increase in coursework that tends to concentrate in the first few months of each semester, results in many groups squeezing most of the project work into several, albeit intense, months. For Thyge, as a supervisor, such shortened timespan together with how the "learning process has become more instrumental" resulted in him having "downgraded [his] expectations" over the past decade.

The overwhelming sense that my informants described here was that of the quickening of the supervisory process that feels rushed. While Ulrich felt that especially the early stages suffered as there was not enough time for problem formulation that needs time to properly develop and mature, Ditte's complaint was that there usually was no time really available to discuss data analysis, encountered primarily while reading the final report before the oral exam. Because "writing often happens in this very concentrated period of time", Nancy felt that "there's a lost opportunity there to really follow up on some of the earlier discussions". My exchange with Mette about what she has found most challenging over time exemplifies these effects, underlining changing conditions of possibility for practicing supervision:

Mette: Nowadays, it is to convince them that they actually have to read quite a lot of theory for their projects and also philosophy of science.

TF: Why do you think that is?

Mette: I think it's two things actually. *It has to go so fast, and I really think you can feel this thing*, that it has to go fast because you have to be aware off 'Hm, how much can they actually manage to read for the project in that short time'. That is one thing. The other thing is that they feel more as pupils than as students in some sense...In this short time and more being pupils, they much more expect you to be the one actually to say 'Ok what shall you actually read for this project'...so that seeking process [coming] from themselves, I don't think they do that so much anymore.

Negotiated Temporalities of Supervision

As increasingly clear from this discussion, being a supervisor at this reform university involves a negotiation of multiple temporal frames of different durations that layer and interlace in complex ways. They relate to different cyclical and linear times of varying spans

as they pertain to different aspects of the (acquisition of) practice of supervision, including all the relationalities with supervised subjects, colleagues and especially the institutional framework of supervision.

There is, in the first place, the time of one's own supervisory practice over a longer period of time. As mentioned earlier, this sense of having transitioned from a position of novices, akin to Braidotti's "nomadic subjects...with no fixed reference point as they negotiate their way through the (mine) field of their own insecurities and different power relations" (Maritz and Prinsloo 2015, 973), to that of seasoned supervisors was very palpable, including for Thyge:

I feel now much more trained into looking into where do they [the students] have their difficulties, and what I can say to them. So I feel much more professional, much more like I can do good supervision for them.

This transition is tied also to the everyday clock-time and time management issues. While some commented that supervision preparation became less time-consuming over time, others, like Nancy, acknowledged their active enabling of that transition by becoming "a lot more protective and less flexible". The latter, as an exemplification of supervisors' "developing self-protective strategies" (Halse 2011, 562) and learning "disciplined supervision" (ibid, 565), relates itself to the negotiation of longer-durée transition of late capitalist societies with their attendant increased time-efficiency demands and anxieties about them.

Importantly, while my interviewees' narratives evinced in many ways quite a solid sense of having transitioned, this transition is not necessarily marked by a simple linear temporality, or a severe endpoint. Several more seasoned supervisors mentioned, for example, feeling beginner-like at times again when they started focusing on new areas of the supervision process or returned to supervision after spending time in an administrative or intensive research position, reflecting indeed how supervision works as an "ongoing ontological process of 'becoming a supervisor'" (Halse 2011, 557). Explicit wishes for structured opportunities for collective reflections, or, in Thyge's words, "conscious

discussions of how we do supervision" (see also Kiley 2011), expressed by the supervisors, highlight the ongoing process for learning inherent to becoming.

This discussion shows that the sense of a having transitioned does not necessarily invalidate but rather complicates Grant's (2018) understanding of supervisor as never a finished, coherent or settled identity, but one that is rather always in a state of emergence and re-emergence. It complicates it through highlighting that additional relation that is part of that assembling process, namely one's relation to the past situations, supervisees, formats, as well as oneself, and the way those are remembered. While it might be something that most likely became accentuated through the methodological choices of this project, namely the focus on narrative interviews rather than an ethnography, this past, often in an idealised way, remembered and/or imagined as a much slower time as well as potential future (e.g. Grant 2018) is always very much an element of the present practices of supervision.

Finally, the institutionally given framework of the overwhelming majority of research(-like) supervisions at RUC, namely semester long projects and MA theses, provides for another, the most decisive temporal frame of supervisory practice. Repetition of the whole supervision process from the initial stage to the submission of final project every semester, as well as repetition of stages of that process throughout each semester with multiple groups, provides for multiple, shorter-span cyclicalities that make for an intense cadence of the supervisory practice. This semestral rhythmicity can be at the same time cacophonous as different groups one is supervising move through the stages at different paces, even if the officially set procedures of submitting drafts and formally discussing them with opponent supervisors and groups at set times during the semester, attempt to standardize the unfolding of the semester's rhythm. It is no surprise that in one of the departments at RUC supervisors have started practising cluster supervision, whereby a string of supervisory meetings between a supervisor and a specific project group have been replaced by all the project groups a given

faculty member is supervising participating in a joint session at times set at the beginning of the semester. Somewhat reminiscent to a cohort-based supervision where all (albeit individual) projects are supervised together (Wrigley et al. 2020; Glover 2010), it seeks to smooth out that potential cacophony to ensure all the groups' smooth and synchronised progression through the different stages of research.

Even short of cluster supervision, some supervisors actively address the tendency towards highly unequal pacing of project work between the two different halves of the semester, scheduling several meetings ahead so as to striate or even out the pace and normalize the supervision. And while others insist on students taking responsibility for ensuring timeliness throughout, they nevertheless recognise differential rhythmicity of project supervision throughout a single semester, whereby the supervision during the last half or at least third of the semester shifts much more towards the view of the product rather than the process itself, as reminiscent from the doctoral supervision research discussed at the outset of this article. Importantly, in conjunction with this cyclicity and rhythmicity supervisors also actively attend to the temporal trajectories of students' progression in terms of whether and how their project work expertise grows appropriately between different stages of their university education. For many supervisors this intense semestral cyclical pattern of most of their supervision coexists with - and often in a jarring counter-distinction to - a three-year process of supervision of one or more doctoral students, that itself comes with its own differentially overlapping and intersecting temporal patterns and rhythms.

Conclusion

In contrast to most of the existing work on supervisors' experiences and perspectives that focuses on the doctoral, and to some extent Master's-level supervision at traditional universities, this paper has focused on a reform university, where supervision involves

overwhelmingly multiple, semester-long, group-based research-like project-work of Bachelor's and Master's students. I examined how this particular institutional framework, as an "'outside' element" enabling supervisors to emerge continually into assemblages of a multiplicity of relations to humans, temporal frames, procedures and spaces, is "relayed into the dynamics of supervision" (Grant 2018, 366).

This specific context does, maybe unsurprisingly, shape quite distinctly how supervisors experience their supervisory practice in regard to other parts of their academic practice, or at least how they narrate it in the interviews. While they to some extent do understand supervision as a part of teaching, or pedagogy, like their colleagues elsewhere they at the same time insist on supervision as a practice very distinct from teaching as such, associated more with the coursework and instruction as a mode of teaching. While this might be unusual in undergraduate supervision elsewhere, at this university problem-oriented project work had been a signature, and for a long time the only form of pedagogical work, designed very purposefully to counter the instruction-focused teaching of classical academe.

At the same time, most likely as a result of having to supervise both, a multiplicity of diverse projects, and students in their first years of university education, supervision is seen as promoting learning to research, enabling student development and upholding academic standards, rather than enculturating students into any particular academic community, or about advancing supervisor's own research agenda, as might be the case more often with doctoral supervision (see Bruce and Stoodley 2013). This focus on learning about the knowledge production, or "techne" in Halse and Malfroy's words (2010), is understandable given that supervisors at RUC do not necessarily share "scholarly expertise", thought of in terms of disciplinary match, with all, or at times even majority of the projects supervised.

Lastly, centrality of project-work in the university's pedagogical model impacts strongly temporal aspects of supervisors' experiences. Namely, the dominant short-term,

multiple cyclicity of semester-long projects and theses supervised - while making for a regular practice - results in a temporally intense practice, one that is at the same time complex and multi-layered, as it intersects not only with the different levels and paces of groups supervised in their semestral projects, but also the longer-term temporal frames of trajectories of students' progression in higher education, doctoral supervision or personal and institutional frameworks. This results in an arguably more intensely negotiated temporalities of supervision than at most traditional research universities.

At the same time the feelings of acceleration that the supervisors at this university experience due to the shortening span of even the semestral projects echo the changing temporal feels of graduate supervision more broadly, defined increasingly by stricter completion deadlines and a focus on more immediate outputs of research degrees (Ginn 2012; Usher and Green 2003). Here it becomes clear that the broad contours of neoliberalized academia that underpin the shift towards the "fast supervision" (Usher and Green 2003) and that threaten the possibility for the collaborative, more intellectually explorative forms of supervision are shared to some extent across the different institutional-pedagogical contexts. This shared landscape is undoubtedly uneven. At RUC and in Denmark more broadly for example the surveillance and evaluation of supervision, mentioned especially in Australia-based research, has not (yet?) made as many inroads. Yet the ever-increasing focus on the employability and timely completion in higher education programs, pushed for by the national government - which provides not only free higher education but also financial support for all the Danish and EU university students - has made - as in other countries - students' knowledge acquisition and production more utilitarian.

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