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## Title

Being "at" university : the social topologies of distance students / Sian Bayne ; Michael Sean Gallagher ; James lamb

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## Abstract

This paper considers how online, distance students enact the space of ?the university?, in the context of the rise of distance education within a traditional, ?elite? institution. Aiming to provide insight into how students translate into distance the space of a university which has traditionally had its basis in conventional on-campus education, it locates itself within the ?new mobilities? paradigm (Urry in Mobilities. Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007), drawing on four different kinds of social space delineated by Mol and Law (Soc Stud Sci 24(4):641?741, 1994) and Law and Mol (Environ Plan D 19:609?621, 2001) in order to analyse narrative and visual data generated with distance students at the University of Edinburgh. The paper shows that the material campus continues to be symbolically and materially significant for a group of students who may never physically attend that campus. Distance students, we find, need their own version of the ?spatial certainties? of bounded, campus space. Yet, in exploring the ?new proximities? of online distance education, we also argue that to define institutional

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and academic authenticity solely in terms of this bounded, ?regional? space is inadequate in the face of the other topologies which also come into play throughout distance students? accounts of what it means to be ?at? university. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Bayne, Sian, E-Mail: sian.bayne@ed.ac.uk