

Campus conventions: distance education and university space

Dr Sian Bayne, University of Edinburgh

This talk will look at the notion of university space as a locus of digital disruption. Focusing on the question of what it means to be 'at' University, for distance students who are never 'in' the University in the sense of being present on campus, it will discuss the question of how we understand the 'distancing' in space of students, particularly in the context of distance postgraduate teaching, and the provision of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). It will consider how both distance and on-campus teaching might take a re-worked and unconventional perspective on space, mobility and what it means for our students to be 'here'.

The presentation will share the findings of a recent research project with distance Masters students at the University of Edinburgh, which gave some surprising insights into what the space of the university means to 'non-traditional' students who never physically attend. It will then move on to discuss the various articulations of space which have emerged through the offering of a particular MOOC (the 'E-learning and digital cultures' MOOC offered by the University of Edinburgh through Coursera).

Some of the themes emerging from this work will be discussed, including how 'homecoming' and a sentimental connection with the material campus remain important to students at a distance, what it means to be 'nomadic' as a student, and what it means to experience 'campus envy'. Using insights from mobilities theory, I will argue against the tendency within higher education to treat bounded campus space as the norm, and distance and 'placelessness' as a deviation. I will suggest that this fails to take account of the complex and creative ways in which distance students make University space.

Biography

Dr Sian Bayne is Senior Lecturer in Digital Education, in the School of Education at the University of Edinburgh. She convenes the Digital Cultures and Education research group, and is Associate Dean (digital scholarship) in the College of Humanities and Social Science. She teaches on the MSc in Digital Education (a large distance programme) and on the E-learning and Digital Cultures MOOC. She researches distance education, MOOCs, on-campus e-learning and museum learning, with current areas of interest in open education, code cultures and 'more-than-human' movements in cultural theory.

Email: sian.bayne@ed.ac.uk

Twitter: [@sbayne](https://twitter.com/sbayne)

Web: sianbayne.net