Presence Is Not Always in The Singular

Teaching in the virtual classroom often involve the dichotomies concerning time (synchronous - asynchronous) and space (same place - different places) and they are normally considered with regard to the physical area because learning designs must be created differently depending on whether the students are together in the classroom at the same time with the teacher or not. But when e-learning is taking place as a mix of students on campus and e-students on-line and the teaching is recorded in order to be watched by other students later on, the traditional dichotomy cannot capture the complex and multiplied learning topoi. Both students and teachers can be present many places at a time: the teacher can e.g. be physically-bodily present on campus and virtually-bodily present on the e-students’ laptops, the e-students can be at home and in the classroom (via videoconference) at the same time or in the classroom while also actively present on Facebook. Based on fieldwork and interviews in professional bachelor program in physiotherapy and with inspiration from symbolic interactionism and postphenomenology, this paper attempts to analyze and discuss different kinds of e-learning designs with regard to physical and virtual presence. It suggests the concept of polytopic presence in order to nuance the dichotomies between same/different time and same/different place and to focus on the necessity of a didactical consideration of a presence that is not only physical and in the singular but very often also virtual and thereby with an opportunity to be in the plural too.

Keywords: e-learning, professional bachelor programmes; physiotherapy; videconference; polytopic presence, designs for learning