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**Marko Hakonen & Janne Tienari**

A view to the merger: Aalto University, the campus move, and identity

In this article, we examine how the place-based and social identities of academics are construed in a move of campus that is a part of a university merger. We shed light on this complicated process by studying the move of Aalto University School of Business from Etu-Töölö in Helsinki to Otaniemi in Espoo. Interactions of place and social identity in organisational change – here, in an organisation undergoing a merger and a move of premises – have passed unnoticed in extant research. We introduce a new construct to the study of identities: the concept of 'view', which relates to the layering of different types of identities of individuals. Our core finding is that place-based and social identities intertwine in more complex ways than earlier research has indicated. We argue that the 'view' relating to individuals' contextually bound histories helps us to understand these relations. Hence, we bring new elements into discussions on academic identities in universities undergoing change.