

# Academic Tribes and Territories: over two decades of theorising academic cultures

## ***From formal theory to real-world solutions***

### **Research impact story**

The first edition of *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual enquiry and the culture of disciplines* was published in 1989. Researched and written by Tony Becher, it was “greeted by academics as a landmark book” (Hughes, 2013, 262).



The second edition, by Becher and Trowler (2001) put a new emphasis on academic practices other than research, especially on learning and teaching. It also highlighted gender issues and discussed the significance of managerialism and the diversity of institutions.

The third edition was a collection edited by three academics – [Paul Trowler](#), [Murray Saunders](#) and Veronica Bamber. Trowler and Saunders co-direct [here@lancaster](#) and Roni Bamber is a graduate of the Department’s [Doctoral Programme in Educational Research](#). Taking a ‘practice turn’, it shifted the theoretical framework of the Tribes and Territories thesis in the direction of social practice theory, concentrating on recurrent practices in different settings, and stressing the importance of context in understanding academic cultures across the disciplines.



The second edition has over 3,500 citations and is the 8th most referenced book in the field (Tai et al, 2013).

As Mark Hughes says in reviewing the whole genre: "The tribes and territories thesis ...has made a significant contribution to education studies in mapping ontological, epistemological and methodological shifts within education studies over 23 years" (Hughes, 2013, 261).

Paul Trowler (pictured here giving a keynote address to the Higher Education Research and Development Association Annual Conference, in Australia, July 2011) continues to develop the Tribes and Territories thesis, currently considering the implications of a practice approach for conceptualising disciplines in general and particular, and the implications of this for change practices (for example, Trowler, 2013).

## References

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