

# Lost and found in space: placed and misplaced academic advisors and developers

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This position paper argues that the regular restructuring of central units of teaching and learning in universities maintains and reinforces their peripheral status, undermining productivity. We read current *practical* experience of place through *theories* of place. In regard to research training, Green and Bowden (2010: 136) map a three-levelled model of good practice, positioning the university-wide programme as ‘*central*’ (imperialist in post-colonial theory). Generic support’s ‘central space’ can be construed as a contact zone between disciplines, a *borderlands* (Anzaldúa, 1987), allowing lucrative cross-cultural trade and contributing to research culture a vantage point into the meta-levels of research work. Generic support is also often described as somehow *marginal* (e.g. Rowland, 2006: 76). These metaphors of place smuggle in theories of social exchange relevant to academic advisors and developers and their work. In practice, learning advisors and academic developers are prone to being shifted about by senior management: devolved, amalgamated, and recycled under different reporting umbrellas. Theories of space are played out in physical and line-management placement, where an identity of itinerancy undermines other ideas of academic identity—and productivity.