

# ICS SEMINAR SERIES 2024

## Policy Ecology as Concept and Method

27 June 2024 | 11:30am - 1:00pm

Room: EZ.G.36 Parramatta South Campus

### Abstract

In this talk, Tess Lea will speak about her efforts to refine what an anthropology of policy might offer, and how a framework she calls 'policy ecology' might be applied. She sketches why she needed a different way of thinking about what policy is, where it acts, and what it leaves behind, as part of coming to grips with Indigenous experiences with policy saturation and what sits behind the inability of social policy to deliver equitable or restorative outcomes. She argues that policy is soaked into almost everything we care to analyse. Accordingly, policy analysis should not be confined to traditional artefacts and practices of governance and regulation. A policy ecology framework considers dispersal, rather than governmental artefacts and practices alone, as the proper object of analysis. While the primary reorientation comes with adopting an ecological approach to policy over normative understandings of what policy constitutes, three additional perspectives are offered to aid in grasping policy soakings at large and across time: artefactual, ambient and hauntological modalities. Examples of how a policy ecology approach might be applied are provided, together with an account of what this framework potentially offers for those seeking to move beyond critique toward critically mindful action, in a world of rapidly compounding complexity and disruption.

### Biography

Tess Lea is an anthropologist who studies bureaucratic and organizational formations, and whose interests in social policy has seen her delve into schooling, health systems, infrastructure, housing, urban planning, and mixed media cultural interventions. She is currently Dean, School of Social Sciences, Macquarie University.

**Presenter: Tess Lea**

**Discussant: Louise Crabtree-Hayes**

**Chair: Denis Byrne**

**NEXT SEMINAR:  
25 JULY**