



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Biopolitics of Science Research Network

Sydney Social
Sciences and
Humanities
Advanced
Research Centre

RESEARCH SEMINAR WITH THOMAS LEMKE



Speaker

Thomas Lemke
Goethe University,
Frankfurt

When

1-2.30pm,
12 September 2018

Where

CCANESA boardroom,
Madsen Building,
Eastern Avenue,
University of Sydney

Register before Monday August
20, 2018 at

<https://bit.ly/2k4hsUq>

For more information

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**Biolegality Pop-Up
Research Lab**

BEYOND LIFE AND DEATH

Investigating Cryopreservation
Practices in Contemporary Societies



ABSTRACT

Cryopreservation practices are an essential dimension of contemporary life sciences. They make possible the freezing and storage of cells, tissues and other organic materials at very low temperatures and the subsequent thawing of these at a future date without apparent loss of vitality. Although cryotechnologies are fundamental to reproductive technologies, regenerative medicine, transplantation surgery and conservation biology, they have largely escaped scholarly attention in science and technology studies, anthropology and sociology. In my talk, I will explore the crucial role of cryopreservation in affecting temporalities and the concept of life. The talk is based on the thesis that in contemporary societies, cryopreservation practices bring into existence a new form of life: “suspended life”. “Suspended life” enables vital processes to be kept in a liminal state in which biological substances are neither fully alive nor dead. I will examine how “suspended life” is assembled, negotiated, mobilised, and practiced by exploring two distinctive fields of investigation and sites of cryobanking: oocyte freezing to extend fertility and rearrange reproductive futures and the cryopreservation of endangered or extinct species with the prospect of “bringing them back to life” by employing reproductive and genetic technologies. The talk will address how new regulatory and legal issues emerge around practices of cryopreservation and the concept of “suspended life”.

AUTHOR BIO

Thomas Lemke is Professor of Sociology with a focus on Biotechnologies, Nature and Society at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Goethe-University Frankfurt/Main in Germany and Honorary Professor at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. His research interests include social and political theory, biopolitics, new materialisms, social studies of genetic and reproductive technologies. Lemke has published extensively on the social implications of the life sciences and contributed to the theoretical advancement of social theory and the social studies of biotechnology. He is especially recognized for his readings of Foucault and theoretical contributions to the debates on governmentality and biopolitics. In 2018 he was awarded an Advanced Grant of the European Research Council (ERC) for a research project on the social and cultural impacts of cryobiology.