Interpretivism and policy research

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This seminar will examine the value of Interpretivism to public policy research and by extension to public policy makers. It will demonstrate how interpretivism offers an important alternative perspective that can help us understand why policy makers and professionals and practitioners might not always act in the way that postivism might suggest. Drawing on empirical examples the seminar will explore how interpretivism can be operationalized in public policy research. It focuses on three elements: traditions, situated agency, and practices and shows how interpretivism affords more nuanced accounts of meaning-making by actors and also has implications for the shaping of material outcomes.

Professor Helen Sullivan is Foundation Director of the Melbourne School of Government (MSoG) and a public policy scholar. Her research and teaching explores the changing nature of state-society relationships including the theory and practice of governance and collaboration, new forms of democratic participation, and public policy and service reform. Her latest book is Hybrid Governance in European Cities: Neighbourhood, Migration and Democracy (2013). She is a Fellow (Victoria) of the Institute of Public Administration Australia.