Sandra Bärnreuther (Heidelberg):
“Biovalue: The Case of IVF in India”

More than three decades after the birth of the first IVF-baby in 1978 methods of extracorporeal fertilization have become clinical routine measures in the field of reproductive medicine. The procedures, however, have invoked public controversies and have impinged on understandings of procreation, nature and life itself in many parts of the world. By examining how reproductive technologies are shaped by social and cultural contexts in different locales, and, reciprocally, the role they play in forging these social formations, anthropologists have addressed the co-production of science, technology and sociality. In a similar vein this paper will explore the notion of biovalue (Waldby) and investigate some of the manifold meanings the term may encompass using the example of reproductive technologies. What values are reproductive technologies imbued with in IVF clinics in India? In what regimes of value do related biomaterials circulate? And how do IVF procedures contribute to the generation of biovalue (e.g. in terms of markets, norms and ethics)? The paper will further highlight modes of abstraction entailed in the establishment of biovalue and give examples of diverse features of IVF treatment in India, such as gamete and embryo donation, laboratory practices and the politics of life.

Podium Discussion “Travelling Technologies, Tracing Transculturality”:
2011/10/07 (Friday) – 11:00-12:30
Venue: Neue Aula