Sinjini Mukherjee (Heidelberg):
“New Technologies, Normative Ideals: Kidney Transplantation and Kins as Organ Donors in India”

Transplantation, as a form of therapy was made viable only in the mid 20th Century, by which time genetic and immunological research had conclusively established that a dysfunctional organ in one person could be “supplemented” by a healthy, functioning organ from another. Ever since its inception as a therapeutic option, organ transplantation came to be accompanied by a fair share of transgressions and scandal, making legislation an imperative prerequisite to even sustain its viability. This was even more so the case for the developing world, India being its prototype, where the socio-economic conditions for a large part of its population made it conducive for the mushrooming of organ markets. In India, the Transplantation of Human Organs Act was passed in 1994 that permits only parents, offspring, siblings and spouses to donate organs to an individual suffering from advanced stage organ failure. This paper analyses how the medico-legal regulations governing living donor transplants in India, in their effort to curtail organ trafficking and trade, reinforce conventional kinship roles. It is assumed that new technologies have given rise to new forms of kinship and this has been the case (only in part) where altruistic unrelated donations are possible. In the Indian context however, with the outlawing of unrelated donations, the technologies of transplantation have come to rely heavily on normative kinship structures for their fulfillment. Finally, this paper will reveal the normative ideals which instruct donor-recipient relations within such a set-up and the subsequent negotiation of these ideals through an intricate act of “performance”.

Podium Discussion/Panel “Travelling Technologies, Tracing Transculturality” (part two):
2011/10/07 (Friday) – 13:30-15:00
Venue: Neue Aula