Prof. Celia Lury  University of Warwick

Bringing the world into the world: the material semiotics of topological culture

The lecture puts forward the claim that culture is becoming topological. Rather than using topological concepts to analyze and interpret contemporary culture, it is suggested that the distinctively topological ‘abstractions’ of ordering and continuity of transformation now organize the movement of forms of social life such that constant change is normalized. This claim is supported by a discussion of the material semiotics of contemporary culture, which makes use of the Peircean framework of signs as icons, indices, and symbols to explore the changing qualities of live(li)ness as they are produced in processes of practical abstraction. The effect of these processes is to expand modes of relating, and in particular to intensify the importance of comparison as a social relation. Topological culture is thus presented as the introduction of new continuities into a discontinuous world and the making and marking of discontinuities through repeated contrasts; both are shown to emerge in the contemporary proliferation of modes of relating made possible by changes in the composition of a mixed sign-system.

Celia Lury is Director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies, University of Warwick. Her main interests include feminist and cultural theory, interdisciplinary methodologies, branding and consumer culture and the sociology of culture. Recent publications are amongst others Branding: the logos of the global economy (Routledge, 2004), Global Culture Industry: the mediation of things (Polity, 2007, with Scott Lash), Consumer Culture (Polity, 2011, Second Edition), and Inventive Methods (Routledge 2012, co-edited with Nina Wakeford).

Please contact michael.huth@ku.de at the Department of Economic Geography for any comments, suggestions or questions regarding the Lecture series.