



Lecture Series: New Developments in Theory

GEOPOLITICS, GEOPOWER, GEOMETRICS

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Recently geographers and others have begun to rethink the nature of 'geopolitics'. Unhappy with the way that geopolitics has effectively become a synonym for global politics, they are beginning to rethink the 'geo' element of the word, as the earth, land or world. Elizabeth Grosz has recently suggested the idea of geopower as a broader frame within which geopolitics operates. Within a wider rethinking of geopower we can then resituate what we mean by geopolitics, as a politics of the earth. At its best, such a politics of the earth would take into account the power of natural processes or resources; the dynamics of human and environment; the interrelation of objects outside of human intervention; the relation between the biosphere, atmosphere and lithosphere; and the complex interrelations that produce, continually transform and re-work the question of territory and state spatial strategies. This geopolitics would sit alongside, rather than replace, the attention given to biopolitics in recent years.

This lecture picks up on these suggestions, adding the particular register of geometrics. Just as with biopower, biometrics and biopolitics, there is a three-way relation between geopower, geometrics and geopolitics. Foucault's work on biopolitics, governmentality and the politics of calculation can, as I have argued elsewhere, be very helpful in understanding transformations of political space and the concept of territory. How can this be extended to look at the world, the global? Geometrics can be understood both in the traditional sense of the term, a measuring of the earth as geo-metry, but there are also a range of other ways geo-metrics might be thought in terms of the applied sense of land surveying; the measuring of the yields of oil and gas, soil fertility, air quality, emissions, and population density. How might this sense of the term be useful today as we grapple with new metrics, new regimes of calculation, new ways of governing the global?