

DIE AMERIKAS: FORSCHUNGSKOLLOQUIUM ZU DEN AMERIKAS AUS KULTURWISSENSCHAFTLICHER SICHT

Donnerstag, 6. Mai 2021
18 Uhr c.t.
Online via Zoom

Luísa Reis Castro (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Global Health, National Science, and the (Future) Ecology of History: The Release of *Wolbachia*-infected *Aedes aegypti* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, vector for viruses such as Zika, dengue, chikungunya, and (urban) yellow fever, is entangled with Brazil's violent history. Environmental historians argue the species probably arrived in what is now known as Brazil in the same ships that crossed the Atlantic bringing in people forced into enslavement, and carrying away natural resources expropriated from indigenous land. In the early 20th century, once the mosquito's vectorial capacity was established, Brazilian physicians, researchers, and politicians called for the tackling of diseases, like yellow fever, as a fundamental step to "civilize" and "modernize" the nation. The *A. aegypti* elimination became a *national* flagship: a means of addressing an illness afflicting the country, an opportunity to promote knowledge and propel Brazilian science, and a path to take the nation out of its "backwardness."

My research examines how the *A. aegypti* was—and still is—a medical, scientific, and political concern, while concomitantly being a promissory possibility for a new national future. I do so, by ethnographically investigating a project releasing *A. aegypti* infected with a bacterium called *Wolbachia*, a microbe that can significantly reduce the mosquito's capacity to transmit viruses. The project is being implemented in Rio de Janeiro by research from a national public health institute but funded by the Gates Foundation. Releases in Rio, with its recurring mosquito-borne disease epidemics, are considered the "gold standard" to evaluate the strategy.

I analyze what I call a *(future) ecology of history* to interrogate (1) how Brazilian scientists and politicians have reframed precarious human-vector-virus relations in an unequal country as a means to achieve global stature and (2) how Brazilian and international scholars frame environmental conditions in the country as foreshadowing what the *A. aegypti*'s presence will be in other parts of the world, due to the effects of expanding urbanization and climate change.

Das Kolloquium findet im Sommersemester 2021 online über Zoom statt.

Um den Link zu erhalten und bei Rückfragen wenden Sie sich bitte an die folgende E-Mail-Adresse: carolin.luiprecht@campus.lmu.de

Institut für Ethnologie
Oettingenstraße 67, 80538 München
www.ethnologie.uni-muenchen.de