

ISA REGIONAL GUEST LECTURE

LIVING WITH, AND GETTING RID OF, MOSQUITOES

THE 2005-07 CHIKUNGUNYA EPIDEMIC IN RÉUNION AND MAURITIUS

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From 2005-07 the islands of Réunion and Mauritius were for the first time affected by an epidemic of the vector-borne disease of *chikungunya*. Chikungunya is a virus carried by the *Aedes* mosquito, and infection causes painful symptoms of rheumatism. Around 30 per cent of the population in each island were affected during the outbreak.

The *Aedes* thrives in artificial reservoirs created by urban spaces such as gardens, backyards or wastelands, which in turn facilitate the spread of the disease. As a result, public health policies advocate for the destruction of mosquito breeding grounds despite residents' various uses of such spaces. This talk explores multispecies ethnography to discuss how the entangling of human lives with those of mosquitoes affects the diffusion and understanding of vector-borne diseases such as chikungunya. Challenged by public health policies, residents in the islands often question the biomedical aetiology of chikungunya because it threatens to negatively impact their familiar surroundings and interactions with their environment. Living with mosquitoes reflects as such a set of ongoing relations among species, objects and spaces that, arguably, entails more than just efforts to get rid of them.



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