

Environmental History in southern Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

65th Minisymposium of the Centre for Environmental History

3rd Rachel Carson Center Lecture

Presentation:

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It is common wisdom that as a named modern subdiscipline, environmental history developed in the United States and Europe against a background of the rising environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Historians in the emerging world have long recognised that their particular, and distinguishing, contribution to this rich seam of historiography lies around an analysis of environmental injustice, inequity and power struggles over the control of resources in precolonial, colonial and postcolonial times.

This focus raises particular challenges around practising environmental history in southern Africa. They include the paucity of reliable sources for various periods, the difficulties of language and interpretation, and the strength (or otherwise) of indigenous knowledge. The small cohort of academics in the region must also be borne in mind. The challenges are, however, to be weighed against the opportunities for fresh scholarship and creative engagement that exist. It is within African environmental history that politics, ideology and purpose come most strongly to the fore, arguably more so than they do in the environmental histories that are characteristic of the developed world.

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Save the date:

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Die Versorgung Wiens 1829-1913. Neue Forschungsergebnisse auf Grundlage der Verzehrungssteuer