

“Pulling the Teeth of the Tropics: Towards an Environmental History of U.S. Public Health Efforts during the Construction of the Panama Canal”

77th Minisymposium of the Centre for Environmental History
7th Rachel Carson Center Lecture

Presentation:

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Between 1904 and 1914, the United States constructed the Panama Canal, an ambitious engineering project undertaken in the shadow of the French failure two decades earlier. The French experience taught American administrators a number of lessons, none more potent than the need to control malaria and yellow fever. The Americans not only responded with a sanitary program that met that threat, but they claimed that they had solved one of the vexing medical – and imperial – problems of the era: settling temperate peoples in tropical environments. The Americans, to use the words of contemporary commentator Albert Edwards, had “pulled the teeth of the tropics”.

This talk will critically examine these triumphalist claims by examining the material conditions that produced these diseases, conditions that had less to do with tropical nature per se than with the environmental disturbances created by canal building.

Ort / Place: AAU | IFF | Standort Wien, 1070 Wien, Schottenfeldgasse 29

Zeit / Time: Monday, 7th November 2016, 18.00 c.t. – 20.00