

## **Thinking (geo)politically: A political ecology of conservation and global security**

Professor Rosaleen Duffy, University of Sheffield

Conservation is, and always has been, (geo)political. While there has been a recent 'security turn' in conservation, it is important to place this in wider historical context. From the inception of the conservation movement at the height of British Imperial ambitions, to current responses to the illegal wildlife trade, geopolitics has infused conservation thinking and practice. I offer a political ecology reading of conservation to tease out the multiple ways in which conservation and geopolitics can intersect. I will focus on responses to the illegal wildlife trade as an illustrative example. The spikes in poaching of elephants and rhinos forged a renewed sense of urgency in conservation, a call to do something to tackle poaching and trafficking before they drive species to extinction. On the surface this seems to be a story about conservation and how it is changing in response to an emergency. However, I will look more deeply into these shifts and reveal how it is actually a story about capitalism, the security industry it sustains, the interests of powerful actors in the international system and the fundamental restructuring of our relationships with nature.