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# "From Biopower to Ontopower? Violent Responses to Wildlife Crime and the New Geographies of Conservation"

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Intensifying global dynamics of wildlife crime are rapidly reshaping conservation politics, practices and geographies. Most pronounced are the manifold violent responses to wildlife crime, including direct lethal action and increasing anticipatory action to prevent these crimes from happening in the first place. This paper reflects on these dynamics in relation to recent literature that employs Foucault's concept of biopower to understand the governance of increasingly precarious human and non-human life. Building on Brian Massumi's exposition of ontopower—an "environmental power" that "alters the life environment's conditions of emergence"—I explore whether we are seeing a move from bio- to ontopower where the imperative is less the construction of systemic forms of governmentality to ensure life's "optimisation" than on processually pre-empting incipient tendencies towards unknown but certain future threats to life. Phrased differently, ontopower focuses on how to prevent nature's destruction in the future through pre-emptive measures in the present. Drawing on empirical research on violent responses to rhino poaching in South Africa, the paper argues that we are seeing the uneven emergence of new geographies of conservation based on ontopower. It concludes by speculating whether conservation's insecurity is turning into its pre-emptive other by making (green) war necessary for non-human life's survival. (Text from author's abstract)

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