Constructing the Poacher: Narratives of Blame in Ivory Poaching

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4/23/2019

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Abstract:

Poaching has been, and continues to be, of significant concern to the conservation of biodiversity. While media descriptions of poaching often include vivid details about the animal victims and the heroics of those fighting to conserve biodiversity, ambiguity still surrounds 'the poacher'. Clarifying the identity of a poacher is necessary to expose a societal tendency to enforce stereotypes on others that perpetuate violence and inequality. Without knowing the identity of a poacher, it becomes easy to impose unsubstantiated beliefs upon them that legitimize unjust and violent policies like shoot-to-kill and life-time jail sentences. This research seeks to understand how the media has constructed the identity and context of the poacher to answer critical questions of how and why violent protected area policies have become perceived as necessary conservation strategies. Through a media content analysis of newspaper reports and field interviews with conservation actors, this paper explores the human rights implications around how the media and society place poachers within a 'space of exception' that legitimizes the state and private sector's claims biopower and strengthens a post-democratic conservation approach.

Acknowledgements

On July 3rd, 2018, human remains were discovered near a pride of lions in South Africa's Sibuya Game Reserve. In the thick bush, investigators found three pairs of boots and three pairs of gloves, a high-powered rifle, silencers, wire cutters, and an axe[i].

With that discovery, the investigation into their deaths halted. According to officials, the remains belonged to rhino poachers who were attacked and eaten by lions while trespassing in the reserve. Social media engagement on news articles about the event alleged that the outcome – being eaten by lions – was the appropriate level of punishment for these men. Many posts asserted that more extreme and violent punishments would have been more suitable to "even the score" between poachers and nature[ii]. These news reports also focused their discussions on the plight of elephants and rhinos in the recent "ivory poaching crisis"[iii]. But, there was an absence of any information – or interest into – who these individuals were, where they came from, or what circumstances led them to enter Sibuya Game Reserve on that day.

Introduction

The case described above is emblematic of society's typical view of ivory poaching that is focused on protecting biodiversity at all costs, even at the expense of human lives. As the anecdote also reveals, when violence befalls those seen as violating or endangering wildlife, this is largely perceived by the public as deserved and even the preferred outcome in such a situation. Yet, despite this contention that violence – in this case being eaten by lions – against poachers is deserved, society frequently does not know *who* actually experienced this violence. For example, when examining news articles and official social media posts by conservation organizations on the incident described above, no information is ever given about the men killed. It begs a question of how society can condone and, in many cases, call for violence against a group of people despite not knowing who they are, where they come from, or why the engage in a particular behavior.

This omission of humanizing information about poachers is unsurprising when considering the dominant discourse on ivory poaching that focuses disproportionately on wildlife. In news reports, the public is often given vivid descriptions of the animal victims

targeted and the heroics of conservation practitioners and rangers who protect threatened species like elephant and rhino (Barua 2010; Mbaria and Ogada 2016). But, information about the poacher is largely absent from these discussions. Instead, as this research will empirically demonstrate, when poachers are considered, descriptions tends to be vague and focused on stereotypical concepts of greed and cruelty.

Without knowing the true identities of poachers, it becomes easy to impose these stereotypical characteristics upon them that can legitimize unjust and violent policies. Research has extensively demonstrated the ease with which society can ascribe exaggerated and false characteristics to other groups that lead to violence and inequality (Hurwitz and Peffley 1997; Harrison and Esqueda 1999; Scharrer 2002; Sides and Gross 2013; Saleem and Anderson 2013; Obaidi et al 2019). Thus, clarifying the identity of a poacher is necessary to expose this societal tendency within conservation to illuminate how violent and militaristic policies have become accepted approaches in conservation.

While a number of scholars have examined the mechanisms through which conservation has become increasingly militarized (Peluso 1993; Peluso and Watts 2000; Duffy 2000; Neumann 2001; Davalos 2001; Lunstrum 2015; Masse 2017; Masse et al 2018; Hitchcock 2019; Buckley 2019), there still remains inattention to how the global public perceives this violence and those targeted by it and perpetuates its usage as a legitimate conservation strategy. As the media is a lens through which to understand the social fabric of society, how it depicts violence in conservation reflects and influences prevailing societal beliefs (Ferguson 2014; Slater 2007; Sotirovic 2003). Media depictions are also significant because they are understood and internalized by a range of actors, thus wielding immense power in shaping conservation discourses (Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006).

Given this brief background, the purpose of this research is to understand how the media and conservationists construct the identity and context of the poacher to answer critical questions of how and why violent protected area policies have become accepted practices in contemporary conservation. Specifically, I offer an analysis of the media and conservation actors' roles in defining an identity for poachers that situates them within a space of exception where they are not afforded the same rights or protection as other members of society. It is through this discursive positioning that poachers become perceived as deserving targets of violence.

We argue that it is in the state's interests to perpetuate this narrative of "the poacher" to justify its use of violence and emphasize its power over its citizens in what Foucault's biopower noted as "making live" and "letting die" (Houen 2008; Biddick and Joy 2016). As the public continues to support the state's power to make decisions about the lives and deaths of others within the framework of conservation, both the state and private conservancies, or privately-owned lands that engage in conservation activities (Endicott 1993; Carter et al. 2008) and exemplify the increasingly neoliberal conservation approach, are able to maintain a status quo of militarization and violence over the control of natural resources.

This research pays particular attention to how violence is articulated by managers and wildlife officials at private conservancies to elucidate how the shift in the type of conservation, from state to private, has shaped the expression and acceptance of violence. Conservation has historically been the domain of the state but, with the intrusion of neoliberal ideologies, it has increasingly shifted to the private sector. As both *who* enacts the violence and how that violence is differently perceived and interpreted by the public matters, it is necessary to examine how both the state and private actors understand and engage with violent protected area policies. I further

examine how the state and private conservancies operate symbiotically and how the relationship between the state and private conservancies extends beyond the unique domain of the state into the private sector.

While conservation violence is a salient issue around the world, this research focuses specifically on East Africa, with much of the data coming from Kenya. Kenya is an important site in which to understand the nuances of violent protected area policies because it has numerous private conservancies and an extensive history of ivory poaching that has prompted state and private protected areas alike to implement or propose militarized policies (Norton-Griffiths and Said 2010). Additionally, Kenya's history of colonialism has significantly shaped the country's approach to biodiversity conservation and conservation policy to have important implications for how violent enforcement policies are understood by local actors (Steinhart 1989, Petursson and Vedeld 2015; Grove 2017).

Research Questions

Given this brief background, I specifically pose four research questions to examine how violent and militarized protected area enforcement policies have become the cornerstones of the contemporary conservation approach. In particular, to understand how the public has come to accept violent protected areas enforcement policies, I ask the following research questions:

1. How does the media construct the poacher?
2. In what ways does this construction contribute to the escalation of violence in conservation policy and action?

While the media is a useful medium through which to analyze public beliefs as it is consumed by large numbers of people and has been demonstrated as a powerful tool in shaping public perceptions and attitudes (Morley 2005; McCombs 2005; Baum and Potter 2008), an

analysis focused exclusively on media representations leaves out the voices and actions of conservation actors on the ground. It is necessary to include this dimension to better understand how violence in conservation is articulated in these spaces and rationalized by those physically enacting these policies. As such, I posed two additional research questions:

3. How do different conservation actors (conservation policy officials, conservation NGOs, and wildlife rangers) understand poachers and poaching?

4. How do these different understandings affect conservation violence?

To answer these critical questions, this research is divided into two components – a media content analysis and an empirical fieldwork component. First, I examine the theoretical frames that provide the conceptual foundation for this work: green militarization, biopower and spaces of exceptions, post democracy, and media studies. These bodies of literature come together to unveil the complexity of conservation violence and expose the mechanisms through which violent and militarized protected area strategies have become accepted practices.

Next, I discuss our chosen research site, Kenya, and examine how its unique context and history has shaped approaches to protected area enforcement and the involvement of the private sector. Then, through a media content analysis of forty years of news articles about ivory poaching, I demonstrate how the media positions poachers within an excepted space. Next, I assess how the on-the-ground reality of protected area enforcement reflect the media analysis and examine how different conservation actors perceive poachers and justify conservation violence.

I then conclude by offering an explanation for how the state and private conservation actors rationalize the use of violence in conservation. Finally, I analyze how the distortion of the barrier between the state and the private sector in conservation has shaped the articulation of

violence and resulted in new forms of conservation governance that allow the private sector to lay claim to *droit de glaive*.

Literature Review

Green Militarization

In the last several decades, scholars in political ecology have critically examined the nexus between violence and natural resources. In her seminal work, "Coercing Conservation", Peluso (1993) theorized that states have a vested interest in controlling natural resources and appropriate the moral ideology of conservation as a justification for using violence to do so. Homer-Dixon (1994) proposed that scarcities of critical environmental resources contribute to the advent and worsening of violent conflicts. In particular, he invoked population growth as the primary cause. Peluso and Watts (2001) pushed back against his neo-Malthusian, arguing that environmental violence is site specific and rooted in local histories, social relations, and larger political economies. Le Billon (2001) further demonstrates the mechanisms through which states control economically valuable natural resources and suppress the dissenting claims of opposition groups, often through the use of violent force.

While violence around natural resources and conservation is nothing new (Steinhart 2006; Dowie 2011), the transition of the sites of violence to primarily include protected areas and the use of heavily militarized technologies and private security forces has come under greater scrutiny recently. Coined green militarization, this concept theorizes about the meshing of militarization and conservation by examining "the use of military and paramilitary (military-like) actors, techniques, technologies, and partnerships in the pursuit of conservation goals" (Lunstrum 2014). This is rationalized by the pervasion of a 'war for biodiversity' rhetoric and the

accompanying discourses of national identity, narco-traffic, and terrorism that have converted conservation into an issue of national security (Ferradas 2004; Williams 2014).

Research around green militarization has focused on its role in creating and perpetuating unequal and problematic power relations between local communities and state conservation officials (Buscher and Fletcher 2014; Buscher and Fletcher 2015; Duffy 2016; Bocarejo and Ojeda 2016). As Peluso (1993) argues, the legitimized use of violence against citizens by the state in the name of natural resource protection allows the state to leverage greater control over people, widening existing power imbalances and resulting in the marginalization of particular groups. The use of state-sanctioned violence in the name of biodiversity conservation "carries a risk that human rights will be compromised in the pursuit of anti-poaching initiatives" and creates the perception by society that certain human lives are valued below biodiversity (Duffy 2014, 324).

Yet, green militarization research has primarily focused on the state as the enactor of violence in conservation. Research on the role of private actors have primarily examined how neoliberal policies of conservation that commodify nature have increased the private sector's control of land and biodiversity, known as the neoliberailization of conservation (Roberston 2004). Through this, there has been an expansion of key conservation actors to include societal elites, businesses, and entrepreneurs (Brockington and Duffy 2010; Buscher and Fletcher 2015; Holmes and Cavanagh 2016). While conservation is frequently positioned as a "bulwark against the spread of neoliberalism", as it defends biodiversity against the destructive force of free-market capitalism, private conservancies exemplify neoliberalism's intrusion into this space (Igoe and Brockington 2007, 433; Heynen and McCarthy 2007).

Neoliberalization is defined as a series of processes that seek to increase the role of the private sector in the economy and society. The first process, deregulation, scales back the

involvement of states and their regulatory practices as they are portrayed as corrupt, inefficient, and restrictive of the market. Privatization, the second process of neoliberalization, is seen by advocates of neoliberalism as the solution to these shortcomings. Here, the role of the state shifts to the private sector, where private entities are tasked with implementing and overseeing government programs and services (Metzger, 2003).

The shift towards neoliberal conservation has largely occurred in the last several decades. Despite state-sponsored protected areas serving, until recently, as the mainstay of conservation efforts, conservationists have long condemned the inefficiency and corrupt nature of the state as hindering their objectives and limiting the range of activities performed (Smith et al. 2003). While new state protected areas do continue to emerge, privatization has been increasingly heralded as the key to conservation success, demonstrated through the proliferation of private game reserves and conservation-oriented business ventures by transnational conservation NGOs (Langholz 2003; Igoe 2007; Brockington et al. 2012). These private conservancies, operated as for-profit enterprises by wealthy elites and foreign donors, promise to improve upon the state's approach by offering more – more resources, more participation, and more unique wildlife viewing opportunities for visitors (Ojeda 2012).

Historically, the state has welcomed the involvement of private actors in conservation – providing tax incentives, sub-dividing collectively held land to make available for private investors and conservation NGOs to purchase, and entering into joint public-private partnerships with private conservation enterprises (Berlanga and Faust 2007; Igoe and Brockington 2007). Through these mechanisms, neoliberal conservation, in the form of private conservancies, has become the gold-standard of conservation in many regions of the world.

Masse and Lunstrum (2016) have further examined neoliberal conservation through an analysis of 'accumulation by securitization', the dynamic in which "capital accumulation is

enabled by practices and related logics of security in ways that often provoke dispossession, which enables further accumulation" (223) and how it is supported by the state and networks of private actors (Masse and Lunstrum 2016). However, existing analyses have not included an examination of how the specific forms and tactics of environmental violence has shifted with the inclusion of private actors nor what the implications of this shift has been.

Despite the growing body of literature on the militarization of conservation, research on the media's role in this discourse has been limited. Neumann (2004) examined the intersections between the media and conservation violence. He reasoned that the manner in which "things are discursively constructed…determines moral worthiness and standing" within society (465). He further applies these ideas to conservation by arguing that, in criminalizing certain activities and assigning particular characteristics to poachers, conservation has created a moral geography that defines certain actions (hunting) and certain people (poachers) as morally wrong. In contrast, violent retribution against poachers by the state is perceived as morally just and necessary. It is through conservation's construction of the identities of poachers and wildlife, where wild animals are anthropomorphized while poachers are vilified, that society is effectively reordered. The construction of conservation's "enemies" in this manner normalizes violence against people in African protected areas (Ybarra 2012).

Lunstrum (2017) argues that the internalization of the "war for biodiversity" rhetoric has created a space where conventional laws governing violence has been suspended. Given the proliferation of social media as a bellwether for societal discourse, she demonstrates this through an analysis of social media comments that reflect poachers' existence in an excepted space where they "have already lost that which would render him or her human in any sense beyond mere biological existence" (Lunstrum 2017, 131). Thus, when poachers are killed, society does not perceive this as a homicide but rather as necessary for conservation practices.

Despite these analyses, understanding of the media's role in conservation violence is severely limited. Neumann's results are based on an analysis of a single article and thus the generalizability of his findings is questionable. Lunstrum's paper, while exploring the connections between poachers, excepted spaces, and social media engagement, fails to consider how the media *itself* can position poachers within spaces of exception. As there has not yet been a systematic investigation into how the media constructs the identity and context of poachers, this research elucidates important elements in how violence has become accepted as a legitimate conservation strategy.

The academic discourse on green militarization provides a necessary contextual foundation for this work by exploring the mechanisms through which conservation has become increasingly violent and militarized. Additionally, this literature provides a useful understanding of how the emergence of neoliberal conservation has increased the role of private actors, providing a necessary base for examining the differences in how conservation actors understand poachers, poaching, and violent protected area policies. While this literature is essential for understanding the methods of conservation violence and the effects of this violence on different groups, it is limited in its ability to answer *how* and *why* violence has become commonplace in the state and private actor's conservation approach. To answer these questions, I borrow from Foucault's theory of biopower and Agamben's spaces of exception to provide the theoretical scaffolding for this research advance our understanding of violence in African protected areas.

Biopower and Spaces of Exception

Foucault (1978)'s notions of biopower refer to a unique form of power that legitimates itself based on its claim to nurture and protect the lives it is charged to defend. Various scholars have argued that this construction of power defines itself in relation to a biological field by

dividing those who must live from those who must die, or as Foucault specified, "making live" and "letting die" (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003; Ojakangas 2005; Patton 2007; Buscher 2018).

While Foucault's definition of biopower was applied specifically to human populations, scholars have expounded upon his theory to describe how actions protecting nonhuman lives are defended using similar biopolitical terms (Luke 1999; Cavanagh 2014; Fletcher 2018). Biopower can specifically be understood as it relates to conservation in the enforcement of protected areas, which demonstrate the state's defense of the nonhuman lives that it considers within its domain (Youatt 2008; Biermann and Mansfield 2014). Fletcher (2018) contends, "in aggressively defending protected areas, states can claim that they are simply extending their general monopoly over the legitimate use of force" into the realm of conservation (235).

Biopower and its usage by the state and conservation is closely related to Agamben's notion of spaces of exception. Agamben (1997) theorized that a space of exception emerges when there is a temporary suspension of the rule of law by state authorities within a space by on the basis of the state's perception of a danger. Further, when a space of exception acquires an enduring spatial arrangement, it remains permanently outside the normal state of law in a society. When this occurs around an individual, who is seen as spoiling the harmony of a nation or area, *homo sacer*, or a bare life, emerges. Here, individuals are divested of political status, protection by the state and its laws, and are relegated to the fringes of society (Agamben 1995; Martin 2015). It is thus through the creation of excepted spaces and fictionalized enemies that the state "civilizes" the art of killing by placing rational objectives upon the act (Schmitt 2005).

Lunstrum (2017) applies spaces of exception to conservation by arguing that the state internalization of the 'war on biodiversity' rhetoric as being akin to a life or death struggle has created a space where conventional laws that govern violence are suspended. She builds upon this argument by demonstrating that when a poacher is killed within a protected area, it is not

considered homicide as poachers have, in the eyes of the state, "already lost that which would render him or her human in any sense beyond mere biological existence" (Lunstrum 2017b, 102). Instead, their deaths are seen as necessary acts for the achievement of conservation goals. Thus, poachers exist in an excepted space where they are considered to be undeserving of the rights and protection accorded to other citizens.

Additionally, the park itself is an excepted space where the laws of nature rather than the laws of society dominate (Duffy 2016). Martin (2015) explains this by arguing that a national park can be conceived as "a piece of land that is placed outside the normal juridical order", where otherwise unacceptable violence is both condoned and encouraged (46). Therefore, by positioning poachers within both a proverbial and literal space of exception, violent policies can be perceived as necessary.

As threatened species like elephant and rhino are absorbed into the state's national "community" and poachers become seen as threats to their lives and the nation itself, the use of violence in conservation becomes legitimated on the basis of biopower. The poachers, existing in a space of exception, are constructed as "the enemy" of the state and are thus defined as deserving to die. In other words, it is through the creation of a political enemy (the poacher), the organization of war against these perceived adversaries (shoot-to-kill and other militarized anti-poaching policies), and the exposure of its own citizenry to violence (via the media) that the modern state consolidates its right to kill. This process of making decisions about which of its citizens may live and which must die, or as Foucault defined it, "making live and letting die", further exemplifies the power that the modern state has over its people.

While the concept of biopower has been applied to understand militarized protected area enforcement as a product of the state's biopolitical agenda, little analysis has been extended to consider how the positioning of poachers within excepted spaces furthers the "making live and

letting die" rhetoric of the state by reconciling the paradoxical nature of using violence to enforce biopower. Additionally, current approaches for understanding the intersection between biopower and conservation have primarily centered on the *state's* use of biopower, with little explicit consideration given to how biopower is deployed by the private sector through the militarization of private conservancies. As the *who* enacts violence matter for how violence is understood, it is necessary to critically examine how the state and private actors each make distinctive, but often overlapping, claims to biopower. This research aims to answer these critical questions to understand how the constructed narrative of the poacher allows for the maintaining of a status quo of militarization within natural resource control by both the state and private interests.

Post-Democracy

Foucault's biopower and Agamben's spaces of exception combine with theories of green militarization to explain how the state and the public justify the use of violence in protected area management. While green militarization theories do consider how the private sector expresses violence in conservation, these theories are incomplete for understanding how the private sector's use of violence is accepted by the public and the state in particular. In the following section, I utilize Crouch's theory of post-democracy to examine how private elite interests have expanded into conservation to blur the lines between state and private, thereby providing an opportunity for private actors to make claims to biopower. I argue that, as the lines between the state and the private become blurred, important distinctions between the enactors of violence become less perceptible to the public, normalizing the use of violence by the private sector.

Crouch's theory of post-democracy (2004) is a useful conceptual framework to examine how conservation has become increasingly dominated by elite private actors who use this

position of power to make decisions about the lives and deaths of other citizens. Post-democracy refers to a form of governance "which formally retains all democratic institutions and rituals but relocates political power and decision making to arenas where elite interests rule largely insulated from democratic participation and accountability" (Crouch 2000, 143). Post-democracy can thus be characterized by the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of society's elites. Swyngedouw (2011) applies post-democracy to Agamben's spaces of exception by arguing that the existence of a permanent emergency can stimulate a prolonged space of exception that creates a political climate where national security is privileged over individual liberties. In such a case, and particularly when the state is unable or unwilling to manage this emergency, elite actors are able to exert considerable control under the guise of protecting national interests.

While several scholars (Bond et al. 2015; Brockington 2015; Fletcher 2014) have interrogated how conservation can be interpreted through post-politics and post-democratic lenses, their analyses have primarily focused on environmental movements and conservation NGOs. There has been no attention to the ways in which the poaching crisis and the positioning of poachers in an excepted space have contributed to the emergence of a post-democratic conservation landscape. Additionally, I argue that, when this power over decision-making by elite actor's transitions into the life-and-death arena where the private sector is given authority to enact violence against others, the emergence of a post-democratic state then allows private actors to make claims to biopower.

In addition to the expansion of the private sector's power in conservation, in recent decades, the boundary between the state and the private sector has become increasingly porous. This "blurring" of the state and the private has occurred in a variety of ways. First, private conservancies operations mirror those of the state. For example, private conservancies'

employment of private military forces and ranger teams and their use of surveillance technologies to monitor and police their boundaries are the same techniques used in state protected areas (Duffy 2006; Wels 2015; Sambu 2017).

Second, private conservancies often border state protected areas to maintain migratory corridors. As conservationists frequently are unable the use of fences due to migrating wildlife and so must instead employ alternative boundary enforcement techniques, the borders between state and private protected areas are increasingly indistinct (Martino 2001).

Third, private conservancies cannot create their own laws and regulations but must apply those of the state within their bounds. Private conservancies thus act as enforcers of the state's rules rather than as separate lawmakers. While the rules of engagement are often indistinct in practice, as many working in security at private conservancies are ex-military (Mkutu et al. 2017) and it is difficult to police the exact interpretation and execution of state policies, private conservancies can still be seen as pseudo-agents of the state through their operations.

Finally, the state and private conservancies rely on each other to operate in the manner they do, creating a symbiotic relationship between the two. Private conservancies can only operate in their current manner with the government's blessing. The use of private military forces and surveillance technologies by non-government actors without the state's explicit approval is typically perceived as a threat against the state and its sovereignty (Richards 2012). Thus, private conservancies can only use the militarized approaches they have come to rely on with the explicit approval of the government.

Conversely, the state actively benefits from the existence of private conservancies. Private conservancies can perform conservation activities that go beyond the state's capacity and limited resources, exemplified by initiatives like rhino breeding programs and other financial and human capital-intensive conservation programs. And, private conservancies are able to market unique

services that the state cannot – off road game drives, private tours of wildlife rehabilitation centers, or one-of-a-kind dining experiences. In addition to the ability to tax private conservancies, the exclusive services provided by private conservancies also attract more visitors, thereby increasing tourism revenue for the state.

Through these mechanisms and the rise of explicit public-private partnerships in conservation, the line between public and private has become distorted. In my analysis, I examine the potential implications of this blurring and speculate on how private actors use this to make seemingly legitimate claims to biopower. Additionally, by exploring how the private sector has adopted, and in some ways extended, the state's role in post-democratic conservation, I expose the emergence of new forms of conservation governance. Figure 1 reflects the dual nature of the private sector in reinforcing the existing conservation paradigm and for allowing new forms of governance to emerge. As new governance systems affect the forms and tactics of violence used, interrogating this dimension allows us to better consider the shifting nature of violence in protected area management.
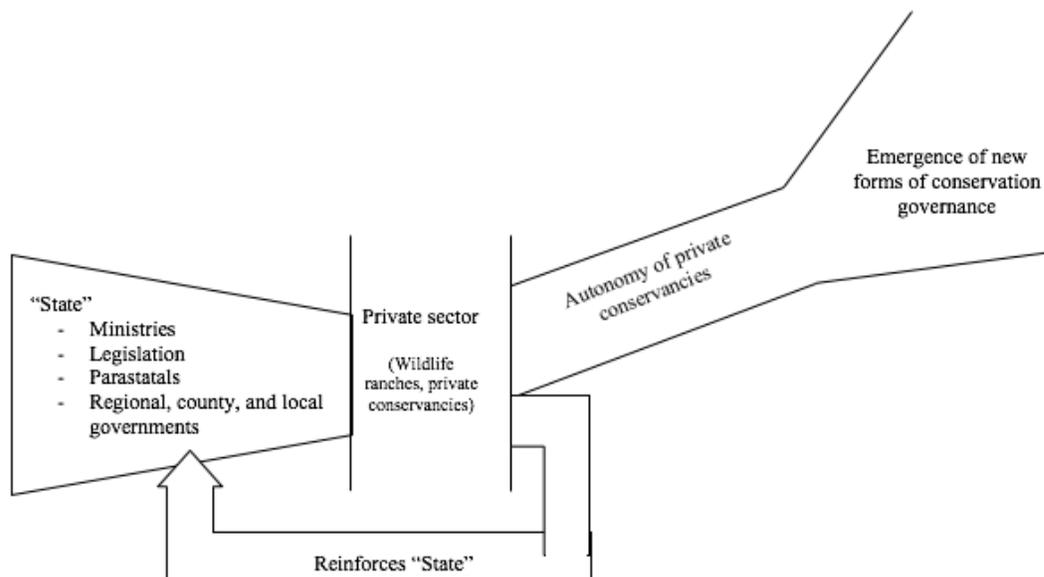
Figure 1. Diagram of the interaction between the State and the private in conservation.

Post-democracy serves as a useful framework for understanding the increased role of the private sector and societal elites in conservation and the emergence of new forms of conservation governance. When post-democracy is used alongside Foucault's biopower, Agamben's spaces of exception, and green militarization, we can uncover critical nuances in how conservation violence is articulated and justified by different actors to become a central tenant in the modern conservation approach.

In my analysis of conservation violence, I focus particularly on the media's role in its legitimization, arguing that media depictions of poachers construct an identity and context for them that permits the use of violence. Before making this claim, it is first necessary to establish the power of the media in shaping public perceptions. In the next section, I explore the existing research on the intersection between the media, identity, and violence.

Media, Identity Construction, and Violence

The media has extensively been implicated in shaping the development of identities and influencing the internalization of particular societal tropes within ethnic and national categories (Faist et al. 2010; Georgiou 2006; Katz 1998). Jackson (2006) establishes the critical role that the media plays in shaping the values, intentions, and characteristics assigned to different groups, particularly those of different races or ethnicities, through his analysis of media representations of race in America. He argues that the American public's perceptions of different races and their alleged beliefs and characteristics is strongly correlated to media depictions of these different groups.

"Framing" also plays a critical role in influencing perceptions of other groups as journalists, guided by their own biases, select certain events and strategically place them within a field of meaning to tell a particular version of a story (Entman 2010; Tankard 2001). This concept is particularly salient as journalistic bias acts as a powerful tool in influencing an audience's perceptions of a group or event (Entman 2007).

Moreover, the media's power in assigning particular characteristics and influencing beliefs is particularly persuasive when violent imagery is used (Johnson et al., 2010; Fishman and Marvin 2003; Barker and Petley 2003). For example, when images of the Black Lives Matter protest movement included depictions of seemingly violent behavior from the protestors, it affected public opinion of the legitimacy of the movement (Won et al. 2017). In addition to shaping people's beliefs, media depictions of certain groups can incite violence against them. Research on the Rwandan genocide revealed the power of the radio and main stream media in provoking violence against groups by demonizing them as having inherently evil qualities (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014; Kellow and Steeves 1998; Straus 2007; Mcnulty 1999). Additionally, as Thompson (2007) discusses, the media stalled international intervention in Rwanda by falsely

constructing the genocide as an ethnic conflict, further demonstrating the media's power in determining state and international actions.

Finally, the media also normalizes violence (Malamuth and Briere 1986; Wood and Wong 1991; Fischer et al. 2010). Research has revealed that everyday depictions of violence in the media normalizes its existence and use in society (Carter 2007). He further argues that everyday use of violent imagery is "implicated in structuring the hegemony of powerful groups", widening the imbalances between victims and perpetrators (87). Despite the breadth of research on the intersection between the media and violence, there has been little attention to how these ideas develop and manifest within conservation. Through my analysis of media depictions of poachers, I extend the current scholarship on media and violence into this unexplored space.

This research explores how the media and conservation actors have constructed the identity and context of the poacher to understand how and why violent protected area policies have become accepted. By weaving together these bodies of literature (green militarization, biopower, spaces of exception, post-democracy, and media studies), we can better understand how state and private entities are enacting and justifying broader forms of violence in African protected areas. In particular, I offer an analysis of how the media and central conservation actors position poachers within excepted spaces to increase the state and private actors' power in "making live and letting die". In the following section, I discuss our chosen research site, Kenya, and its history of protected area development and management.

Study Site

While poaching is a global issue and militarized approaches to its management have been implemented in virtually every region of the world, I examine their use in the African context where violent protected area policies are increasingly common. Specifically, I focus on East

Africa as one of the primary sites of the contemporary ivory poaching crisis and due to the proliferation of news reports about ivory poaching from this region. Kenya was selected as the specific research site because of the country's historic use of militarized conservation approaches and its considerable number of private conservancies. From a practical perspective, Kenya is a logical choice as both researchers had existing connections to its conservation community and had experience in country. Kenya has a long and complicated history of protected areas and conservation approaches and so, to fully understand how violence is expressed and justified there, it is necessary to first examine the historical context that shapes the country's conservation approach.

Historically, pre-colonial societies in Kenya lived and interacted freely with wildlife and developed various methods for managing wildlife and other natural resources based upon their cultural understanding and perceptions of territorial and social landscapes (Steinhart 1989; Akama 1998). Research on the history of wildlife conservation indicate that most pre-colonial Kenyan communities had governing regulations concerning the hunting and use of wildlife products; for example, it was considered taboo to hunt and kill certain species that had cultural or symbolic value to the community (Lusigi 1978; Ogot 1979).

With the establishment of the East African Protectorate in 1895 and the subsequent arrival of British colonial settlers, the perception arose that wildlife were competitors for limited resources and threats to settler's expensive imported livestock and should thus be killed without impunity (Steinhart 2006). This belief, combined with the arrival of amateur and professional wildlife hunters and the country's devastating rinderpest outbreak in the late nineteenth century, accelerated wildlife population declines and habitat destruction (Kabiri 2010).

In response, Western conservationists, romanticizing the virtues of pristine nature, began campaigning for the preservation of natural areas, both at home and in the colonies (Akama

1996). Game Departments, composed primarily of British naturalists, aristocrats, and top administrative officials, were established to regulate sport hunters and limit the hunting and land-use activities of the indigenous Kenyan people (Steinhart 1989, 250). These Game Departments gave rise to the establishment of protected areas throughout the colonial period, reaching a zenith in the mid 20th century. These protected areas were modeled on the assumption that protecting wildlife required separating them from the destructive forces of man (Neumann 2002). Known as "fortress conservation", local communities were restricted from entering the area without authorization and previously acceptable practices of local people were transformed into illegal acts. Hunting and fishing become poaching and indigenous people become poachers, while comparable acts by wealthy elites remained sport (Jacoby 2014). The establishment of these protected areas also entailed the coercive and often violent removal of indigenous people (Agrawal and Redford 2009; Dowie 2011).

Since independence in 1963, Kenya has seen an explosion in the number and size of protected areas; currently there are 23 terrestrial national parks, 28 terrestrial national reserves, 4 marine national parks, 6 marine national reserves and 4 national sanctuaries. Collectively, these parks and reserves cover 8% of the national area (KWS 2019). Throughout much of the post-colonial period, Kenya's protected area management has closely resembled that of the colonial governments' approach through the forcible removal of indigenous communities and the severe restriction of local land-use practices, particularly pastoralism. Further, with the spread of neoliberal conservation and the growing belief that conservation could be improved through privatization, greater percentages of Kenya's land has been absorbed into conservation. Through the rise of private conservancies which are largely owned and operated by descendants of the colonial occupiers and the involvement of Western conservation scientists and conservation

NGOs in the country's protected area management, conservation continues to alienate and marginalize local communities (Jones 2006).

While there have some been attempts to decentralize conservation through the implementation of community-based conservation programs, wildlife conservation in Kenya has continued to emphasize law enforcement as the primary means to manage protected areas, particularly in the aftermath of the 1980s poaching "epidemic" (Buscher and Ramutsindela 2015; Annecke and Masubelele 2016). During this time, ivory poaching reached "crisis" levels; it was estimated that in 1980, the continent had over one million elephants but fewer than 600,000 remained at the end of the decade (Christo 2012). The appointment of Dr. Richard Leakey in 1989 to the head of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), the country's parastatal agency for conserving and managing wildlife, heralded a new era of anti-poaching and protected area enforcement (Gibson 1999). Here, the focus shifted towards a militarized approach via the initiation of law enforcement training for rangers, the adoption of more advanced anti-poaching technology, and the alleged implementation of a shoot-to-kill policy, which authorized park rangers to shoot to kill suspected poachers if they felt their safety or the security of the animal was threatened (Peluso 1993; Akama 1996; Orenstein 2013).

Despite a slight resurgence in elephant populations during the 1990s, poaching rates remained high into the 21st century. As the price of ivory climbed to more than $2,100 US dollars per kilo, an estimated 100,000 elephants were killed between 2010 and 2012 (Stiles 2004). Today, the BBC estimates that fewer than 415,000 African elephants remain (BBC 2018). While Kenya's poaching rates are lower than many other sub-Saharan African nations, ivory poaching is still a concern. A 2017 press release from the CITES' MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants) Program revealed that while the steady increase in the levels of ivory

poaching in Kenya had stopped, they remained far above elephant's natural growth rate, leading to continue population declines (CITES 2006).

These declines, coupled with a still thriving black market ivory trade, are particularly concerning to the Kenyan government and the international community due to alleged connections between ivory sales and criminal gangs operating in arms and human trafficking and the funding of terrorist groups like al Shabaab and Boko Haram (White 2013; Bergenas and Knight 2015; Haenlein et al. 2016).

Since 2011, Kenya has been a repeated target of al-Qaeda-linked Islamic extremist group, al-Shabaab (Anderson and McKnight 2014). Consequently, ivory poaching has expanded beyond simply a threat to biodiversity to become a matter of national security and counterterrorism. In response, there has been a conscious escalation in Kenya's militarized approach to protected area enforcement. Examples of this militarization include the use of military-grade surveillance technologies like drones and infrared night vision goggles, the employment of paramilitary forces as rangers in private conservancies, and calls for stricter legal punishments for poachers including life time jail sentences and death penalties (Simlai 2015; Wich 2015; Duffy 2016; Barbora 2017). It is the widespread use and acceptance of these violent policies in conservation that we specifically examine.

Kenya's history of protected area management provides a useful baseline for understanding its contemporary conservation landscape. Additionally, recognizing the historic marginalization and restriction of local people is critical for understanding the potential ramifications and human rights implications of recent militarized policies and how this violence can be seen as an extension of the colonial project. Further, it reflects the complex history of "poaching" and the historical assumptions embedded in the term poacher that is often missing

from contemporary discussions. In the next section, I analyze how the media defines "the poacher" and situates these individuals within an excepted space where violence is permissible.

Media Analysis

To understand the media's role in the acceptance of violent protected area enforcement policies, we analyze how the media frames the poacher to construct a particular identity. We then consider how this identity contributes to the legitimization of violence in conservation. To answer these research questions, we conducted a systematic analysis of news articles discussing African ivory poaching.

Methods

A total of 436 news articles about ivory poaching were identified using a Lexus Nexus search. After duplicates and articles discussing other forms of wildlife poaching were removed, a total of 405 remained for analysis. To investigate the potential differences in how poachers are depicted and perceived in different temporal and geographic spaces, news articles were sourced from four regions (East Africa, East Asia, Europe, and North America) and from the forty-year time period of 1980 to 2018. Table 1 details the exact number of articles sourced from each region and time period.

As we were only able to access articles that had been published online in the Lexus Nexus database, we were limited with the number available from East Africa from 1980-1989 and 1990-1999 and from East Asia from 1990-1999, as well as the diversity of publications we could draw on from each region. Examples of publications include The New York Times (US), The Standard (Kenya), The Guardian (UK), and The South China Post (China), but a range of publications were used from each region.

	East Africa	East Asia	Europe	North America
1980-1989	0	6	26	26
1990-1999	3	29	33	21
2000-2009	13	30	28	11
2010-2018	66	30	40	43
Total	**82**	**95**	**127**	**101**

Table 1. Number of articles analyzed from each time period and geographic region.

Using a qualitative directed content approach (Shannon 2005), news articles were read and coded along eleven pre-identified categories:

(1)   the ethnicity/nationality of the poacher;

(2)   references to terrorism or criminal syndicates;

(3)   characterization of local/indigenous people;

(4)   discussion of corruption or mismanagement and by whom;

(5)   whether shoot to kill narratives were invoked;

(6)   the final destination of the ivory;

(7)   the technology used by the poacher;

(8)   the technology used by protected area or state officials;

(9)   the identification of the "middlepeople", or individual/groups who are neither directly

        involved in the killing of the animal nor the final consumer but are involved in the

        transit of ivory;

(10)   efforts to reduce acts of poaching are specifically or anecdotally attributed to donor

        agencies and/or NGOs and who those agencies are;

(11)   what are the proposed interventions or solutions. These categories were selected as

they most clearly demonstrate the techniques the media uses to construct the identity

of poachers.

These categories were selected as they represent the types of information typically reported in

news articles about ivory poaching, and so reflect the common frames the media uses to define

an identity for poachers. Further, these specific coding categories allowed us to track the

evolution of how the media depicts poachers over time. This provides important information

regarding the progression of public perceptions of poachers and protected area management.

Results

The analysis of the news articles revealed several important trends. First, eighty nine

percent of articles surveyed did not provide any identifying information – ethnicity, nationality,

or other first-person identification – for poachers. These articles either ambiguously referred to

"the poacher" without providing additional clarifying details or discussed poaching in the

abstract without mentioning the human actors involved. This lack of identification persisted

across time and geographic region, but was pronounced in East Asia, totaling to ninety-seven

percent of articles analyzed. Only eleven percent the articles surveyed provided information on

the ethnic or national identity of poachers. Overall, sixteen different ethnicities were ascribed to

poachers (i.e. "Mozambican", "Zimbabwean", "Chinese" or "African"), with the most common

being "Somali". Finally, of the 405 articles analyzed, only six provided any other identifying

information for poachers, whether it be names, occupations, or testimonies from the alleged
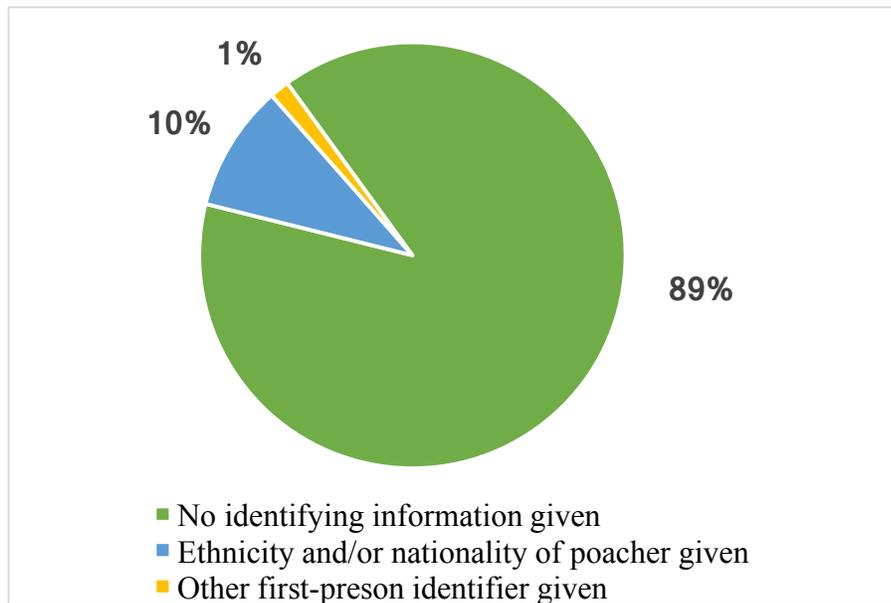
poacher or those that knew them.

Figure 2. Graph of frequency of media identification of poachers.

In addition to this anonymization, the media also actively villainized poachers. Of the articles analyzed for this research, seventy-one percent included references to negative stereotypes about poachers. Phrases like, "disgruntled, underpaid park employees"[iv] or "local youth with nothing to do[v]" emphasize a particular view of who poachers are that perpetuates simplistic and stereotypical tropes. Additionally, many of the articles surveyed used descriptors like "greedy"[vi], "lazy"[vii], or "cruel"[viii] to describe poachers and referenced their "depravity" through frequent invocations of the existence of criminal poaching syndicates[ix] and the alleged relationship between ivory sales and Islamic terrorist groups[x]. These results reflect the ways in which the media, through how it chooses to depict poachers, constructs these individuals as criminals despite including little identifying or humanizing information.
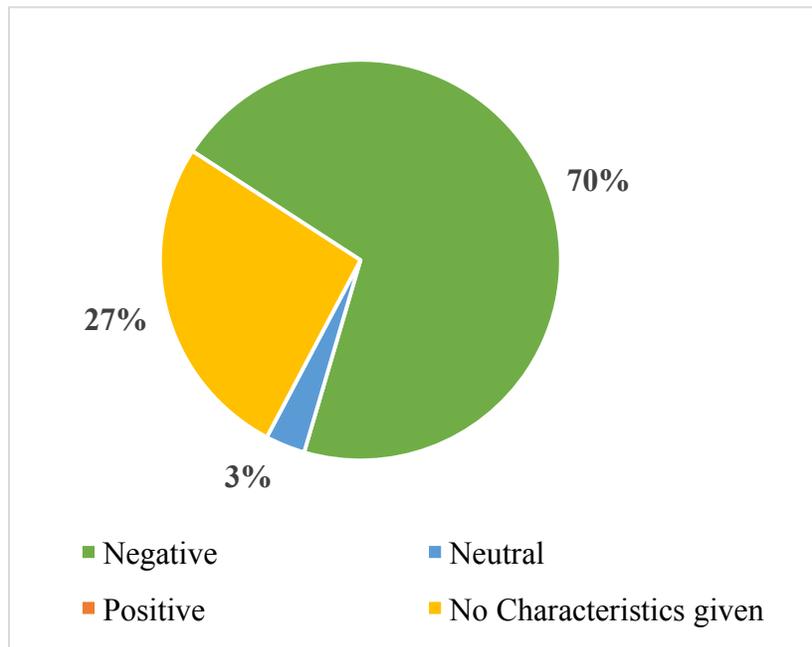
Figure 3. Types of characteristic ascribed to poachers by the media

News articles referenced local communities in their descriptions of ivory poaching in twenty-one percent of articles, with the vast majority of these coming from European or North American publications. Of these references, fifty-seven percent described local communities in negative terms, either as being poachers themselves or as aiding and abetting suspected poachers. Eight percent described local communities as the "victims" of poaching by describing the violent behavior of poachers against local people and their forced complicity due to fears of violent retribution should they refuse.

References to corruption were infrequent but, when they occurred, were almost always in relation to local or national governments or the local rangers and wildlife officials. Allegations of corruption were never invoked against Western or international conservation NGOs or managers of private conservancies and other white conservationists. Further, despite empirical evidence that the United States and the United Kingdom serve as major ivory destinations (Strauss 2015),

news articles from Europe and the United States discussing the final destination of illegal ivory almost exclusively incriminated Asian countries, typically China and Japan.

The media analysis also revealed a common narrative for explaining the severity of the recent ivory poaching "crisis" - poachers use of more sophisticated weapons and technology like assault rifles, silencers, and helicopters[xi]. These references were prevalent in articles published between 2010 and 2018 from all four geographic regions, but were especially common in European news articles, occurring in ninety-three percent from the 2010-2018 period.

This narrative of poacher's use of sophisticated weapons and technology coincided with a rise in allegations of criminal poaching syndicates and connections between illegal ivory sales and the funding of Islamic terrorist groups like al Shabaab, particularly in European and North American publications. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the 2013 al Shabaab attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, this alleged relationship between ivory sales and terrorism became considerably more prominent in East African articles on ivory poaching, occurring in eighty-three percent since 2013 (RUSI 2018).

Additionally, in all geographic regions, but particularly East Africa, there was a definitive increase over time in media reports invoking increased law enforcement and the use of more sophisticated technology by protected areas as the needed solutions to poaching, including advanced military training for rangers, the use of drones or other surveillance technologies, and the official implementation of shoot-to-kill. Fifty-five percent of articles from the 2010-2018 period advocated for increased law enforcement and an additional twenty percent argued for better technology to increase the capacity of ranger teams. In comparison, for both the 1990-1999 and the 2000-2009 time periods, only nineteen percent of articles advocated for increased law enforcement and only six percent for increased technology. Finally, despite its widespread use in Southern Africa and its unofficial endorsement in East Africa, shoot-to-kill policies were

infrequently mentioned in news articles. Only thirty-six articles contained any reference to the policy or its use and those references were minimal without further discussion of its controversial nature nor its ethical and human rights implications.

Discussion

From this analysis, several conclusions regarding the media' construction of "the poacher" can be drawn. First, by rarely giving identifying information about poachers to readers, the media anonymizes them and, in so doing, strips them of their position within society. No longer seen as neighbors, friends, or fellow members of the national community, these individuals are absorbed into the amorphous category of "poachers" against whom violence is permissible. Through this anonymization, poachers fall into an excepted space because they are no longer seen as a human deserving of empathy or forgiveness, but as an unidentified criminal. Divested of their humanity, it becomes easier for the public and conservation actors to justify violence against them.

But while poachers are denied an identity, in other instances of violence like terrorism or murder, the media floods the public with information about the identity of the alleged perpetrators. For example, in the aftermath of the bombings at the Boston Marathon and the Manchester Arena, news outlets published lengthy descriptions of suspects within hours, complete with life histories and interviews with family, friends, and acquaintances. While not analogous crimes, this juxtaposition does introduce the question of why, for some types of violence, perpetrators identities are at the forefront of discussions while, in other types of violence, the opposite occurs?

Second, while the occasional inclusion of information about the ethnicity or nationality of poachers does provide some identifying information, it still remains ambiguous with little true

humanizing information. Moreover, by equating an ethnicity or nationality with poaching and its related negative stigmas, the media reinforces society's unfavorable views of particular ethnic groups. This is particularly problematic in, for example, Kenya where those of Somali descent are widely viewed by much of Kenyan society as "dangerous" or "criminals", particularly in the aftermath of Al-Shabaab attacks like Westgate and the Riverside Complex attacks (Scharrer 2018). Linking the idea of poaching with those of Somali descent may exacerbate existing ethnic tension in the country or result in the use of racial profiling by conservation actors.

Third, the results of the media analysis reflect how the media constructs poachers as villainous criminals who are undeserving of the state and society's sympathy and protection. By ascribing characteristics like "greedy", "cruel", and "lazy", the media produces an image of poachers that is synonymous with violence and criminality. Further, by establishing linkages between poachers and criminal enterprises like human and arms trafficking, narcotraffic, and terrorism and emphasizing their use of dangerous weapons and technology, the media constructs poachers pose a legitimate threat against the welfare of the nation and those in its domain, including wildlife (Fletcher 2018).

As a space of exception emerges around individuals when they are perceived as endangering the harmony of the nation, constructing poachers as criminals who engage in violent acts against others places them within this excepted space. Here, they are no longer perceived as people, but rather as legitimate threats against whom violence is permissible. Further, as readers rarely receive humanizing information that contradicts this image of poachers and most will never interact directly with them, this construction is rarely contested. With the image of the poacher as a violent criminal firmly rooted in mind, when violence is used against them, the public can rationalize this as a necessary act for safeguarding the nation and protecting those that fall within its domain. Thus, violent policies like shoot-to-kill or the institution of life time jail

sentences, which would typically be seen in other spaces as violating basic principles of human rights, are justifiable given their purpose is to protect the nation and its heritage.

Finally, through the media's descriptions of local communities' involvement in poaching and its principal focus on the alleged corruption of local authorities, Western news sources convey a message that others, and not Westerners, are singularly to blame for the poaching crisis. This is further reinforced by the Western media's focus on Asian countries as the primary importers of ivory despite the large body of empirical evidence that implicate the United States and the United Kingdom as significant ivory importing hubs (Wyler and Sheikh 2008; Stiles and Martin 2009; Lau et al. 2016). Through this selective focus, Western nations mask their complacency in the ivory trade and reinforce racially motivated stereotypes of poachers that become further entrenched without the addition of clarifying and humanizing information. In this way, the Western media "whitewashes" poaching and the ivory trade and further position "poachers" as others within an excepted space.

Moreover, due to the excepted nature of poachers, the scale of violence occurring in African protected areas remains largely hidden from view. When an individual is killed in a protected area, particularly under suspect circumstances, once they have been established as a poacher, little additional investigation occurs, regardless of the veracity of this classification. This occurs because, as Lunstrum (2017) argues, the deaths of poachers are perceived, not as homicides, but as necessary acts for conservation. This violence rarely then elicits the concern of conservation organizations, human rights bodies, or the general public because it is not seen as being inflicted upon a person but rather on a "criminal" who was deserving of this fate. As such, this violence goes largely unnoticed to become deeply intertwined into the everyday practices of protected area management.

The media content analysis reveals that readers rarely receive identifying information about poachers from the media and, when they do, it is either ambiguously focused on ethnic or national origin or the identity reproduces existing one-dimensional stereotypes, like corrupt officials or restless youths. Further, through the assigning of negative characteristics like greed and cruelty and associating poachers with terrorism, the media produces an image of the poacher that is tantamount to a criminal. Thus, we see a trend emerge in the media where poachers are simultaneously de-identified *and* vilified. This contributes to their position within a space of exception where violence is justified because the public does not consider them a person deserving of protection, but rather as an unidentified criminal.

These results reflect the role of the media in constructing the identity and context of the poacher that cast them as deserving targets of victims. While the media's contribution is an important component in understanding how violence in conservation has become accepted, it is necessary to further interrogate how conservation actors contribute to this discourse as the executors of violent protected area policies. In the following section, I unpack the specific ways that conservation practitioners, NGOs, and wildlife rangers construct an image of "the poacher" that justifies the implementation of violent protected area policies.

Part II: "On-The-Ground" Realities

To better answer questions of how and why violent protected area policies have become accepted practices in conservation, we analyze how central conservation actors contribute to the discourse on ivory poaching. To do so, I examine how different conservation actors – conservation policy officials, conservation NGO workers, and wildlife rangers – perceive poachers and poaching. I then explore how these different understandings shape the expression

of violence in conservation. To achieve this, I conducted empirical fieldwork through first person interviews with conservation officials, NGOs, and wildlife rangers was conducted.

Methods

Initial interview subjects were identified through our existing connections in Kenya and were contacted if they could be classified into one of the three categories we defined as central conservation actors – conservation officials, employees of domestic or international conservation NGOs, and wildlife rangers (Figure 4). We selected these categories because these groups most directly interact with poachers, act as important lobbyists for anti-poaching, and execute anti-poaching policies. For these reasons, these categories of stakeholders should, in theory, have the best understanding of poachers and poaching to elucidate how violence in conservation is justified by central actors. We received the University of Michigan's Institutional Review Board approval (HUM00142008) in April of 2018 with a no more than minimal risk assessment.
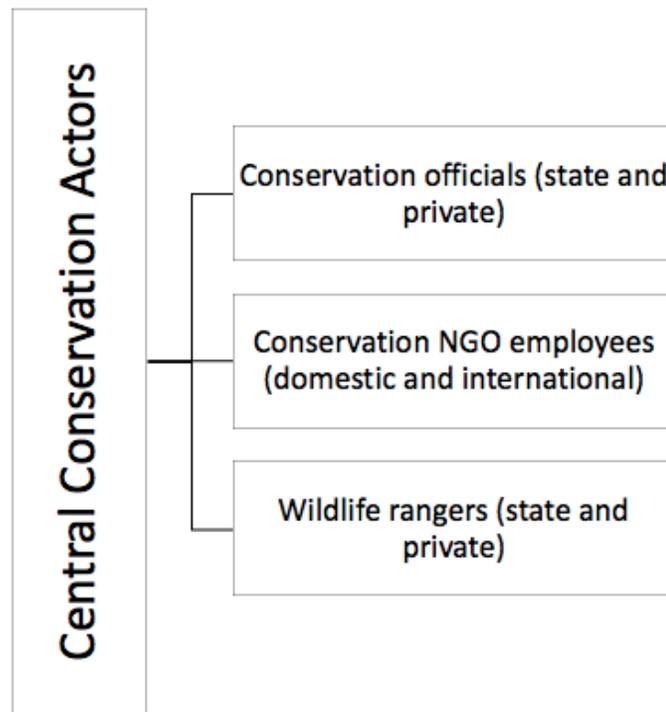
Figure 4. Analyzed groups of central conservation actors

I intentionally chose not to interview poachers for several reasons. First, due to the

potential dangers associated with accessing these individuals, obtaining the necessary

Institutional Review Board approval would have been a considerable challenge. Second, to

develop the trust and rapport necessary for poachers to frankly discuss their actions and

motivations would necessitate substantial time in the field that was impossible due to the time

restrictions of the Master's program. And, due to my positionality, as a white European from a

US-based institution, there were concerns, both ethically and practically, about how to gain

access to this informant network. Third, I had concerns about the ethical implications of

conducting these interviews, particularly the repercussions of a data breach should subject

testimonies be obtained by the state. While all measures would be taken to ensure confidentiality

and protect the identities of informants, there would be serious legal implications for participants

should data be leaked.

It also necessary to emphasize that the goal of this research was not to identify who poachers were but rather to highlight our *lack* of this knowledge despite the widespread use and acceptance of violence. With this goal in mind, I felt that focusing on understanding how those enacting these policies understand poachers and poaching was congruent with the stated research goals. However, should research in this area progress, interviewing poachers will be essential.

After initial participants were contacted, a snowball sampling technique via word-of-mouth recommendations was used to identify additional participants. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions regarding their personal experiences with poachers, their understanding of how poaching and protected area enforcement has changed over time, and their perceptions of various militarized protected area enforcement and anti-poaching policies – fences; fines; the use of technology i.e. surveillance systems, DNA technology, tracking devices; militarized training and weapons; and persecutory policies like shoot-to-kill and lifetime jail sentences. These specific categories were identified as they represent the evolution of protected area enforcement as a response to escalating poaching and capture the common ways that violence is expressed in conservation. Interviews were recorded – with permission – transcribed, and analyzed to determine trends in how central conservation actors identify and describe poachers and approach protected area enforcement. The testimonies of conservation actors that are included in this analysis are direct quotations and some may be upsetting. Despite the offensive nature of some, we chose to retain the exact wordings of participant to better capture the reality of conservation in Kenya.

Interviews illuminated several important themes in how central conservation actors describe and understand poachers that provide critical insights into how conservation violence is expressed and justified. These themes fall into three broad processes that together explain how poachers are situated within an excepted space – de-identification, construction, and moral restructuring. In this section, I will present evidence from interviews that demonstrate how conservation actors contribute to each process and explore potential differences in the contributions of each group of actors (conservation officials, conservation NGOs, and wildlife rangers).

The first process, de-identification, was evident in interviews with all three categories of conservation actors and is reflected in the notion that interviewed participants could not definitively identify who poachers typically are or where they come from. Across all categories, there was a significant lack of clarity between and within subjects regarding the identity of poachers. Frontline rangers often contradicted themselves during a single interview, beginning by conclusively stating that poachers came from one area before later stating the opposite. This is exemplified in the below interaction.

> *"In your experiences, who are typical poachers and where do they come from?"*
>
> "Foreigners. They come from Tanzania, Somali, some from Ethiopia to hunt elephant here. Then they work with the Chinese to get the ivory out."
>
> *"So, poachers in this area are typically not Kenyan?"*
>
> "No, it's also locals. Kenyans can't blame others. The people around the parks come in to graze their cattle and see an elephant, so they shoot it. It's opportunistic."

In addition to discrepancies in individual testimonies, there was also significant variation between the various subjects interviewed regarding the identities of poachers. The ethnic of national identities ascribed to poachers varied widely, from members of the local Kenyan communities bordering the parks to demilitarized Somali soldiers or foreigners from West Africa.

> "When Somalia stabilized a bit, there were all these soldiers that had a bunch of weapons and nothing to do. So, they came to Kenya to make money by poaching elephants and rhino."

-   John, protected area official

Other interview subjects refused to attempt to identify who poachers were, stating that it was impossible to preemptively know this information. While this occurred across the three categories of stakeholders, stating directly that it was impossible to determine the identities of poachers arose most commonly in interviews with conservation officials. These individuals also advanced the belief that attempting to identify poachers beforehand would be an inefficient use of time and resources, particularly given the traditionally reactionary nature of protected area enforcement.

> "I get why you're asking about who poachers in our experiences have been but I honestly don't think there is one 'type' of person who poaches. Plus, it's really hard to know this information up front. And I don't even think it makes sense to try and figure this out. Think about how much time and money would get wasted trying to figure out something that's impossible to really know… And what would this knowledge even do?

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[1] All names used in this paper are pseudonyms in order to protect the identities of interviewees.

We're so focused on responding that we just don't have the time to do anything with it even if we had it."

- Moses, park warden

In contrast, employees at conservation NGOs often emphasized that identifying poachers was difficult because anyone could be a poacher.

"Poachers can be anyone. Think about it, right, they could be people from the communities around the parks, they could be coming over the border from Tanzania or Somali or even as far away as West Africa. And, let's not forget about corruption. The very guys employed to defend these species might be poaching them. It's a bit of crapshoot honestly."

- Samuel, employee at conservation NGO

In addition to this lack of clarity around the national or ethnic identities, interviewed subjects also never provided first person identification for poachers and rarely provided non-ethnic or national identities. Only wildlife rangers occasionally provided information about the types of occupations that alleged "poachers" typically held but these also varied widely. For example:

"...so this one time, we find a dead elephant and the tusks are missing. We go into the communities around here and start kicking down some doors. At first they won't talk but, pretty soon, we got some good information that led us… guess where?... The chief's house! Guy was sitting on like hundreds of pounds of ivory just waiting until he could get it to the port. So, while we try to build trust in the communities, sometimes they're the guys doing it [poaching]."

- Mark, wildlife ranger

and

"With all this construction by the Chinese on the highway from Nairobi to the Mara, it's raised some questions for me. You remember that the fences on the road used to be filled with dead wildlife. Like carcasses everywhere. And now, there's none. You noticed that, right? I'm talking not one dead antelope, gazelle, nothing. A bit coincidental with all the Chinese here, you know. These [racial slur] are eating everything! I heard they're paying the Maasai to pick up the dead animals and bring it to them

as bush meat. So, who's to say they're not killing the live ones too. And that includes the elephants…."

- Elliot, head of anti-poaching ranger force

The racism overt in the second quotation also reflects the prejudiced assumptions embedded in the idea of the poacher that many participants displayed. Despite conservation actors' inability to offer concrete and consistent information about the identities of poachers, several, primarily conservation officials, invoked racist explanations for why individuals poach, for example saying:

"it's in their DNA. They can't help it, it's just what they do"

- David, private conservancy manager

and

"…these are poaching villages. Those guys are out there and, no matter what we do to try and prevent it, it's only a matter of time before they go back to what they know. It's like a bloodlust or something."

- Wycliffe, head of security at a state protected area

These types of explanations and the derogatory language used in reference to different groups reveals the highly racialized landscape of conservation that becomes further problematized when considering the violence that these same officials advocate for.

The inconsistent and ambiguous identification given by all three categories of conservation actors is consistent with the results of the media analysis in that poachers are actively stripped of an identity. The implications of this de-identification will be discussed at length later in the analysis.

In addition to this de-identification, conservation actors also actively construct the *ideas* of poachers and poaching. This process occurs in several ways. First, conservation officials and wildlife rangers, those who regularly engage with the notion of poaching, construct it as a crisis – one where the use of excessive force against alleged enemies is justifiable – by producing associations between poaching and warfare and disease. For example:

> "…poaching is a war. I would classify it as a war. It's a form of bush warfare because you have guys opening fire on you. It's a fight for your life, your rangers lives, and then you're also trying to capture or kill the guys firing at you. It's utter insanity when you're in the thick of things."
>
> - Josef, wildlife ranger at private conservancy

and

> "It [poaching] was like an infection that just kept spreading. We tried to contain it but then there would be another outbreak a park over. It was like it was never ending and it just didn't matter what we did to try and stop it."
> - George, head of security

This construction of poaching as a crisis, particularly as a form of warfare, was also evident throughout the actual fieldwork process. While at a conservancy interviewing park officials and rangers, I was asked to accompany the team on an effort to treat an injured elephant who had allegedly been shot by poachers. From the moment the process began, it felt like warzone. Members of the team wore camouflage, with some in bullet proof vests carrying large assault-style weapons, and referred to each other using military call signs like "Alpha One" or "Delta Squad". The actual operation entailed rangers hanging on the backs of land rovers that sped across savannah and through acacia forests while drivers barked orders into their two-way radios about the position of the "target". Thus, the combination of how conservation officials and

wildlife rangers discuss poaching and act in their day-to-day operations construct it as a crisis that necessitates force to manage.

The second process of construction that works in parallel to this crisis production is through conservation actors' positioning of poachers as the "enemy". Consistent with the result of the media analysis, interviewed participants across the three categories frequently referred to the wickedness of poachers, describing them as "greedy", "cruel", and "lazy". As one participation stated:

> "It's cruel to shoot an elephant. They're highly intelligent creatures, they can understand what's going on."
>
> - Silas, conservation NGO worker
>
> and
>
> "They're motivated by money. It's all greed. They want a new cellphone or Nike shoes but they don't want to work hard. They're too lazy to go and find a real job so they take the easy way out and shoot an elephant."
>
> - Martin, head of anti-poaching

In addition, conservation actors, and particularly the conservation officials and rangers, created connections between poachers and criminality, particularly through testaments to the existence of criminal syndicates.

> "It's not so much one poacher as much as it's a chain. That's how I would think about it, a chain. The guy who pulls the trigger leads to someone in the village, who goes to someone in the port, who transports it to the kingpin in China. It's this entire network of criminals"
>
> - Denis, wildlife ranger
>
> and
>
> "They come in with their AK-47s and G3s, silencers and shoot one

[elephant] after another. And you know, they've realized that their firearm can be a source of income too and so they're also using it to rob vehicles, houses, harass community members. They rob tourists when they can. They belong to the same gangs that run arms in the region, too".

- Jeffrey, state wildlife official

While, like the results of the media analysis, conservation NGO workers reproduced the narrative of ivory sales funding terrorist activities, conservation officials and wildlife rangers refuted this linkage, calling it unsubstantiated.

"Yeah, you hear that all the time but I don't believe it. Sure, it's a sexy narrative and it gets people's attention but it doesn't hold up. Al Shabaab makes way more money from drug trafficking than they would get from ivory so it doesn't make sense. Plus, the trade is under a microscope. If it was true, there would be a lot more evidence of it and we don't see that."

- Edwin, manager of state protected area

Through ascribing negative characteristics like greed, cruelty, and laziness to poachers and associating them with criminal enterprises, conservation actors are constructing an identity for poachers that cast them as the "enemies". Through the constructions of a crisis and an enemy against whom violence is necessary, private and state conservation actors justify the use of violent force within protected area enforcement, claiming it as essential for creating the "climate of fear" necessary to effectively address this 'crisis'. While the belief in the need to "de-incentive" poaching by makings its costs exceed its benefits was evident in the testimonies from all three categories of stakeholders, advocating for using violence to accomplish this goal was unique to conservation officials and wildlife rangers:

"Fear is the only way to stop poaching, make poachers afraid of the consequences... If they get killed, their family and friends will think twice about shooting an elephant… And making the communities more afraid of

you than they are of poachers is the only way to get them to tell you
what's going on."

- Charles, head of security at private conservancy

and

"I'm a big proponent of what I call 'door-kicking'. You lay people flat on
their faces, chop off some hands, and they start talking real quick."

- Francis, warden of state protected area

As the above quotation reflects, instilling fear was synonymous with the use of violence,

often against local communities, and reflects the increasing violence of protected area

management. However, while conservation officials and wildlife rangers advocated for more

militarized and violent practices to manage poaching, conservation NGO workers advocated for

increased legal punishments through the levying of harsher fines and lengthier jail sentences.

"The legal system just isn't working for us right now. When we are able to
get a conviction, they go to jail for a few months or pay a small fine and
then they go free. You can understand how people get frustrated by this.
The punishment doesn't fit the crime right now. But increasing these fines
and making the jail terms longer will make the costs outweigh the benefits
of poaching."

- Brian, head of local conservation NGO

The final process through which we can see poachers' placement within a space

of exception by conservation actors is through conservation's moral restructuring. The

discursive positioning of poachers within an excepted space, where they are perceived as

sub-human and so undeserving of the rights and protections afforded to other members of

society, is evidenced in participant discussions of human rights, or a lack thereof.

Conservation actors, particularly wildlife rangers and conservation officials, often

highlighted the notion that poachers were not entitled to the same rights as other citizens, remarking for example:

> "…a poacher doesn't have any rights. If you break the law, why should the law protect you?".

> - Michael, wildlife ranger

This quotation reflects the view by many conservation actors that poachers are criminals who ignore state laws for their own gains and so are underserving of those laws' protections. Michael's testimony further exemplifies the notion that poachers exist within an excepted space where they are not entitled to the protection of the state.

Conservation actors also elevated animal lives over the lives of poachers, exemplifying Neumann (2004)'s restructuring of conservation's moral geography where elephants are assigned a higher moral standing than certain people. This reorganization of society's moral hierarchy is demonstrated in the following participant's comment:

> "I guess it comes down to human rights vs animal rights. And if you ask me, an elephant is worth 10 times one of their [poachers] lives."

> - Richard, state conservancy official

Thus, while there was recognition of the human rights implications of these militarized policies, participants either explicitly stated or indicated a belief that the need to protect elephants and rhino outweighed the value of human lives.

Interviews with central conservation actors reveal their role in defining the identity and context of the poacher through the processes of de-identification, construction, and moral restructuring. In the following section, we discuss the implications of these processes for how violence in conservation is justified.

Interviews with conservation actors revealed a process of "othering" that occurs in conservation. Othering is defined as the reductive process of labelling and defining a person as subaltern, thereby excluding and displacing them to the margins of society where mainstream social norms do not apply (Canales 2000; Gallaher et al. 2009; Jensen 2011). The "othering" of the poacher becomes evident in the testimonies of central conservation actors and occurs in the three processes described above: de-identification, construction of a "crisis" and "enemy", and the moral restructuring of conservation. By "othering" poachers, conservation actors justify their governing through fear that results in the pervasive securitization of protected areas. We first examine how the othering of poachers occurs through de-identification, construction, and moral restructuring before considering how "othering" has resulted in a "governance through fear" mentality and subsequent militarization.

During interviews with central conservation actors, the process of de-identification becomes clear as, just as with the media portrayals, poachers are stripped of their humanity to become nameless and faceless bodies. Without an identity and thus devoid of humanity, poachers are positioned in a space of exception where the use of violence against them is permissible because there is no human face to those harmed. As the interviews revealed, there is a lack of understanding of *who* exactly are impacted by conservation violence by those responsible for executing it. As such, we see significant levels of violence sanctioned against individuals despite no knowledge of who they are and, more importantly, why they engage in these behaviors. As Campbell (1998) demonstrates in his analysis of Bosnia, masking a groups' identities and human characteristics facilitates the use of violence against them as the human victims affected by this violence is not discernable. In first removing their humanity and the common characteristics they share with other societal groups, conservation actors begin the

process of "othering" poachers to push them to the fringes of society where they become placed in a space of exception.

In addition to de-identification, interviews with conservation officials also revealed the highly racialized landscape of conservation and the assumptions embedded into the idea of the "poacher". These stereotypical and racist beliefs become further problematized when we consider *who* is responsible for enacting these violent policies. Many of Kenya's conservationists are white, descendants of those who benefited under Britain's colonial occupation of Kenya or transplants from other colonized African nations. Thus, we see a situation where violence is enacted against largely black, impoverished populations at the behest of wealthy, often white, elites. The use of racist rhetoric is a core tenant in "othering" as stereotypical perceptions about race and ethnicity are frequently used as a means to construct the subaltern "Other" (Bailey and Harindranath 2005; Rich and Troudi 2006; Dervin 2015).

In addition to their de-identification, conservation actors also "other" poachers to position them within an exception space through the ascription of negative characteristics and attributes to them. Despite an inability to offer concrete identifiers to poachers, conservation actors unanimously attributed negative characteristics to poachers like greed, cruelty and laziness. Through these descriptions and the construction of poachers as "criminals" through assertions of poaching syndicates and criminal behavior, conservation actors construct them as deserving targets of violence. Without the inclusion of any humanizing information, poachers continue to exist within an excepted space where violence is acceptable because they perceived as violent criminals.

The creation of a poaching "crisis" through allusions to warfare and disease further produces a space where violence against people is justifiable. First, the construction of a crisis requires the simultaneous construction of a threat – in the case of conservation, poachers. The

creation of a poaching crisis further casts poachers as violent criminals, creating a belief that only through violence can this crisis be managed. Research has also revealed that society is typically more accepting of the use of force during emergency situations than during times of perceived peace (Hoffman 1973; Morabito et al., 2012). As such, by constructing poaching as an urgent crisis – a war or disease epidemic –violent actions, like shoot-to-kill or death penalties, are interpreted as morally permissible in light of the extenuating circumstances.

Additionally, by equating poaching with a 'war', conservationists emphasize the military command and control structure of conservation. This was exemplified in the anecdote of the elephant treatment exercise where orders were passed down by 'superiors' to rangers who fulfilled these commands without hesitation. This emphasis on a military hierarchy in which decisions by leadership are not questioned reflects how biopower gets enacted in conservation. The state and managers of private conservancies make a decision about who must die to allow wild animals to live and the rangers execute these decisions without question. This obedience legitimizes their biopower and thus reinforces the state and private conservation elite's *droit de glaive*.

In constructing poachers as criminals by assigning negative attributes and creating associations between poaching and crises, the "othering" poachers is strengthened. These stereotypical and negative characteristics of poachers and the perception that they are enemies in a life or death struggle become the justification for their separation from society. The belief that poachers pose a threat also reinforces the perception that mainstream social norms and protection should not apply to them, constructing poachers as undeserving of protection by the state's laws.

Finally, discussions of human and animal rights by conservation actors reflect the moral restructuring of conservation – where elephants and rhino are situated above people – that Neumann (2005) described. As conservation actors emphasize this restructuring of

conservation's moral geography, violent retribution against poachers by the state becomes perceived as morally just and necessary. Through this restructuring of society's hierarchy, poachers are further constructed as sub-human and subaltern, emphasizing their "othering" and status in an excepted space.

Through this process of "othering" where poachers are positioned in a space of exception, the perception arises that this poaching "crisis" can only be managed through fear. This "governance through fear" logic is reflective of the space of exception around conservation and anti-poaching, where moral and legal judgement has been abandoned in favor of fear and violence. "Door kicking", as one interviewee put it, is emblematic of the violent landscape of conservation and the suspension of society's ethical and moral responsibility to protect people from violence. To govern through fear and violence thus necessitates the increased militarization and securitization that is occurring in conservation. We see then how, through "othering" the poacher and placing them in a space of exception, conservation actors justify a governance through fear and violence that results in the implementation of militarized and securitized protected area policies

The results of this fieldwork were consistent with results from the media analysis – poachers are actively anonymized, dehumanized, and vilified by those centrally involved in conservation. It is through the media and conservationists' descriptions of poachers that this group has been "othered" and placed within a space of exception to be undeserving of the rights afforded to other members of society. This culminates in a perception that governing through fear and violence is necessary to manage the subaltern "others", resulting in the increased securitization of conservation.

Paradoxes in Making Live and Letting Die

The results of this research illuminate why society, as viewed through the lens of the media, views violence in protected areas as acceptable, as the media and conservation actors' discursive construction of the identity and context of the poacher positions them within a space of exception where violence is tolerated. But, the creation of a space of exception also helps us understand how violence has initially become part of the state's repertoire of natural resource control and governance. Specifically, we extend our analysis to understand more broadly how the state rationalizes its reliance on violence despite the fact that it derives its legitimacy from its claims to protect the lives of those in its domain. We use the case of conservation violence and the creation of a space of exception around poachers to analyze how the state reconciles its seemingly contradictory use of violence against its own people to fulfil its agendas.

Various scholars have demonstrated how the state rules through biopower, legitimizing itself on its claim to protect the lives of its citizens (Rabinow & Rose 2006; Perron et al. 2005; Lazzarato 2002; Oels 2005). The "making live and letting die" element of biopower, *droit de glaive*, is central to the state's power, as the ability to make decisions over the lives of its citizens is critical for defining the sovereignty of the modern nation state.

However, the state's use of violence in governance calls forth a paradoxical question (Dolan 2005): how does a form of authority that is fundamentally justified on its claims to protect life condone the use of deadly force? If the state emphasizes its power through the management and increase of the lives under its control, how does one understand the violence and killing at the heart of this power?

This 'paradox of biopwer' has important implications for how conservation is understood as violence and the sovereign right to kill fundamentally underpins it, from militarized

enforcement strategies to shoot-to-kill policies. As such, understanding how the state resolves this paradox is necessary for understanding conservation violence and violent natural resource control more broadly.

But, how exactly does the state accomplish this? I argue that the state's solution is to construct a legitimate threat to the majority of the lives its purports to defend which, in the case of conservation, includes wildlife. The construction of a poaching crisis and the equating of ivory poaching with a national security issue establish them as that threat to the nation and its people.

But, the construction of a threat is not enough – for the rest of its citizens to accept the use of violence, that threat must fall outside the state's bio-political order, or those considered under the state's protection. The positioning of poachers within an excepted space, where they exist as anonymized criminals, strips them of their citizenship and situates them outside of the state's jurisdiction. As poachers are not seen by the rest of society as fellow citizen but as "others" who threaten their lives and the sanctity of the nation, the state is able to use violence against them without protestation and emphasize its control. It is through this that the state's biopower becomes inscribed on the modern state and the sovereign right to kill (*droit de glaive)* is created and justified (Foucault 2003).

Society's unquestioning acceptance of *droit de glaive* within conservation reinforces the state's ability to make decisions over the lives and deaths of people more generally. The longer the use of violence in conservation goes unchallenged by society, human rights groups, and non-governmental organizations, the more this tactic becomes adopted. Violence has already become a central strategy, apparent in the approach of many nations to migrants and refugees, the control of natural resources like oil, timber, and gems, and the treatment of political dissenters. As society continues to support the state's power to kill its own citizens, it is able to maintain a

status quo of militarization and violence, resulting in an escalating cycle of violence and human rights abuses.

The intensification of violence in conservation is further problematized when considering the role of private conservation entities. In the following section, I analyze how the blurring of the state and the private sector has allowed private actors to lay claim to *droit de glaive* and legitimize their power within society and use of violence. I also examine the self-perpetuating cycle of the private sector's claims to biopower and the rise of post-democracy in conservation.

The Blurring of State and Private

Contemporary approaches to conservation have blurred the line between the state and the private sector. Both in their geographic locations and through their chosen methods, private conservancies operate like state-sanctioned protected areas – employing the same technologies, enforcing the same laws and regulations, and relying on the same types of militarized approaches. Additionally, state and private conservation institutions are engaged in a mutually beneficial arrangement – private conservancies can only operate in the manner they do with the goodwill and approval of the state and the state derives financial benefit from private conservancies that can extend beyond the state's capacity to further conservation goals. As a result, within conservation, the state and the private sector has become increasingly intertwined.

This symbiotic relationship between the state and the private sector has allowed private actors to gain a larger foothold within conservation. As revealed by the rapid expansion of neoliberal conservation, the extension of the private sector into conservation through the establishment of private conservancies has resulted in the consolidation of decision making power with elite private interests. Private conservation actors and for-profit conservation NGOs wield significant power in the contemporary conservation landscape – often receiving more

donor funding and international attention than state wildlife agencies as they can accomplish conservation goals that the state cannot. Further, as the media content analysis reflected, private conservancies are rarely troubled with the same accusations of corruption as state wildlife agencies, and so are often the preferred partners for donors. As a result, these private conservancies have considerable power in conservation. This consolidation of power subsequently contributes to the rise of a post democratic conservation landscape, where power is increasingly moved from the state to private elites, resulting in a new form of conservation governance that is dominated by the private sector.

This emergence of a private elite-controlled governance structure has implications for how violence is expressed and understood in conservation as these actors can employ new forms and tactics of violence that the state cannot, either due to a lack of resources or institutional barriers. Additionally, as private conservancies rely on paramilitary forces for hire, it becomes difficult to police how these actors use and misuse violence. Further, the use of violence by private actors is rationalized as legitimate because of the perceived meshing of the state and private in the public imaginary. Citizens are often more comfortable with state-sanctioned violence due to engrained beliefs about the sovereign's right to use force, particularly when it is framed as for the common good (Leander 2005; Avant 2005; Kinsey 2006). Thus, by blurring the distinction between state and private, violence enacted by private actors becomes acceptable because it is seen as an extension of the state's already-accepted *droit de glaive*.

It is this legitimization of the private sector's use of violence through the blurring of state and private in conservation that becomes particularly problematic. As distinctions between private actors and state actors being increasingly unclear, violence committed by private entities can be perceived and rationalized by citizens as extensions of state practices. In this way,

violence committed by private actors in the name of conservation is given legitimacy through associations with the state's historic use of force and violence.

Society's acceptance of the private sector's use of violence in conservation then reinforces the post-democratic conservation landscape as it allows the private sector to exert even more power and control over other citizens. Additionally, through this blending of state and private and the consequent rise of post-democracy, the private sector not only extends the state's biopower but actually absorbs it. Thus, biopower is no longer solely in the domain of the state, but becomes appropriated into the jurisdiction of the private sector.

Within this expansion of biopower, private conservation elites are able to lay their own claims to *droit de glaive* through their use of private military forces and unofficial shoot-to-kill policies. And, as the public tacitly accepts their deployment of violence, private conservation elites continue to emphasize their claims to biopower and *droit de glaive,* resulting in a self-fulfilling cycle. With *droit de glaive* being increasingly invoked by the private sector through the expansion of neoliberal conservation, violence itself is undergoing a process of neoliberalization – resulting in a paradigm shift in which violence is progressively privatized.

Through the blurring of the boundary between state and private, conservation has increasingly become post-democratic. In so doing, violence has undergone a neoliberal shift, where biopower and the sovereign right to kill (*droit de glaive*) is no longer unique to the state. As private actors are allowed to make decisions over the lives and death of others, the post-democratic conservation space is strengthened.

Conclusion

This research has interrogated how the media and conservation actors construct the identity and context of the poacher to understand how and why violent protected area policies

like shoot-to-kill have become acceptable conservation strategies. Through a systematic analysis of news articles and first-person interviews with conservation actors, we have demonstrated the ways in which poachers are dehumanized and placed in a space of exception to become legitimate targets of violence.

The media content analysis reveals that readers rarely receive identifying information about poachers from the media and, when they do, it is either vaguely focused on their ethnicity or nationality or it reproduces stereotypes while providing little evidence for these conclusions. Additionally, through the assigning of negative characteristics like greed and cruelty and associating poachers with terrorism and criminal enterprises, the media constructs poachers as criminals. Thus, we see poachers simultaneously de-identified *and* vilified by the media, positioning them within in a space of exception where the use violence is justified.

In addition to the media analysis, interviews with central conservation actors further revealed how poachers come to be situated within an excepted space. Through the processes of de-identification, construction of a crisis and enemy, and moral restructuring, poachers are actively anonymized, dehumanized, and vilified by those centrally involved in conservation. As a result, they become perceived as undeserving of protection by the state, its laws, or by the rest of society, exemplifying their status in an excepted space. In this position, the use of violence against them, through policies like shoot-to-kill, becomes seen as necessary and morally justifiable.

While this research has revealed important dimensions for understanding how and why violent protected area policies have become widely used in conservation, a number of critical elements are still in need of exploration. As significant aspects of conservation violence remain unexplored and, perhaps more urgently, the level of violence is consciously escalating, this line of research requires additional scholarly attention.

First, we must actively take steps to uncover *who* poachers are and why they poach. This research highlights society's lack of knowledge about poachers despite the widespread use and acceptance of violence against them, but there still remains uncertainty about *who* poachers actually are. In order to increase transparency around violence in African protected areas and to fully understand the effects that violent policies have, it is necessary to know *who* is actually experiencing this violence by increasing efforts to humanize individuals affected by militarized protected area policies and giving more power to non-partisan investigations and oversight into extra-judicial killings.

Second, there is a need for greater investigation into the shifting nature of conservation violence through a deeper examination of the role that private conservation actors play in using and legitimizing violence. We begin to offer an analysis of how the private sector's intrusion into the realm of biopower shapes the violence that is enacted within conservation; however, given the rapid expansion of neoliberal conservation, the role of the private sector in environmental violence is likely to expand. As such, this is a critical area of future study.

Finally, Agamben's spaces of exception can be a useful analytic for investigating other examples of environmental violence – including militarized control of other high-value natural resources, green gentrification, control of natural resources in contested spaces, or the rise of environmental "insurgency" movements – as it offers a new analytic for understanding how violence can be justified by society against particular groups in the name of environmental good.

This research highlights the lack of knowledge around poachers despite the level of violence used and condoned against them. This widespread use and acceptance of violent protected area policies like shoot-to-kill reflects how a group of people can come to be considered sub-human and legitimate targets of violence, while little effort is expended to understand the larger context. Even death row inmates have advocates for their human rights yet

we see virtually no attention given to the level of violence used against people in African protected areas.

As the results of this analysis have shown, militarized protected area policies are often used with little oversight, against individuals arbitrarily deemed a threat. In many ways, this use of violent protected area policies like shoot-to-kill can be seen as a continuation of historic coercive conservation tactics as the state's use of force has been a cornerstone of its approach. The violence and human rights implications associated with the state's coercive conservation techniques has long been examined in political ecology (Peluso 1993; LeBillon 2001; Agrawal and Redford 2009; Duffy 2014). Yet, as conservation and its related violence is increasingly absorbed into the private sector through the expansion of neoliberal conservation and the blurring of state and private conservation entities, it raises important concerns about what this means for the escalation of violence in conservation.

Private conservancies, with more donor funding and the ability to charge guests higher prices for more exclusive services, often have more resources to police their boundaries and protect wildlife. But, greater financial resources to enact violence in protected areas carries the risk that conservation's coercive tactics will continue to escalate with detrimental effects on local communities in and around protected areas. And, as the identities of the victims of this violence remain hidden from the public, an intensification in the level of violence through new coercive tactics and the potential related abuses will likely continue to go unnoticed and unquestioned.

In addition to the potential for escalating forms of violence, the expansion of conservation governance to include the private sector also has implications for how violent protected area policies are executed. Due to the challenges of monitoring the exact nature of how policies are executed on the ground, it is difficult to ensure that abuses do not occur. Unlike the state, the private sector has minimal accountability to citizens. They are not seeking re-election

nor are afraid of being overthrown. These private conservancies are only accountable to the state and so, as long as they can demonstrate they fulfil the directive of protecting wildlife, there is little oversight or disapproval of the tactics they rely on.

Through the expansion of neoliberal conservation, conservation increasingly resembles a post-democracy, where decision-making power collects with elite actors. And, through their ability to implement violence against others, private actors are able to gain even greater control within society. As more and more power consolidates with elite private actors, societal power imbalances and inequalities continue to widen, with elite interests being privileged over others against the risk of violent retribution should groups protest. This ability for private citizens to implement and physically carry out violence against their peers is a problematic notion that lies at the heart of the recent shift towards neoliberal conservation. It is necessary to consider the ethical implications of allowing private actors the power to enact violence against others, particularly when this violence is difficult to monitor and comprehensive information about its use is difficult to come by.

Given the unique human rights implications of private conservancies' use of violence and the improbability that the spread of neoliberal conservation is likely to abate, it is necessary for greater international scrutiny to be paid to how conservation violence is enacted and against whom. As not knowing who is on the receiving end of the bullet or the jail sentence makes it easier to justify these actions, clarifying the identity of those targeted by violent protected area policies is necessary to understand how these polices are used and abused.

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