

When Zoo became Nature

Copenhagen Zoo and perceptions of animals and nature around 1900

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Abstract

This article points out central historical themes in the debates and arguments given by the directors of Copenhagen Zoo for the zoo as an alternative to nature. When Copenhagen Zoo was founded in 1859, its purpose was divided equally between entertainment, enlightenment and symbolizing the glory of the Danish capital. During this period though, it also became possible for the zoo to stage itself as a kinder place for animals than “real” nature. In the early 20th century, the zoo attracted attention from animal rights movements, wherefore the debates came to be structured around two radically different perceptions of nature. The article takes its outset in the arguments formulated by the three successive directors: Julius Schiøtt, Waldemar Dreyer and Theodor Alving.

Nature in here

This article will investigate an institution that is readily associated with nature by most, but which in fact is a cultural phenomenon; ‘the zoo’. ‘Nature’, as presented in zoos, is not untouched, authentic or wild. Rather, the presence of animals and many institutionalized and conscious discourses about nature are effectuated in the zoo, making it an excellent location for identifying definitions and perceptions of nature. The following pages will trace conceptions of ‘the wild’ as something, which is “out there” – in contrast to ‘cultural nature’. This will be done by analyzing Copenhagen Zoo and especially its discourse on zoo animals in the decades around 1900.

This was a time when anthropomorphic and popular descriptions of animals were challenged by new ideas of animal welfare, as well as by a professionalized and scientific approach to zoo keeping. At the same time, developments made it possible for zoos to stage themselves as worthy alternatives to an externalized nature, through the discourse of conservation and ideals regarding realistic surroundings and landscaping for the animals.

“Nature itself” will not be analyzed, nor (unlike Hanson 2004 or Hancocks 2001) will the attempts to recreate nature in the zoo, but rather it is the idea of nature that is of concern, as this was communicated – more or less indirectly – by staff and

commentators of Copenhagen Zoo. It will be the historical discourse on the animals and their (place in) nature, which is the main theme – not an analysis of animals as such.

This article therefore differs from several critical zoo-studies (f.ex. Mullan & Marvin 1999; Malamud in Marino et al. 2009), by being a historical analysis, rather than a cultural analysis. Other zoo-studies have been less radical than these, such as Elizabeth Hanson and David Hancocks' works. Hancocks argues, while remaining quite critical towards zoos as institutions in general, that an increase in natural surroundings and landscapes in zoos may have a positive effect on attaining the educational purpose of zoos. Hanson covers much the same ground as Hancocks, but seems to equate the presence of animals with the presence of nature. These studies thus differ in their definitions of nature at the zoo and in their attitudes to whether zoos can be considered nature at all, or must be viewed as altogether cultural (or artificial) institutions.

Cultural studies are not interested in nature per se, but rather perceptions, uses and definitions of nature. This is the main point in Jennifer Price's book *Flight Maps—Adventures with nature in modern America* (Price 1999). It is not nature "out there" that is in focus for the historian, anthropologist or cultural studies researcher, but nature "in here". In this case, Copenhagen Zoo may be used as a case study, which highlights the debates on these issues in the early 20th century.

Copenhagen Zoo – History and background

Copenhagen Zoo celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2009 with a new elephant

house designed by Norman Foster. In addition, a new "savannah" was opened and increased emphasis was placed on the importance of zoos in wildlife conservation. Its beginnings were humbler, but had equally strong aspirations (see e.g. Bing 1984, Jørgensen 1984).

In the autumn of 1859, the amateur ornithologist Niels Kjærbølling announced the opening of a zoo that was inspired by larger and well known zoos in London and Germany. Copenhagen Zoo was thus not founded by a scientific institution or society (as were the zoos in London or Bronx), nor developed from an existing menagerie (like zoos in Paris and Vienna). Copenhagen Zoo was the result of private initiative and an ambition to create an institution that would enhance the glory of the Danish capital by providing entertainment and education for its citizens. The early years were characterized by few and non-exotic animals, poor buildings and cramped space, but support from the King and the government allowed for Copenhagen Zoo to expand and become a popular place of amusement.

In terms of financing, the zoo was in constant trouble and its organisation and management were problematic at best. When Kjærbølling died, it was re-constituted as a non-profit, joint-stock company, aimed at maintaining the garden. The fact that the board, directors and employees were in constant conflict regarding money and personal matters, overshadowed the few positive developments in the last decades of the 19th century.

Management changed around 1900 and the three charismatic directors that ruled the zoo from then and until 1942, had considerably more power, space for initiatives and a much better budget balance, than former directors. Julius Schiøtt was

the director from 1900 till his death in 1910. He was an editor and had a passion for popularizing scientific knowledge. His major journal *Frem* (literally “Forward”) was influential in this regard and had the motto: “Knowledge is power”.

Even though the Schiøtt-years were not characterized by a scientific approach as such, they were certainly a turning point in terms of zoo-popularity. Schiøtt renewed the establishment’s failing contacts with the German animal trader Carl Hagenbeck, who provided advice and spectacular collections of animals, panoramas and caravans of exotic people for exhibition (Rothfels 2002). Schiøtt also introduced music, lotto, exhibitions and other entertaining activities, such as the “Eiffel tower” that is still the landmark of Copenhagen Zoo.

Schiøtt’s successor was a close friend – Doctor Waldemar Dreyer – who was also an enthusiastic supporter of popular science education. Dreyer wrote extensively about zoology and other natural science subjects in books and magazines. This body of work includes *Fra Naturens Værksted* (“From the Workshop of Nature”), published 1912–16. Dreyer was an eager observer and commentator of developments in other zoological gardens. He admired Carl Hagenbeck and praised the groundbreaking Bronx Zoo, founded in 1899, which was also committed to wildlife conservation (Hanson 2004, chap.1).

When Dreyer died in 1924, the lawyer Theodor Alving became director. Alving had a long-time passion for zoos and had spent two years in New York training as a zoo-director with William Hornaday of Bronx Zoo. This experience secured Alving the position at Copenhagen Zoo. His main achievement was a radical reorganisation of the zoo according to newer principles

regarding animal care, hygiene and architecture (Alving 2009, Hansen 2009). Schiøtt, Dreyer and Alving all had strong personalities and ambitions for Copenhagen Zoo. They communicated their views and insights on the zoo and its inhabitants both verbally and in writing.

Sources on the zoo are scarce and anecdotal for the time preceding the 20th century. However, one is still left with an impression regarding perceptions of animals and nature for that time. The few remaining texts suggest the existence of similar notions of animals and nature as tainted by a schism: nature and its animal inhabitants are idealised, but the animals are spoken of as culture, not nature. This is found both in popular magazines (En Naturforsker 1865, Anon. 1873, Juel-Hansen 1874) in texts by zoo directors (Klein 1896) and by inspired poets (Stuckenberg 1905).

Girlish bears and feminist elephants

In the decades preceding 1900, Copenhagen Zoo was described as a place where you could encounter and come to attain a better understanding of nature. Nature was tranquil, dark and hidden; a romantic wilderness in which the animals were noble beasts. In almost every early text on Copenhagen Zoo, nature was idealized as the opposite of culture. However, when the texts address actual zoo animals, the descriptions swell with anthropocentrism and cultural references – the animals are described essentially as humans. The young bear Gine is a coquette, a young girl who wants to have fun, described as bound by a leash, but not by marriage. The Elephants are an old quarrelling couple; the female teaches the male a lesson or two when he does not behave properly. The lion king

keeps his females from such behaviour by a good spanking (Klein 1896). Animals in Copenhagen Zoo were spoken of as individuals, but also as representatives of their kind, and thus as stereotypes. But as types, they were ascribed character, will, wishes and secrets.

Copenhagen Zoo was small and did not feature interesting or exotic architecture, or much beautiful landscape. What the writers described as most popular were the animals, especially the tamed, trained, funny and humanlike ones. If the animals represented nature in Copenhagen Zoo, then the most appreciated nature was cultivated and modelled by humans (Gjerløff 2008b, Gjerløff 2009a).

It is an interesting fact that the exotic people-shows presented in Denmark around 1900 (only three of them were actually held in the zoo), were praised for exactly the opposite. The best shows were those considered most authentic, most natural, most untrained. The best animals were the cultivated ones, the best people shows were the most naturalistic. Being natural was thus not in itself a positive word, but employed according to context. This becomes even more apparent in contemporary texts about the animals, written in the first decade of the 20th century.

Protecting the prisoners of the zoo

Danish animal protection movements were latecomers in a European context. The first societies were part of a broader philanthropic movement, which sought to help, protect and educate the marginal groups of society. Focus was both on protection of animals and the creation of compassionate and moral citizens through information on animal protection. The society *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* (literally “Protection of Ani-

mals”) was founded in 1875 and focused mainly on humane slaughter and the plight of horses in the cities. Protection of wild birds and moral education of children were also among its core activities (Gjerløff 2008a).

The animals of Copenhagen Zoo were rarely mentioned by *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* prior to the 20th century, but with Schiøtt’s many activities and advertising of the zoo, they came to the attention of animal protectionists. The zoo was criticized by *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* in many cases and Schiøtt often responded swiftly and effectively. He acknowledged readily that some of the zoo’s activities did not look too good for an institution that claimed to like animals.

One case in point was a laboratory that tested rat-poison in the zoo. The laboratory building was rented by a private company, but the zookeepers had helped perform tests on live animals. In fact, the product Ratin was advertised as developed in cooperation with Copenhagen Zoo. Schiøtt abolished the contract with the laboratory and apologized to *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* (Anon 1903, Schiøtt 1903a).

Another case was a lottery in the zoo with live canary birds as prizes for visitors. This sparked critique in the publications of *Dyrenes Beskyttelse*, including a heartbreaking short story about a little thoughtless girl and her soon-to-be-dead bird, won at the zoo. Schiøtt also terminated this practise (Anon 1904, Jensen 1904, Anon 1906).

Some general concerns were not reacted upon though and Schiøtt argued with *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* about the general plight of the animals, which were considered innocent prisoners by animal protectionists (e.g. Fleuron 1925, Blomqvist 1912). Animal protectionists in both Sweden and Denmark found zoos as institutions to be a

Advertising poster for Copenhagen Zoo from around 1900. The text addresses one of the issues that was criticised by *Dyrenes Beskyttelse*: “100 male harzer-canaries will be distributed for free, by drawing lots among the paying visitors during the 4 Easter holidays”. The poster depicts free birds flying into the sky, but many of the canaries succumbed to less fortunate fates.



cruelty towards animals and wanted them closed altogether. In Stockholm, the Women’s Society for the Protection of Animals held a party for the children of Stockholm in the local zoo at *Skansen*, and was criticized for morally corrupting the children (Anon 1909).

Although Hagenbeck’s ideas about exhibiting animals were praised by the directors of Copenhagen Zoo, some animal protectionists were less than happy. In a report from the International Animal Protection Congress in Copenhagen August 1911, Hagenbeck’s park and training methods were severely criticized and compared to old-fashioned and cruel menageries (Blomqvist 1912). Basically the question was whether it was cruel to keep animals in zoos, no matter how well they were cared for. Neither Schiøtt nor Dreyer accepted the views of zoos as cruel institutions. The two directors had a radically different perception of nature and the nature

of animals than that of *Dyrenes Beskyttelse*. While the animal protectionists saw the animals as victims and life-time prisoners, the zoo manager constructed the relationship between human staff and captive animals as a system of mutual responsibilities, which included notion of the “natural”. This will be exemplified here with three cases, which were continuously mentioned in the literature and debates about zoos, in the first half of the 20th century: the Imprisoned Eagle, The Feeding of the Snake and The Natural Death.

The Imprisoned Eagle and the Feeding of the Snake

No animals were more symbolic in critical as well as positive accounts of the zoo than the birds of prey. Ever since Kjærbølling (who was an avid ornithologist: an anecdote reports that a live kite was his first inspiration for the zoo), visitors had felt uncomfortable by the sight of large birds behind bars (Sehested 1903, Barfoed 1913). The eagle was the incarnation of liberty and power. A caged eagle therefore seemed a mistake, indeed a perversion. Just like the lion, the imprisoned eagle thus became a symbol of maimed and enchained nature. Not having the freedom to fly degraded the bird to something other than an animal; something un-natural. The essence of the bird vanished and more than one visitor considered it a fate worse than death.

Other animals were regarded in the same way, mainly large predators. These animals, considered the wildest and most untameable, were seen as subjects of mistreatment by being kept behind bars. The animal rights movements of the time reasoned that the zoo-visitor could not possibly learn anything from such unnatural

exhibitions. *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* argued that a truer representation of nature could be created by using professional taxidermy and presenting the stuffed animals in natural surroundings. A dead animal in a realistic setting was considered more natural than a live animal behind bars. This was indeed a radical argument that linked the zoo to another constructed nature, the natural history museum. Also, it points to the discussion of what purpose Copenhagen Zoo was supposed to fulfil. Was it the animal's character, behaviour or "essence" that should be visible in the zoo – was this at all possible? Who was to decide what that essence was; and was the zoo a museum, in which only the appearance and taxonomic categories of animals should be exhibited?

Both Dreyer and Schiøtt reacted to the criticisms by arguing for another, less anthropomorphic interpretation of the animal mind. The eagle's love of freedom was a human construct they claimed. The eagle flies only to scout and hunt, but since feed is given to it at the zoo without effort, the eagle will rest happily in the cage (Schiøtt 1903b). Dreyer also mentioned that imprisonment gave the bird a chance to grow old, unlike in nature where it would be hunted by humans and compete with other birds for food. He added that an eagle behind bars meant survival for many small creatures in the wild. The eagle was compared to a human criminal who was behind bars for murder (Dreyer 1915a: 372). This was actually the way many hunters perceived birds of prey in the early 20th century and Dreyer himself was a hunter. The landed aristocracy culled birds of prey in the thousands to protect the prey of human hunters, like hares, partridges and pheasants (Laursen 2009). The hunter's wish to exterminate the birds of prey like other vermin raised much criti-

cism from ornithologists and *Dyrenes Beskyttelse*, who started a campaign to purchase protected areas for the birds.

The case of the melancholy eagle was a question of two different perceptions of nature: one where birds could feel and love freedom and one where birds only fly higher to eat one another. The eagle was both a symbol of pride and freedom, but also a bloodthirsty villain.

The imprisoned eagle nevertheless kept on provoking sensitive visitors. A most disturbing example is found in the short story by the famous writer Martin A. Hansen: *Dialogue with the Golden Eagle* from 1938, where the visitor seeks out a reaction from the eagle and asks about his loss of liberty. The eagle refuses at first, but then answers from inside his cage:

In here are my true mountains and abysses. Freedom! You cackle. Only here do I know it, only here do I reign over the kingdom, where my wings carried me in my prime, when I attacked the bucks like a spear from the skies. Only here do I fathom everything! (Hansen 1938, 65)

The visitor walks on to the small budgerigars and concludes that only in confinement can freedom truly be appreciated. But simultaneously the visitor is portrayed with irony as a man who philosophizes about the animal's soul to appease his own discomfort about the imprisoned eagle. (Hansen 1938)

The feeding of the big snakes was another case in which discomfort was a prominent emotion and where audience wishes and beliefs clashed with the intentions of zoo directors and animal protectionists. Feeding the snakes was a precarious problem at the zoo. Apparently the snakes

would only eat live food. For this reason they were fed live rabbits, mice, chickens and guinea pigs. Already in the 1880s *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* had questioned the practise of letting the snakes (and thus the public) relish in the death and fear of the prey. It was not only considered cruel to the animal, but also a threat to public morale.

During Schiøtt's reign the question was raised once again in several letters published in the magazine *Dyrevennen* (The Friend of Animals) published by *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* (Sehested 1903, Barfoed 1913). These words are representative of the debate:

The audience gathers in droves to see the poor mouse or rabbit's fear of death, its quivering and agony before the snake catches it; later to see the spasms of the little defenceless animal, while it is still in the jaws of the snake... zoo is a hotbed of cruelty towards animals (Sehested 1903:87).

It is interesting that such words were to come from the same party that wished for the eagle to be set free to hunt, and it demonstrates the broader question: is nature a loving or a cruel place? Is it not more natural for the snake to eat live and kicking food, than to be forced to eat by getting the food literally stuffed into its mouth? Is it less cruel when small animals are seized by a free flying eagle, than if they are fed to a snake in captivity? It seems that the ideal is "the natural". It was perceived as natural for predators to hunt live prey, but not to be fed live feed. "The natural" also involved the possibility for the prey to escape, while such fair-play had no place in the zoo at feeding-time.

Curiously, the argument regarding whether it was natural or not to use live

prey, is not an argument used by Dreyer and Schiøtt; they both pointed out that mice, rabbits and rats could not experience such a complicated emotion as fear of death. More to the point, it was argued that Danish rodents had never evolved a fear of big snakes, since these did not exist as natural enemies in the Danish countryside. The magazine *Dyrevennen* claimed that some international zoos had stopped feeding their snakes live prey, but whether the practice was ceased in Copenhagen, is difficult to determine. Schiøtt claimed so (Schiøtt 1903a), but Dreyer mentioned feeding the animals with live food (Dreyer 1916a:317), even though he did not let it happen in public. The practise was described in detail in the novel: *The Imprisoned Wilderness* by the popular nature writer Svend Fleuron in 1925 (Fleuron 1925), but with a satisfying climax where the fictive zoo director (no doubt inspired by Dreyer himself) was killed and devoured by a large python.

Today the snakes at Copenhagen Zoo are fed dead animals, but the rabbit's body has to be pushed around by the zoo keeper to make it look like it moves, so that the snake will go for the "kill". Other feeding practises in Copenhagen Zoo includes complete, large (but dead) herbivores for the lions and polar bears. This is recognized by the staff as important for the enrichment and health of the predators, but the public sometimes reacts with disgust. As in the case of the polar bears who are sometimes given horse's head as a snack, which the local newspaper judged: "...a bit too natural..." (Anon. 2006).

A Natural Death

The snake example highlights a complex question: What is a natural death when it

comes to animals? To most humans, 'natural death' means a death by ageing, but is this also the case for wild animals? Are animals still wild when managed by humans? Even the most radical animal protectionists would not deny that wild animals kill each other in nature. What is important, however, is that many of them envision nature as a grand drama, a glorious tragedy, where animals were the heroes. The American nature writer Ernest Thompson Seton expressed this notion in his book: *Wild animals I have known*: "The life of a wild animal always has a tragic end" (Seton 1898: introduction), but the point in the book is that the most tragic thing that could happen to animals was man, who corrupted the natural cycle of life and death in nature. This romantic notion of the drama of nature is evident in much popular literature of the period – from Jack London to travel accounts and fictions on human prehistory.

The animals in the zoo were evidently not considered wild animals or a part of the circle of life by *Dyrenes Beskyttelse*. The Society argued strongly that man's use of animals – in every way – made him responsible for them. This responsibility also included the right to a painless death, a goal *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* sought to reach when advocating humane slaughter.

Copenhagen Zoo was thus absolutely not expected to recreate the dramatic circle of life – the food chain. Zoo animals were not supposed to kill each other or to suffer painful deaths. This was a view the directors used themselves as an argument for the very existence of the zoo (Schjøtt 1903b, Dreyer 1915a). The zoo, they argued, was in fact a place better than nature itself. In the zoo, it was possible for animals to die of old age; they would certainly not be hunted by predators, and would be given medical care if sick. From a modern perspective,

this view was both hypothetical and even hypocritical, since most zoo animals in those days actually succumbed to disease and seldom survived long in captivity. Not till later on in the 20th century did the argument become even remotely legitimate.

Copenhagen Zoo claimed a responsibility to keep the animals healthy, but also to put them down without pain, if needed. To feed the snakes with live animals was therefore inappropriate. According to the animal protectionists, man had the right to use animals, but also to secure them a life with only a little pain and a stress-less death.

One illustrative case, where a zoo animal had to be put down, was the young elephant born in Copenhagen Zoo in 1915 (Dreyer 1916b). The baby was unable to use its legs or stand and after a few weeks it was put down with chloroform at the Royal Veterinary School. The photo of the infant elephant with its small trunk in a bottle of chloroform makes a pitiful sight, but the killing was rationalized as an act of mercy. In the wild it would have been easy prey for predators, but in the zoo it was delivered from pain and its body donated to science; Copenhagen Zoo had demonstrated itself to be a kinder place than nature.

Some animals even thrived at Copenhagen Zoo. Eating well, mating and giving births to live and healthy offspring was generally considered proof of animal welfare. In Copenhagen Zoo elephants, ungulates and lions were the most fertile. With reference to those animals, the directors of Copenhagen Zoo could stage their garden as a paradise, where the animals were never hungry, cold or hunted – in contrast to their relatives in the wild. In 1915 Dreyer wrote about herbivores:

One can, without exaggeration, say that they are outlaws everywhere, that their life is one of fear and terror, that they must be on guard everywhere, surrounded as they are by countless dangers, and that few, a very few of them, die a “natural” death, get to live their life to the fullest, until they die from sickness or old age. The struggle for existence is always bitter and at all times, even where Man does not partake therein (...) I think they would chose the Garden [the zoo] with it’s life of milk and honey, the good, safe life, a roof over the head in the cold winter nights, a mate, or perhaps many, and a lovingly family life (Dreyer 1915a:371).

A tale of two natures

Obviously the three themes just described – the eagle, the snake and natural death – all have their discourses interwoven in two different perceptions of nature. These may roughly be labelled: Romantic nature and Darwinian nature. Romantic nature was nature perceived as a paradise, where all creatures lived in harmony, surrounded not by fences but by love, freedom and life. It was an idealized nature, a place where nothing could be spoiled and everything was genuine, including feelings of love, trust, courage and loyalty. It was a nature, not without tragedies, but with noble tragedies.

Darwinian nature in contrary was a battle zone. Nature was defined by the struggle for survival, a struggle won by the strongest, for the benefit of future generations. It is in this conception of nature that we find the “Let nature take its course”. Here, instincts rather than feelings dominate; instincts to reproduce, feed and kill, to fear, flee and survive.

These two approaches to nature were also part of a more extensive debate around 1900, between humane activists and natural scientists, and regarded conservation and hunting (Lutts 1990) and in the field of animal psychology between anthropomorphism and behaviourism (Gjerløff 2009b). The bone of contention was the nature of the beast: Was it instincts or consciousness which formed the basis of animal behaviour, and which consequences would the answer have for human responsibility towards the animals?

In the context of zoos, this was primarily a dispute about whether zoos should replicate one of those natures for the benefit of the animals. Most visitors and staff chose to envision the zoo as romantic, rather than tragic, but for both versions of nature it was evident that nature was something out there, something that was far from the zoo and its urban environment. A new consciousness of distant nature and its interaction with humans developed in the early 20th century though. It became impossible for any observer to deny that no matter how one interpreted the earthly paradise of nature, a dangerous snake had entered it. Of course, that snake was man. However, parallel to the growing consciousness of humans as a threat to nature, it was suggested that man could also be its only saviour.

Paradise in the Ark

It was no secret that species could be exterminated by man’s actions. The best known examples were the extinctions of the Dodo, the great Auk and Steller’s Sea Cow. In the decades around 1900, other species became extinct or threatened by extinction. These birds and mammals attracted the greatest awareness of concerned observers and con-

ervationists (Adams 2004). The Passenger Pigeon and the Bison are the best known examples of this development. The last Passenger Pigeon: Martha, died in Cincinnati Zoo in 1914. This bird had for centuries been the most numerous in America. The Bison, on the other hand, became the focus of many conservation attempts. This was the first case of direct intervention by conservationists and Bronx Zoo played a major role. Controlled breeding and protection in national parks, zoos and private parks was believed to be the last hope for the bison. Indeed, such measures became crucial for the survival of other species such as the Père David's deer and the Przewalsky horse. As the secretary for London's Zoological Society Chalmers Mitchell (who later created Whipsnade Zoo as enlargement of London Zoo) wrote in 1912:

The resourceful and aggressive higher races have now reached into the remotest parts of the earth and have become the exterminators. It must now be the work of the most intelligent and provident amongst us to arrest this course of destruction and to preserve what remains (Chalmers Mitchell 1912: 355).

In Copenhagen, Dreyer was a keen observer of international zoological news and a sharp writer on the negative development among several species. He lamented the passenger pigeons, criticized massacre on penguins and praised initiatives like Bronx Zoo's conservation activities. In Dreyer's view, species were eradicated because of human greed and folly: American tastes for hunting and women's tastes in hats with exotic feathers. He lashed out at museums and zoos in particular, who hunted and

“collected” the last surviving individuals of threatened species (*Fra Naturens Værksted* 1912-16, Dreyer 1913a). Dreyer did not have much faith in modern civilization and its relationship to nature: “The story of extinction of the American bison is an example above all others of the almost unbelievable cruelty and lack of thought humans display even in our “civilized” ages” (Dreyer 1912:371). Nevertheless he expressed some hope: “The ruthless slaughter of animals in nature is a disgrace for our overly praised western culture, but now in many place serious efforts have been made to do something about it” (Dreyer 1913:30).

Given the death of Martha the passenger pigeon, Dreyer's misanthropic views were once more justified: “September 1st 1914, the curtain went down following the final act in the most shameful of all shameful animal tragedies our time has witnessed, may it be the last time a species is permitted to disappear! But alas...!” (Dreyer 1915c:27) Simultaneously with this bleak vision of nature's future, the dangers of exploitation and extinction for animals and their habitats, invested the zoos with a new potential for identity. They could now frame themselves as life rafts – or arks – and present themselves as a better and safer alternative to nature.

The new self-proclaimed responsibility for zoological gardens became, not only to grant the individual animal a life free of pain and stress, but to preserve endangered species. A central factor in this development of a new zoo identity was the novelties of animal keeping that Carl Hagenbeck developed and described. The keywords in this effort were space, fresh air and kindness. Animals should have space to move, bars should be banished and replaced with moats, heating was unnecessary and train-

ing should be by kindness, not through violence.

Hagenbeck was of course not solely driven by altruism. His incentive was not only the plight of the animals, but the economy of his animal dealership, the size of the audience for shows and the animal park (Rothfels 2002). Still, many of his contemporaries considered him an enlightened and humane man, who sought to better life for the animals in zoos in general.

Dreyer was a great admirer of Hagenbeck. He translated Hagenbeck's autobiography into Danish and wrote about him, his animal park and principles (Hagenbeck 1911, Dreyer 1913b). Another of Dreyer's and Alving's idols was William Hornaday at Bronx Zoo (Dreyer 1915a, Alving 2009). Hornaday had – contrary to Hagenbeck – a conservationist agenda for Bronx Zoo, which was unequalled in regard to space and realistic, natural surroundings for the animals. Alving even planned his career as the director of Copenhagen Zoo in detail and gave up his work as a lawyer to travel to and live in New York as Hornaday's apprentice.

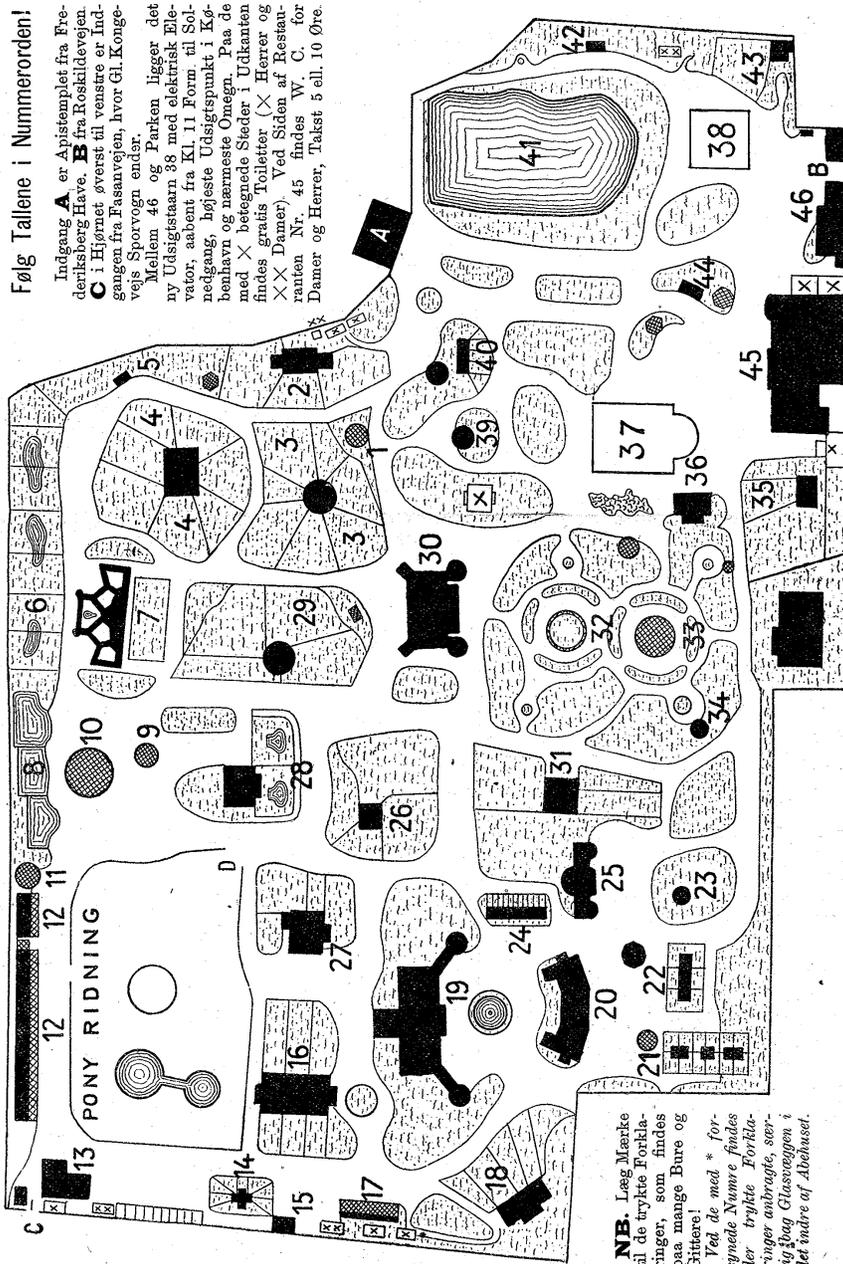
Hagenbeck's principles were founded upon older ideas regarding acclimatization of exotic animals for proliferation and profit (Rothfels 2002:200ff). Hagenbeck demonstrated that exotic animals, such as ostriches, monkeys, lions and elephants did not need heated buildings, but thrived in open air enclosures in northern Europe. The principles also included an abundance of space. Space equalled freedom, which was something most people wished for the animals in the zoo. Hagenbeck wanted to create the romantic version of nature inside his zoo. The animals should be free (or at least look as if they were), and with clever architecture, invisible moats and panoramas, Hagenbeck created his zoo to be an improved version of nature.

During the 20th century most zoos continuously tried to grant their animals more space, insofar as landscape and money allowed for it. This development was accompanied by a tendency to reduce the number of species present in each zoo. The ideal was no longer to represent the total number of animals in nature, but to present the chosen ones in more natural and healthy environments (Hagenbeck 1911; Chalmers Mitchell 1912; Dreyer 1915a; for a modern analysis see Hanson 2004).

In the improved zoo, polar bears and seals could be seen side by side. The zoo became a paradise where the lion could literally lie beside the lamb. The same construction of Eden-like scenery was seen in Hagenbeck's trained animal groups where tigers performed with horses and dogs with bears. Animals of different species co-habiting cages or enclosures were rather common at zoos around 1900. In Copenhagen, monkeys and small bears were displayed together in a large aviary-like cage, which was very popular because of its amusing inhabitants. Another enclosure was labelled "Paradise for Animals" and displayed smaller herbivores together, running free among each other. Hagenbeck's panoramas displayed animals that live in the same environmental zones, but without any reflections on nature and habitat, only of showmanship and the spectacular.

Modern zoos use the idea of displaying animals together as a means of reproducing environmental niches. This is linked to the ideal of teaching visitors about the importance of natural habitats. The new savannah in Copenhagen Zoo is an example of this trend and the plans for a new Nordic exhibition, with polar bear, seal, muskoxen and reindeer, build on the same inherent idea. The question is whether the zoo both then

Plan over „Zoologisk Have“.



Følg Tallene i Nummerorden!
 Indgang **A** er Apistemplet fra Frederiksberg Have. **B** fra Roskildevejen. **C** i Hjørnet øverst til venstre er Indgangen fra Fasanvejen, hvor GI. Kongevejs Sporvogn ender.
 Mellem 46 og Parken ligger det ny Udsigtsstærn 38 med elektrisk Elevator, aabent fra Kl. 11 Form til Solnedgang, højestes Udsigtspunkt i København og nærmeste Omegn. Paa de med X betegnede Steder i Udkanten findes gratis Toiletter (X Herrer og XX Damer). Ved Siden af Restauranten Nr. 45 findes W. C. for Damer og Herrer, Takst 5 ell. 10 Øre.

NB. Læg Mærke til de trykte Fortklaringer, som findes paa mange Bure og Gittere!
 Ved de med * forsynede Numre findes der trykte Fortklaringer ombragte, særlig paa Glasvæggen i det indre af Abehuset.

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 31. Kameler og Lamaer. | 34. Ugletærn. | 39.* Emm. | 42. Gl. Isbjørnebur fra Havens ældste Tid. | 45. Restaurant. |
| 32.* Flamingoer og Træner m. m. | 35. Bøfler og Bisoner. | 40. Hønsfugle, Duer og Smaafugle. | 43.* Rensdyr. | 46. Terrarium med Slangar, Krokodiller osv., (særlig Entré 10 Øre). |
| 33. Fasaner og smaa | 36. Musikpavillon. | 41.* Park for Svømme-fugle. | 44. Glasbassin. | |
| | 37. Fuglehus. | | | |
| | 38. Papegøjer. | | | |

1. Rovfuglebur.
- 2.* Kæmpenulms.
- 3 og 4.* Hjorté, Faar og Okser.
5. Vekslende Dyr.
- 6.* Vade fugle og Møgger.
- 7.* Bjørnegrotte.
- 8.* Isbjørnepark, Søløvebassin, Hvalros og Pinguiner.
- 9.* Oddere.
10. Abe-og Bjørnebur.
- 11.* Kondor-Bur.
- 12.* Papegøjer, Spætter og Rovfugle.
13. Kafé.
14. Hundegaard.
15. Legeplads.
16. Vinterhus.
- 17.* Rovfuglebur.
18. Zebraer og Æsler.
- 19.* Store Rovdyr.
- 20.* Mindre Rovdyr.
21. Bæverrotter og Svømme fugle.
22. Hønsbure.
- 23.* Hjorteløpe.
24. Svin og Gnavere.
25. Kammer.
- 26.* Paafugle, Perlebens, Strudse.
27. Flothest, Gruer og Tapirer.
28. Elefanter.
29. Hjortehus.
- 30.* Abehus.

NB. Ved Elefanthuset (38) ligger Indgangen til Udstillingspladsen, som benyttes til Sportsopvisninger, Udstillinger eller lign.

This map from 1907 shows Copenhagen Zoo as it was presented to visitors in a guidebook written by Schiøtt. At this time the zoo had ca. 350 different species and the zoo covered an area of approximately 18 acres (today it is 27 acres). This can be compared to the Bronx Zoo (or The New York Zoological Park, which was its official name) described by W. Hornaday in a guidebook from 1909. It covered 264 acres and contained more than 1100 species. The numbers alone suggests the cramped conditions of Copenhagen zoo, having less than 1/10 of the area of Bronx Zoo, but 1/3 of the number of species.

and now – more or less instinctively – seeks to imitate paradise. But in arguing that Copenhagen Zoo (and others) could become better than nature, one last element had to be considered: The animals had to stop dying!

The high number of animal deaths caused by catching, transporting and keeping animals, tainted the claim of zoos being a safe and protective place. In the first half of the 20th century, the circumstances gradually improved and an increasing number of animals in professional and dedicated zoos survived for a longer period. Already in the early 20th century some changes could be observed, mainly due to the Hagenbeck principles that helped the healthy animals stay healthy, and later by hygienic measures and the trend in zoo-architecture labelled ‘bathroom-architecture’; easy to clean, but not very natural (Hancocks 2007; Hansen 2009).

However, the animals must not only survive, but also reproduce. Successful mating and breeding were very important for the new identity of zoological gardens, since it reinforced beliefs in the wellbeing of the animals and made it hypothetically possible that breeding of rare species could succeed. Breeding was considered the most fundamental of natural animal behaviour and offspring in the zoo was a sign that basic needs were being satisfied. In addition, one should not forget the public goodwill and support that cute furry babies provided.

When the elephant Ellen delivered the rare event of a newborn elephant in 1908 in Copenhagen Zoo, the visitors were ecstatic. Schjøtt advertised the baby (Kasper) intensively and secured a record income for the zoo. When Kasper was later handed over to a circus director for training, it resulted in a public outcry and *Dyrenes Beskyttelse* made the police investi-

gate whether Kasper was mistreated during the training (Dreyer 1916b; C.N. 1908; Anon 1910a; Anon 1910b).

The reasons for the major points of critique from animal protectionist and the wider public – the cramped conditions and the painful deaths in Copenhagen Zoo – were slowly disappearing during the first half of the 20th century. The zoo directors could with some degree of honesty claim their zoo to be a paradise for animals and even an ark to save the species threatened in the cruel and wild nature.

As mentioned, while a level of blissful existence was sought in many places, it was however, and not least in Copenhagen Zoo, curbed by lack of funding, space or enthusiasm. In the latter half of the 20th century, when animal protection movements reached a new peak of popularity, zoos were once again criticised for confining the animals in places that were too small and lacked natural surroundings (Hancocks 2001; Marino et al 2009). Still, a major argument for the relevance of zoos was their protection of endangered species and the support of conservationist projects outside the zoo itself (Zimmermann et al 2007). Also, a new emphasis was placed on enrichment of animals’ lives to prevent unhealthy mental and physical reactions to the life in the zoo. With catalogues of ideas for enrichment, most zoos, including Copenhagen, did not attempt to copy the natural environment of the animals, but sought to provide stimuli and challenges that would emulate their natural environments. And yet, on the whole, while natural surroundings and behaviour was sought among the animals, certain aspects were still strictly administered or banished, such as hunting, escaping and reproducing.

Praise the Prison

The first decades of this development do not suggest any explicit environmental rhetoric among source texts written by the directors of Copenhagen Zoo, but rather a species preservation discourse. Dreyer wanted to preserve species in captivity, not necessarily in their natural environment and he suggested domestication as a means to preserve some endangered species. He did not think that man's consumption of nature would ever end, but that the animals themselves could be rescued: "The time will come, when the majority of fur will stem from semi-domesticated animals. This will save several animal species, which most certainly would disappear in the wild, but will be preserved by being tame or half-way tame" (Dreyer 1915b:121).

Dreyer created a paradox in suggesting that endangered species only could be protected by removing them from their natural habitat; they could not stay in nature, but must be transplanted to cultured settings such as in parks, reserves or zoos. Only here animals could be controlled and protected accordingly. This reasoning offered the zoo a new rhetorical toolbox for becoming nature. It was a kind of nature that perhaps was not an untouched paradise or a battle zone, but rather defined as a place where healthy animals could live their lives in relative freedom. Nature was where the animals were. The opposition between the notions of Romantic and Darwinian nature could thus be erased, for no matter how 'nature-out-there' was defined, it was apparently disappearing as a victim of human conquest. Nature was now defined by new rules. A disappearing and disturbed nature could not longer be the ideal place for animals. Perhaps – just perhaps – one could argue that a zoo was preferable to true nature.

In 1915 Dreyer wrote the article "Zoos of the Future", where he argued that most animals had "reason to praise imprisonment, rather than the tragic unsafe and painful life out in the free nature" (Dreyer 1915a:377). His colleague Chalmers Mitchell of London Zoo had uttered the same argument two years earlier: "They can live long, and live happily (...) Space, open air, scrupulous attention to hygiene and diet, the provision of some attempt at natural environment and receiving attention that they [the animals] have never received before" (Chalmers Mitchell 1912:364). The protection of animals and of nature that had begun around 1900 and since grew to a global challenge, includes a small irony. Even the small parts of nature that are left have become organized by humans. Rare and wild animals can only exist in areas where they are monitored and managed. As Greg Mitman has phrased it: "If the Zoo was becoming more like nature, nature was also becoming more like the Zoo" (Mitman 1996:121)

From the first decades of the 20th century, zoological gardens began slowly but steadily to stage and present themselves as an alternative to nature, or literally as an alternative nature. In the analysis of the debates on Copenhagen Zoo around 1900, a change in discourse and the self-understanding among zoo-directors is evident: The zoo changed from being a place for recreation, for education and for entertainment, to being a place of necessity: Not only a necessity for the visitors, but certainly also for the animals themselves.

All quotes from Danish sources are translated by the author.

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