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A “green city” – attractions, animals and modernity: The establishment of the Warsaw Zoological Garden in independent Poland

2018 marks the centenary of Polish independence and the ninetieth anniversary of the opening of the Warsaw Zoological Garden.¹ While the former event is part of the so-called grand history which determined the shape of Polish culture, the latter seems local and less significant. They are, however, mutually related. What links them is not only the “fateful eights” included in their dates – 1918 and 1928 respectively, but also the fact that they were turning points in Warsaw’s history. The regaining of independence made it possible to introduce crucial modernising changes both in the capital and the newly established country at large. Despite many difficulties, it was a time of major transformation – not only of a political, but also economic, social and cultural nature. This pertained also to city space. One may ask, after Józef Władysław Kobyłański, *Jak powstał w odrodzonej Polsce pierwszy zwierzyńiec w Warszawie?*² (How Did the First

¹ To mark the ninetieth anniversary of the zoo, the Praga Museum of Warsaw mounted a special exhibition: <https://muzeumpragi.pl/wystawa/90-urodziny-warszawskiego-zoo/>

² Kobyłański wrote about the menagerie of Mieczysław Pągowski, opened in 1926. It was a private venture which survived until 1928, when it was closed, and the animals were transferred to the newly established zoological garden in the Praga

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Zoo in Independent Poland Come to Be Established?) (Kobyłański, 1928). Attempts to follow the lead of other European countries and establish a modern zoological garden had already been made in the second half of the nineteenth century. This plan was only fully actualised in March 1928, when the new zoo located in Praga, a right bank district of Warsaw, was officially opened to the public.

The zoological garden, a special kind of place, may provide a lens through which one may look at the capital at the time. Its establishment and the choice of location tell a lot about contemporary conceptualisations of space and about modernising aspirations. The interwar period saw the gradual process of eliminating horses and farm animals from the capital. They did not fit the vision of Warsaw proposed by architects, a city which was to be "clean and regular, equipped with all the achievements of modern technology" (Brzostek 2015, p. 205).³ The zoo, by contrast, is a thoroughly modern institution, defining the relations between people and animals, and the place of the latter in the city.

The establishment of the Warsaw Zoological Garden in the newly independent country was to be a sign of progress, since in European culture zoos were founded as institutions meant to raise the prestige of a city or country. They were manifestations of economic or scientific power (DeMello, 2012, p. 101). According to *Przewodnik po Miejskim Ogrodzie Zoologicznym w Warszawie* (A Guide to the Municipal Zoological Garden in Warsaw), published in 1929, the zoo was designed to meet European standards and "was worthy of the capital of a great state" (*Przewodnik*, 1929, p. 3).⁴ European aspirations and ambitions to fit western models were coupled with emphasis on its uniqueness: "This, the latest of all zoological gardens established in great European capitals, implements the results of all experiments conducted elsewhere, augmented by own observations, made on its own ground" (*Przewodnik*, 1929, p. 6). The guide also drew attention to the context of recently regained independence:

It is the first Zoological Garden established in independent Poland by ourselves alone, without the aid of foreign experts. Poznań got its zoo ready-made; even though it had been established by Poles in 1871, it was improved and carefully supported by German occupiers up to 1919, as one of the institutions that was to demonstrate the superiority of German culture over the indigenous Polish element. (*Przewodnik*, 1929, p. 4)

district of Warsaw.

³ For information about the number of horses in Warsaw and the changes over the years see Sobechowicz 2014.

⁴ The publication does not mention the name of the author: abbreviation AL. POW.

According to the findings of the historian Błażej Brzostek, the situation of partitioned Poland produced "the Polish complex", conditioned by "a sense of lost grandeur and historical injustice". Poles "survived on the margins of empires, dominated politically and, to a great extent, economically, doomed to institutional underdevelopment" (Brzostek, 2015, p. 27). By contrast, the establishment of a zoological garden could add splendour and grandeur to the capital of a country that had managed to win its independence.

The fragments quoted above correspond with the observations of Andrzej Szczerski, who argues that Polish modernisation should not be seen solely through the perspective of borrowings from and imitations of western models, or treated as a uniform phenomenon. When local tradition, the dynamics of transformation and changing historical circumstances are taken into consideration, it is possible to speak about many "modernisms" in this case. Szczerski proposes to distinguish four models of modernity in twentieth-century Poland. Their different actualisations resulted from the political situation, with independence and sovereignty of the country often serving as the decisive category in the vision of modernism (Szczerski, 2015, pp. 7–10).

In the period of the Second Republic, or the second modernity in Szczerski's classification, Poland aspired to develop according to European patterns, but also relied on its own ideas (Szczerski, 2015, p. 12). This can be seen in the declarations concerning the Warsaw Zoo, where foreign inspirations are combined with Polish vivarian achievements. Moreover, in the period following independence, "the key role in the process of modernisation was played by the state, which could initiate projects on a grand scale, impossible to achieve in the realities of the partitions" (Szczerski, 2015, p. 12). The Warsaw Zoo was established by the city authorities. Without such financial and institutional support, previous – private – zoos had had no chance of survival.

From spectacles of attractions to an educational institution

As Margo De Mello observes, before the establishment of zoological gardens, wild animals were kept in royal menageries, which served as a symbol of power and wealth as well as a sign of triumph and control over wild nature. Looking at animals was reserved for the rulers and aristocrats. The wider public could see wild animals in travelling menageries or curiosity cabinets. Public viewing of animals and the attendant democratisation of gaze began only in the nineteenth century, together with the idea of a modern zoological gar-

den (DeMello, 2012, pp. 101–102). The approach to the manner and objectives of displaying animals changed accordingly. In this context, it is worth looking at what kind of place had earlier been reserved in Warsaw for animals considered exotic.

In 1819, the zoologist Feliks Paweł Jarocki established the Zoological Cabinet, where animals were presented mainly as taxidermic museum exhibits.⁵ But stuffed animals did not arouse as much interest as living ones (Milewski, 2008, pp. 22–23). In nineteenth-century Warsaw animals were presented to the public in places that functioned as venues for "spectacles of attractions" (*spektakle atrakcji*). This term is used by Łukasz Biskupski to describe a variety of shows attracting attention as a display of "what is new, odd, monstrous, astonishing" (Biskupski, 2013, p. 79). These included travelling menageries, theatres of dogs and monkeys, or curiosity shows.⁶

A popular place was Nalewki square, where at least from the 1830s a monkey theatre had mounted displays in one of the wooden buildings. These animals were in vogue in Warsaw at the time. The place gained notoriety in the press after the building collapsed, killing two women as a result (Milewski, 2008, p. 21). In addition, the square served as a venue for such attractions as dioramas, panoramas, cycloramas, cosmoramas, cabinets of automata or wax figures, and a miniature glass works. The acts displayed also included a giant from Finland and an elephant turning the handle of a barrel organ with its trunk. A menagerie and a wax museum of anatomy run by Preuscher, the father of the well-known owner of a curiosity museum in Vienna, were also located in Nalewki, as were the Barnabo menagerie, which featured shows by a Swedish female animal tamer, the menageries of Kreutzberg, Druad, Schauter, and Hejdenreich. Nalewki served as a venue for such forms of entertainment until the late 1860s, when the square was turned into a "park created for the healthiness and decoration of the city" (Heppen, 1890, pp. 1–2).

For a long time, the capital did not have a zoo. It was not until 1874 that a zoological garden was established at the corner of Hoża and Krucza street by Ferdynand Bartels, a private teacher and censor from Warsaw. The garden did not attract sufficient interest of

⁵ The Zoological Cabinet was later transformed into the National Zoological Museum, currently the Museum and Institute of Zoology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (for more information about the history of this institution see Fedorowicz & Feliksiak, 2016).

⁶ After Łukasz Biskupski, we may add to the list of "spectacles of attractions" characteristic of the mass culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth century such items as shows of acrobats, magicians, athletes, displays of mechanical Nativity scenes, museums of "medical phenomena" exhibitions of optical toys and images (magic lantern, stereoscope, Kaiserpanorama, panorama), cabaret and variety shows, garden parties, or even sport (roller skating, cycling). All of them are forms of the entertainment system of the time, which Biskupski terms "culture of attraction" (*kultura atrakcji*), thus replacing such notions as mass or popular culture (Biskupski, 2013, pp. 19–20, 78–79).

the public, and was closed more or less a year later due to difficulties of maintenance and financial debts incurred by the owner (Milewski, 2008, p. 23). The next garden was opened in 1884 by the lawyer Jan Maurycy Kamiński at 15, Bagatela street. Since the profits from ticket sales were not too high, the zoo was advertised in the press and the public was encouraged to buy shares in the enterprise. In addition, new forms of entertainment were introduced, such as games for children and all kinds of spectacles. In order to increase attractiveness, the zoo followed the example of Carl Hagenbeck, an animal dealer, travelling circus owner and promoter of zoological gardens. Hagenbeck organised displays of the human zoo, during which people, usually from Africa, were exhibited together with the so-called wild animals. Regarded as exotic in Europe at the time, Africans were meant to arouse curiosity and cause a sensation as a kind of oddity. Such displays were an example of a radical objectification of both people and animals, a type of "arranged wilderness for the purposes of a spectacle" (Wieczorkiewicz, 2002, p. 12).⁷ With Hagenbeck's assistance, such presentations were organised in Warsaw, too: for example, a group of Dahomeyans, Sinhalese and Hotentots was brought to the Polish capital (Łukaszewicz, 1975, p. 199).

"Bagatela", as Kamiński's zoo was referred to, did not survive for long. In 1888 a fatal accident occurred: a bear attacked and killed the zoo warden. News spread around the city that the animal had been starving, which made it aggressive. To contradict the rumours, the managers decided to kill the remaining two bears, to prove during autopsy that the animals had a thick layer of fat and were properly nourished. Two years later, a great number of animals kept at the zoo died of a food poisoning after being fed infected meat. This led to the closure of "Bagatela", and the surviving animals were sold to zoological gardens abroad (Milewski, 2008, pp. 25–26).

As illustrated by the examples above, keeping exotic animals in city space was connected with accidents or unpleasant occurrences. The buildings were often makeshift, and knowledge about taking care of animals – inadequate. Newspapers published reports about the incompetent behaviour of the audience, who teased and annoyed the animals. There were also incidents such as the theft of a turtle from the aquarium at the Botanical Garden or the killing of an otter kept in the same place (Milewski, 2008, pp. 23, 25). Throughout the nineteenth century the Warsaw press also reported incidents of commotion caused by animals running away from menageries. For example, panic broke out in the 1820s when

⁷ For more about the displays of the human zoo see Poignant, 2004.

an elephant broke out of the courtyard where it was kept. Shops were closed and people stayed indoors, barricading entrances to their houses. The elephant was finally shot, and then stuffed and presented to the Zoological Cabinet. A similar commotion was caused by a lion which ran away from Kreutzberg's menagerie, or the bear from Bartels' garden, which allegedly attacked several women in the street (Milewski, 2008, pp. 22–23).

After the closure of the garden at Bagatela, there was no zoo in Warsaw for over thirty five years. Varsovians were able to see animals mainly at the circus at Ordynacka street, operating in the capital from 1883. All the time, however, efforts were made to establish a new zoological garden. For example, in 1899 there were plans to open a branch of the Moscow Society for the Acclimatisation of Animals and Plants. Members of the board even went on a tour of the most important zoological gardens abroad (Łukaszewicz, 1975, p. 199). However, it was not until independence that chances of opening a Municipal Zoological Garden funded from public sources finally materialised. The new garden took over animals from private menageries, which could not support themselves financially. One of such menageries was set up in 1924 by the confectioner Mieczysław Pągowski in the courtyard at 47 Koszykowa street, and then moved to 12, 3 Maja Avenue. At the same time, biology teachers from Warsaw set up another menagerie, called "Studium Pedagogiczne" (Pedagogical Study, located in the park now occupied by the building of the National Museum), also in 3 Maja Avenue. Both zoos were shut down when the Municipal Zoological Garden in Warsaw opened in 1928 (Łukaszewicz, 1975, pp. 392–393 ; *85 lat...*, 2013, pp. 14–15).

From the start, the scientific and educational objectives of the new zoo were clearly formulated. According to a decision of the Warsaw City Council from June 1927, the zoological garden was to be "an educational institution catering for the masses" (APW 72/153/0, 1927). Its tasks included collecting and making available for study various species of animals, breeding them, organising lectures in zoology and arranging entertainment for young people on the zoo grounds (APW 72/153/0, 1927). There were also visible attempts at dissociating the new zoo from the history of previous menageries. In February 1929 an article published in the *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (Illustrated Weekly) commented as follows:

It is not as easy as it seems. To buy several animals, lock them in cages and a zoo is ready. This is the principle followed most of all by owners of menageries. The captive animal is a product that is supposed to bring profit. The fate of the unfortunate creatures has already been described by world-renowned authorities. The hell of

the menagerie may be described in two words: hunger in captivity. That's enough! (...). A zoo that serves science provides more; it tries to make captivity as close to the ideal of freedom as possible, letting the animal enjoy space and light. (*Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 1929)

"The green city of animals" and a naturalistic exhibition

Zoological gardens may be discussed in the context of the institutions of modernity, which ascribe greater value to gaze and the practices of exhibiting and viewing, such as displays, museums or department stores, which "design the process of perception" and function as a kind of "viewing machines" (Litwinowicz-Droździel, 2014, pp. 154, 158). The first zoological gardens also differed from private menageries in terms of the ways they displayed the animals. Rather than exhibit them in a disordered, random way, zoos organised their collections according to different continents or taxonomic categories (DeMello, 2012, p. 102). Also, the scientific objectives of such gardens were emphasised; the cataloguing and organisation of the exhibition were to serve educational purposes, so that the visitors could get to know and compare different species of animals (Łukaszewicz, 1975, pp. 177–178).

As Karol Łukaszewicz observes, at the time of its establishment, the number of animals and the infrastructure of the Warsaw zoo was rather average in comparison with zoological gardens abroad. However, it was designed according to the generally accepted principles of displaying animals (Łukaszewicz, 1975, p. 395). The achievements of Carl Hagenbeck, the founder of a modern zoo in Hamburg, opened in 1907, provided an immediate inspiration.⁸ Hagenbeck originated a new, "naturalistic" style of exhibition, which quickly spread around Europe and is still used today. Instead of cramped cages and fences of various kinds, he provided a dedicated open space, in which animals could move freely. In addition, he designed sophisticated panoramas, tropical, polar and other, to create an illusion of the natural habitat appropriate to different species. This made the impression that the animals were living in the wild (DeMello, 2012, p. 104).

⁸ As Karol Łukaszewicz points out, Heinrich Hagenbeck, the son of the creator of the zoo in Stellingen near Hamburg (today within the city), visited Warsaw as early as 1916 to assess the proposed location for the Municipal Zoological Garden in Praga. The first guidebook to Warsaw Zoo published an advertisement of the zoo in Hamburg, which supplied animals not only to other zoos, but also private owners. Warsaw zoo had a price list of the Hamburg Zoo and acted as an intermediary in the sale of exotic birds, ponies and monkeys.



Illustration 1: A visit to the zoological garden. The Mayor of Kaunas Anton Merkis accompanied by the Deputy Mayor of Warsaw, Jan Pohoski, December 1938. Instead of bars and a wire fence, a row of spikes and a moat separate the elephant from the public. A low barrier in the elephant enclosure was installed in later years. From the collection of the National Digital Archive (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe).

The Warsaw Zoo was designed in the Hagenbeckian style: it featured extensive open spaces, animal enclosures without bars, ponds and swimming pools with islands (Łukaszewicz, 1975, p. 395). In keeping with the principles of display adopted in Hamburg, it was largely a landscape park, providing directions for the viewers and sightseeing paths set among the greenery. There were lawns, trees, bushes and flowerbeds; one of the latter boasted 3,500 roses (Przewodnik, 1929, pp. 90–91). In the founders' intention, the zoological garden was meant to cater to "the masses", providing a space of rest and recreation in the open air among natural scenery. According to the official guidebook it was "one of the largest and most beautiful parks serving both recreational and scientific purposes" (Przewodnik, 1929, p. 91). It offered "a lot of space, fresh air and the sun" (Przewodnik, 1929, p. 6). Modernly designed, the garden, with enclosures and ponds for animals, and specially dedicated green walking areas, was an attraction for the public. Its good location was particularly emphasised:

The Municipal Zoological Garden, covering the area of twenty-eight and a half hectares, is situated on the bank of a great river. Unpolluted by the fumes of the city, whose population reaches one million, it boasts old trees, flower beds, lawns, the sewage system, electric light and running water. Located within walking distance of a transport hub, it is accessible to the wide masses through an extensive network of tramways.

In summer, it is a wonderful venue for school trips, providing a welcome rest from the stuffy classroom, and contact with living science. (*Przewodnik*, 1929, p. 4)

In August 1935, an article "Zielone miasto zwierząt" (The Green City of Animals), published in the *Kurier Poranny* (Morning Messenger), reported:

(...) within walking distance of the city centre, there is a place where you can benefit from fresh air, have a close look at the secrets of African jungles, American prairies and pampas, the Arctic and the tropics. For those who like flowers, there are plenty of flowers; for those who like birds, there are numerous birds, several hundred, the rarest ones. For those who love animals, there are several hundred animals, too. And those who love their neighbour of the opposite sex, may find a secluded place to coo. (*Kurjer Poranny*, 1935)

While both quotations point out the cognitive and educational advantages of a visit to the zoo, they put a particular stress on the recreational aspects. After Margo DeMello, it should be observed that Hagenbeck's display innovations did not in fact serve to improve the living conditions of the animals, or that was not their primary objective; rather, their purpose was to draw the attention of the public and make a visit more varied and attractive. While walking, people enjoyed a direct, unobstructed view of the animals. In addition, lack of bars and fences created an illusion that animals had a good life, as if in the wild. Such changes turned out to be more morally acceptable to visitors, thus enhancing the pleasure of viewing the animals (DeMello, 2012, pp. 104–105).

The zoo and amusement park: a modern entertainment complex

According to Adrian Franklin, the widespread adoption of the Hagenbeck zoo model in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century in fact led to the abandoning of the noble idea of education. A sign of the times, such changes were dictated by the transformation of the entertainment market. Zoological gardens had to compete mainly with cinema, which had a much greater impact on the imagination of the audiences. Consequently, zoos had to develop new attractions (Franklin, 1999, p. 71). Innovations introduced in the London Zoo in the 1930s may serve to illustrate the point. The opening and extension of space provided an opportunity to view some species of animals as if on a natural meadow. A new penguin

pool with a complex system of planks to walk on was designed by Berthold Lubetkin, a representative of modernism in architecture. Public displays of chimpanzees' tea parties were another attraction. These were a type of comic scenes in which dressed up animals had a party at a table laid with food and drink, in order to provide entertainment to the public, mainly children (Franklin, 1999, pp. 70–71).

The Warsaw Zoo also tried to keep abreast of general trends in providing entertainment, catering mainly to children and school trips. During the first year, the zoo was visited in all by 600,000 people (*Przewodnik*, 1929, p. 6). The *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* described this turnout as "an impressive number", commenting that "there must something worth seeing if so many people come to visit the garden" (*85 lat...*, 2013, p. 25). However, the scale of the zoo's popularity cannot be compared with other forms of mass entertainment in Warsaw. Cinemas alone, according to data published in the *Kurier Warszawski* (Warsaw Messenger) sold over a million tickets every month. Circus and sports events, which the *Kurier* described as "other forms of spectacle", attracted around 150,000 viewers a month (*Kurier Warszawski*, 1928).

Describing the pre-war district of Praga, Andrzej Sołtan observes that the establishment of the zoological garden enhanced the tourist offer in Warsaw. Guidebooks published in the 1930s encouraged the readers to visit the attractions located on the right bank: the amusement park in Park Praski, the beaches on the banks of the Vistula, as well as tennis courts and boating ponds in Park Skaryszewski (Sołtan, 2006, p. 24). The amusement park, established around 1929, was a major attraction in the capital. What is important, it was located in the immediate vicinity of the zoo. Hence both institutions should be analysed together. They not only shared one entrance, but also funds raised through the sale of tickets to the amusement park were supposed to finance the zoological garden (Mórawski, 2017, p. 377). The narrator of the film *Dzieje Warszawy w latach 1920–1939* (History of Warsaw 1920–1939) mentions that "the proximity of the two establishments had a considerable significance for their owners. As a result, they could count on a greater turnout, and, what follows, bigger profits. Everyone who visited the zoo, could then take their children to the amusement park".⁹

The amusement park not only organised fetes and performances by cinema and cabaret actors and singers, but above all it offered swings, merry-go-rounds, Ferris wheels,

⁹ The documentary film *Dzieje Warszawy w latach 1920–1939*, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwgP3TyfeNM>> (accessed 15 May 2018). Screenplay and production Zbigniew Wawer, 1996.

driving carts, and a parachuting tower for daredevils. The greatest attraction was a roller-coaster, five floors high, which moved at great speed and provided plenty of thrills. Together, the zoo and the amusement park were Warsaw's prime entertainment complex. As the film historian Ben Singer notices, the first amusement parks in the world, established at the end of the nineteenth century, relied on "immediate, gripping sensation" and "a commerce in sensory shocks" (Singer, 2001, pp. 90–91). At the time, Ferris wheels, roller-coasters, disaster spectacles and daredevil stunts, all providing thrilling sensations, became widespread. The phenomenon developed as a result of living in the big city environment, creating more and more stimuli. As the experience of everyday life changed, so also did the forms of amusement (Singer, 2001, pp. 90–91, 93).

The Warsaw Zoo, whose main objective was to exhibit animals, did not provide this kind of sensation and sensory thrills like the ones mentioned above. Still, it also aroused the curiosity of the public. Zbigniew Woliński, the former director of the zoo, points out that the press, looking for sensational news during the interwar period, often published stories about animals: "in pursuit of sensation, dailies relished news about, for instance, lion cubs fed with human milk in the zoo, or the birth of hirsute man-apes in the Podkarpacie region of Southern Poland, who should be displayed in the zoological garden" (Woliński, 1959, p. 234). It seems that such images may have arisen in the wake of the shows of the human zoo, which the Warsaw public had had a chance to view many years before in Jan Maurycy Kamiński's Bagatela menagerie. The press in the period also published articles about people being devoured or bitten by animals. For example, the tigress Munda, a zoo pet, had allegedly killed and eaten two natives who had tried to catch her in India (*85 lat...*, 2013, p. 23). In an article "Lew rzucił się na pogromcę" (The Lion Has Attacked the Tamer), one of the regional dailies reported:

The twenty-eight-year old animal tamer in the Warsaw Zoological Garden, Jan Neumann from Vienna, has fallen victim to his profession. He entered the lions' cage to distribute their daily share of meat, and when he had given out all the meat and wanted to go out, one of the lions, probably resentful because it had got a smaller portion, attacked the tamer and bit his leg... Some time ago, in one of the foreign zoos, Neumann had been bitten by a monkey, and two years ago in Berlin he had been bitten by a lion. (*Dziennik Kujawski*, 1938, p. 2)

The zoo made efforts to make the visit more attractive to the viewers. One way to achieve this was to introduce displays of animal training. Jan Żabiński, the zoo manager,

introduced the idea that lions should be taught "savoir-vivre" so that they could play with the public, for their own pleasure and that of the viewers. An animal trainer from Austria was invited to teach the lions, without recourse to violence, how to climb trees or eat from the hand. An article entitled "Dobry wieczór" (Good Evening) quoted Źabiński, who stressed the ethical aspect of such lessons: "This is not training, but taming. In training, animals are made to perform acrobatic feats, jump through burning hoops, form gymnastic pyramids. (...) What we want is that they should be obedient and friendly towards people. (85 lat..., 2013, p. 38)



Illustration 2: The Danish animal trainer Christian Bjarns in the Warsaw Zoological Garden, 1932. From the collection of the National Digital Archive (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe).

In this way, in an attempt to build the prestige of the new institution, the zoo attractions were situated in marked opposition to those offered by the circus or the menageries mentioned above, focused solely on providing amusement. It seems, however, that even if the zoo regulations emphasised primarily the scientific and educational objectives, and

attached less importance to its entertainment function, finally the latter came to play an equally significant role. Thus certain tensions can be discerned in the case of the Warsaw Zoo. One of such tensions stemmed from the interaction between what was local or national and what was international, i.e. between aspirations to follow European models and vivarian achievements, while at the same time maintaining the sense of own distinctness. The second tension resulted from the discrepancy – in fact only apparent – between scientific objectives, perceived as rather elite, and popular or entertainment functions. However, all these aspects may be considered as a whole, as an element of the experience of modernity as such, involving a peculiar pluralism of attitudes.

Spaces for animals in the modern city

It should be stressed that despite efforts to contrast the zoological garden with animal displays catering only for the entertainment of the public, the zoo with all its exhibition infrastructure and a specially planned walking area provided a space designed for recreation and contributed to the development of leisure time culture.¹⁰ Historically conditioned, free time as such appeared in Europe and the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of the shortening of working hours of the labouring class. This was achieved thanks to the movement for labour rights, but was also indirectly promoted by the principles of market logic, according to which the employee "should have time not only for recuperation, but also for consumption" (Morin, 1965, p. 63). Shorter working hours not only encouraged engaging in private life and making use of material goods, but created conditions for the development of the entertainment market. Leisure time provided the opportunity for rest and play, also in the natural environment. It was "a democratic extension of that freedom of time which used to be the privilege of the ruling classes" (Morin, 1965, p. 63). In Poland, fundamental changes in this direction occurred when the country regained independence after the First World War and the working time was officially shortened.

Thus the zoological garden, a modern institution open to the general public, should be seen in the wider perspective of democratisation – not only in terms of the view of ani-

¹⁰ See a documentary film from 1938, showing the amusements of Varsovians on a free Sunday: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-wlSCy990g>>. The film, which clearly exalts leisure time, mentions a visit to the zoo and amusement park among the Sunday attractions.

mals, described above, or availability of leisure time, but also access to recreational space in the city. In response to increasing urbanisation, the interwar period saw the establishment of new parks and gardens in Warsaw. It was there that "the Varsovian, tired of the bustle of the great city, found secluded spots in the fresh air" (Mórawski, 2017, p. 375). This was part of the process of "going out" in order to spend time in the open air which, as Grażyna Szelałowska observes, had begun at the turn of the twentieth century (Szelałowska, 2015, pp. 75–77).¹¹

The creation of city parks was motivated, among others, by concern for the recreation and health of the inhabitants. Public awareness of the importance of such issues grew, together with the development of the ideas of hygiene (Szelałowska, 2015, p. 234). In 1927, Warsaw hosted the International Hygiene Exhibition, held in Aleje Ujazdowskie and Dolina Szwajcarska (Majewski, 2004, p. 160).¹² Changes were introduced in the system of waste disposal: the sewage system was extended, and in 1928 the Municipal Cleaning Service was established, with a large number of employees and modern equipment ensuring efficiency (Bystroń, 1977, p. 313). Slaughterhouses still working in the city posed another challenge to sanitary conditions. It is worth mentioning that two years before the opening of the zoo, the municipal abattoir in Praga was extended. Situated at Namiestnikowska street (today Sierakowskiego street), its aim was to take over the business done in other slaughterhouses, located closer to the city centre. For example, the obsolete abattoir at Rybaki street near the Old Town, was closed in 1916, while another, at Solec, shut in 1937 (Bystroń, 1977, p. 314). The location of the municipal slaughterhouse in Praga, then on the outskirts of the city, meant that slaughterhouses, generating waste and bad smell, were being pushed out of the city centre.

The processes of modernisation included the question of assigning space to animals in the city. After John Berger, art critic and author of *About Looking* (1980), the process of excluding animals from city space may be linked with the emergence of zoological gardens, nature reserves and national parks. They were established – or became more widespread – when some species of animals, those kept for breeding, for example, started to disappear from the immediate human environment, physically and culturally marginalised as a result

¹¹ In 1889, with Mayor Sokrates Starynkiewicz in office, a Planting Committee was established to set out new parks (Bystroń, 1977, p. 279). The last decades of the nineteenth century in Warsaw also saw the popularisation of recreational Sunday trips out of the city.

¹² Hygiene exhibitions had a long tradition in Warsaw. The first was organised in 1887 by the activist of the periodical *Zdrowie* (Health); the next one was held in 1896. The Warsaw Hygiene Society was established in 1898 (Majewski, 2004, p. 160).

of the implementation of industrial inventions. In Berger's view, this involved the increasing importance attributed to pets, included in the private space of the family, and animals which functioned in the sphere of spectacle providing pleasure to viewers (Berger, 1991, p. 26). The zoo, as the best example of such an approach, serving only to enable viewing animals, has in fact become "a monument to the impossibility of (...) encounters" with animals, and the "historic loss", which Berger attributes to the development of modernity (Berger, 1991, pp. 21, 28).

While Berger's diagnosis may seem to be rather generalised, it is worth noticing that scholars such as the geographer Peter Atkins or the historian Peter Soppelsa also observe that the process of elimination of horses and other so-called farm animals from big European cities – Paris and London – began at the turn of the twentieth century. They point out that this move was dictated not only by technological development, but primarily by the vision of the modernisation of urban space and the increase in knowledge about sanitary dangers. Certain species of animals, regarded as unhygienic, disappeared from public view, since they came to be categorised as belonging to the sphere of nature and the countryside, and, as such, no longer fitted the description of urbanity (Atkins, 2012, pp. 33–35; Soppelsa, 2011, pp. 258–260). In a way, this is part of the process of harnessing nature and stabilising what nature in the city should be. At the time, the practices of purification – to use Bruno Latour's terminology – were clearly visible, i.e. the processes of cleansing and excluding everything that was classified as belonging to the unwanted sphere of nature from the sphere of culture and technology. According to Latour, modern thinking is dualistic; it relies on the establishment of dichotomic values (Latour, 1993, pp. 10–11, 40). The construction of the division into what is urban, i.e. connected with culture, and what is rural, and thus connected with nature, may be seen as part of this development.

In Warsaw, such processes took a slightly different turn; they had their own local dynamics conditioned by historical circumstances of a country under partitions which then regained independence. Although the designation of particular landmark dates in the case of such long-lasting and dispersed phenomena is problematic, there can be no doubt these processes markedly intensified in the interwar period. There was a generally observed need to eliminate farm animals, barns and abattoirs from public view. As one could read in the press in 1939, "a great city" should "remove from its borders all echoes of rural life" and "devices that belong in a well-kept farmyard" which were still to be found in the outbuildings of tenement houses in the city centre (Porządkowanie ulic, 1939, p. 6).

The interwar period also saw the gradual marginalisation of horses, stemming not only from the mechanisation of public transport, but also from the view that their presence in the city, especially its central districts, was inappropriate. Hence on 1 August 1939 municipal authorities issued regulations banning the use of horse transport in the centre (*Trudności z ruchem kołowym w stolicy, 1939*, p. 5; Brzostek, 2015, pp. 205–206). If transport horses were now perceived as a problem, it should also be noted that at the same time animals connected with the culture of leisure time acquired a greater importance.¹³ Apart from the zoological garden opened in 1928 to display exotic animals, Warsaw attractions in the interwar period also included a horse racing track built in 1927 in the district of Służewiec to replace the old one in Pola Mokotowskie. The Society for the Popularisation of Horse Breeding (*Towarzystwo Zachęty do Hodowli Koni*) bought the land for the track already in 1925 (Bossak-Herbst & Głowacka-Grajper, 2018, pp. 4–5). Thus the diminishing role of horses in public transport was coupled with the growing interest of the Warsaw public in horse races as a form of entertainment.

The ethnographer Ewa Klekot discusses the racecourse and the zoological garden as the most important construction projects in interwar Warsaw whose "role depended on [providing] the institutionally sanctioned presence of animals in the modern city" (Klekot, 2018, p. 151). During the period between two world wars, after regaining independence, the capital started to develop rapidly; this was connected with efforts to introduce a new spatial order. Municipal authorities attached great importance to creating green spaces that would serve the recreation and health of Varsovians. The attendant spread of the ideas of public hygiene shaped urban planning and spatial imaging (Łupienko, 2017, pp. 68–69).¹⁴ Indirectly, these ideas had an influence on the negative perception of the presence of certain species of animals in the city, which then played an important role in defining urbanity. By contrast, the Municipal Zoological Garden can be seen as a place which to a great extent determined as well as structured the relations between people and animals in an urban setting.

Translated by Maria Fengler

¹³ Ewa Klekot uses the term "leisure time animals" (see Klekot, 2018, p. 150).

¹⁴ For more about the relations between ideas of hygiene and urban planning see Łupienko, 2017. Łupienko observes that hygienists made a contribution to the development of city studies, while similar ideas were proposed by modernist urban planners and architects; some of those ideas are still regarded as valid today (Łupienko, 2017, p. 70). For more about the guidelines on city planning, including such issues as the necessity of access to city parks, sunlight and open space, drawn in 1933 in Athens at the meeting of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (including representatives from Poland) see Le Corbusier, 1973.

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„Zielone miasto” atrakcji, zwierzęta i nowoczesność. Powstanie warszawskiego ogrodu zoologicznego w odrodzonej Polsce

Artykuł dotyczy założenia warszawskiego ogrodu zoologicznego po odzyskaniu przez Polskę niepodległości. Był to moment przełomowy, pozwalający na wprowadzenie istotnych zmian modernizacyjnych zarówno w kontekście narodowym, jak i lokalnym, miejskim. Toczyły się wówczas dyskusje na temat wizji nowoczesności, poszukiwano takiej jej wersji, która łączyłaby trendy europejskie i lokalne inspiracje. Założenie ogrodu zoologicznego jako nowoczesnej instytucji określało w pewnym stopniu także miejsce zwierząt w przestrzeni miejskiej. Zauważalne były wówczas procesy rugowania niektórych gatunków zwierząt z miasta czy sytuowania innych w obrębie kultury czasu wolnego.

Słowa kluczowe:

zwierzęta; nowoczesność; ogród zoologiczny; „kultura atrakcji”; przestrzeń miejska

A “green city” – attractions, animals and modernity: The establishment of the Warsaw Zoological Garden in independent Poland

The article describes the history of establishing the Warsaw Zoological Garden in independent Poland after the First World War, a watershed period when it was possible to implement modern designs not only in the broader, national context, but also in the local and urban environment. Intensive discussions on the form of modernity attempted to find its version which would combine European and local inspiration. To some extent, the establishment of a modern zoo also defined the place of animals in the urban space. While some species were excluded from the city centre, others were put in the sphere of leisure time.

Keywords:

animals; modernity; zoological garden; “culture of attractions”; urban space

Note:

This is the translation of the original article entitled “‘Zielone miasto’ atrakcji, zwierzęta i nowoczesność. Powstanie warszawskiego ogrodu zoologicznego w odrodzonej Polsce”, which was published in *Adeptus*, issue 12, 2018.

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