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Urban topologies of epistemic change: the zoo and the heterotopia of the map

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ABSTRACT

By tracing the history of maps of the Zurich Zoo since its inception in 1929, I enquire how ideas about human-animal relations in an urban context have changed. Linking Foucault's concept of the heterotopia with the ordering power of space allows to see that a map does more than show the way to one's favourite animals in a zoo. I suggest that the map can be understood as a necessary element in creating a heterotopia, an 'other space', contributing more to visitors' ideas about the zoo than generally assumed. Underlying the Foucauldian concept are endeavours to juxtapose several incompatible emplacements in one real place. These can be understood as efforts to accomplish an illusion that allows to reify the respective model of the zoo that each map pretends to illustrate. The maps aim to create an apparent ecology of proximities between animals and humans, and between the urban and the wild. All in all, the maps offer both a layout for human-animal relations and an instructive account of them, as depicted and imagined by the zoo authorities.

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Introduction¹

Visiting a zoo these days usually starts with buying the entrance ticket and, concurrently, being handed a map. The small children are impatient, for they want to see the monkeys, the lions and the elephants. To the adults, the map also offers a representation of the 'zoo territory' in the urban environment, allowing for a quick overview of the enclosures and pathways. Indeed, the map enables visitors to not only locate the animals and learn how to reach them, but also lures them away from a stressful city life, focusing their gaze onto the wonderful world of nature.

Over the last two decades, a series of works in animal studies have explored the sociology and history of human-animal encounters in zoos (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier, 1998; Rothfels, 2002; Stark, 2014; Whatmore, 2002). In general, zoological gardens can be viewed as signs of the political ideas and societal notions dominating in a given period. The birth of the 'bourgeois zoo' has been regarded as a 'thoroughly urban phenomenon' (Reinert, 2016, p. 30; Wessely, 2008a). As urban institutions, zoos represent major tourist attractions catering the human need to come in contact with nature. At the same time, zoos are controversial especially if observed from an animal rights perspective (Acampora, 2010; Gisler,

2015; Malamud, 1998). In this vein, literature has discussed alternative ways of thinking about zoo animals (Gisler, 2016; McDonald & Vandersommers, 2019), including post-zoo sites and experiences (Acampora, 2010, p. 18).

Despite the flourishing literature, there is a surprising gap in attention towards the peculiar technologies deployed in zoos to arrange the meetings of animals and humans. One such technology is, precisely, the map. Maps are as old as zoological gardens themselves, and the 'map-history' of a zoo can help outlining the imaginaries of coexistence that have come to inform this modern institution. The starting point of this paper is the idea that, far from being merely a practical prop, the map can be understood as a tool that generates a heterotopia, an 'other space' in Foucault's sense, contributing to crafting a specific spatial imagination of the zoo. Foucault (1998, p. 181) first suggested that heterotopias juxtapose in one real place several incompatible emplacements. Similarly, zoos operate as heterotopias and encapsulate ideas not only about animals but also about interactions between humans and animals. Revisiting Foucault's concept of the heterotopia, the paper reviews how diverse models for animal-human relations in the self-representations of zoos have been imagined over time.

The case study discussed here is the Zurich Zoo. Its history goes back over a century. Precisely because of its historical significance this zoo serves as a central reference point in the urban conscience where city dwellers might look for exotic animals and engage with nature. Because the creatures hosted there, the types of enclosures and maintenance modes have changed substantially during the twentieth century. Hence, the Zurich zoo provides a good starting point for a historical sociology of the transformations in the relations between human and non-human animals. The changes in the maps will be used to develop a phenomenological analysis and reflect on how maps have had an impact on the interactions between the actors that live, work and spend time in the zoo. Hence, the maps will not be taken as what they are intended to – as directories. Rather they will serve us to describe carefully the world of the zoo they represent. This allows to carve out structural correlations and elements of meaning and also to observe how the maps shift in providing such interpretations over time. While the early maps seemed to serve as bourgeois proves to roam the world in order to bring back as well as keep wild animals in a city such as Zurich, the more contemporary maps contribute to a heterotopian illusion of a cohabitation of humans and animals in an increasingly urbanised world.

1. Heterotopia of the zoo, illusion of the map

Foucault (1998, p. 182) mentions the garden as well as the zoo as instances of heterotopia. For Foucault, a heterotopia mirrors the imagination of a space that is completely 'other': a space that allows one to dream, a space that is different from all the other places. Although the notion of heterotopia is vague (Gallan, 2015; Saldanha, 2008), it remains a valuable tool to explore the possibilities for alternative social orderings (Hetherington, 1997). Foucault in particular emphasises the changeability of heterotopias, and their ability to handle incompatibilities. Over time, the zoo has indeed been subject to reinterpretation and change: the coexistence of different zoo concepts within the same zoo refers to the spatial order and overlapping of temporal discontinuities. Zoos have an explicit opening and closing system, not only with regard to the public, but also to animals, whether individually or by groups.

Foucault frames the zoo explicitly in the tradition of the garden. He mentions that Persian rugs symbolise a reflection of the traditional Persian garden, with the quartered rectangle as a symbol for the four parts of the world, and a fountain bowl in the centre as the navel of the world (Foucault, 1998, p. 181). These rugs represent also the mobility of a garden inside a room: in this way, the fold-out plan of the Zürich Zoo can also be seen as resembling a Persian rug. It represents the zoo, but is also movable within the room and might influence the movements of visitors in the zoo.

Early zoo designs were interestingly based on the panoptical model. The Viennese zoo at Schönbrunn (Figure 1) offers an example. There, human beings are placed at the centre of things, endeavouring to maintain control of their surrounding animals.

A heterotopia combines different viewpoints (Foucault, 2013, p. 120), offering a place 'where ideas can come into being' (Hetherington, 1997). The position of the subject is open, undetermined and mutable, with regard to both how (human) subjects gaze at other (animal) subjects, and where they are situated, what they are doing, and how they determine their position. So, what happens when zoo visitors are equipped with the analogue materiality of a zoo map (Roberts, 2012, p. 2) to look at other living creatures? Unlike in the past, contemporary visitors will not experience one animal after another behind bars. Enclosures in which animals live have become more spacious, so that animals enjoy a greater variety of distractions. Also, zoo territories combine regions of the world and animals that are hardly going to be met elsewhere. Guests to the Zurich Zoo, for example, may pass the Pantanal and the Mongolian Steppe before they enter the Masoala Hall², a most impressive building where the Madagascan Rainforest is

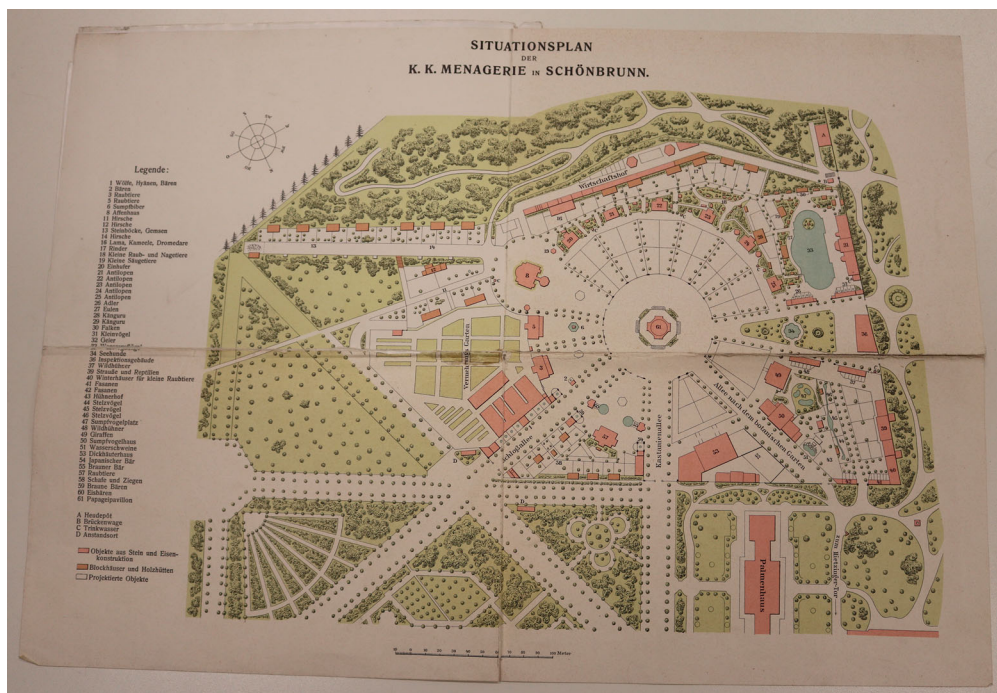


Figure 1. "Schönbrunn. Führer durch die Menagerie", Holzhausen, 1912. Source: Archives Tiergarten Schönbrunn.

imitated and reproduced. In its midst, visitors can have a drink at the Mora Mora bar, which can also be booked for corporate events. Waiters use water sprays to shoo away the cheeky lemurs that try to nibble on the restaurant food. The visitor will feel almost as if s/he has been transported onto the Masoala Peninsula itself – though there are signs indicating not to feed the monkeys, let alone try and touch them. The possibility of such encounters is not mentioned on the zoo map. Although the fences once used to separate humans from the animals have disappeared from the plan, it's nevertheless indicated where people are allowed to go, and where the animals can be found. These territories remain restricted to seeing and being seen.

Maps – as considered by human geographers – convey underlying notions of space created by the sheer fact of being drawn. Dünne (2013) points to the difference between mapping as charting out a terrain and practicing a cartographic inscription: maps 'comprehend, organise, and codify particular relations of extension and form' (Bull, Holmberg, & Asberg, 2018, p. 8); they allow to depict how the 'world has become a multispecies affair' (Van Dooren & Rose, 2012, p. 16). Wood (2010) points out that maps have a discourse function. They shape the ways we see our world and – even more so – they bind together people (or other entities) in certain terrains (if we take as an example voters districts, school areas, gated communities etc.pp.). While maps contribute to produce heterotopian illusions of areas, landscapes, the land itself, they can be and are also contested (Wood, 2010). This is the case when we think for example of how animals themselves dare to trespass the boundaries of the enclosures that are allocated to them (Gisler, 2015).

The zoo map's aim is to create an apparent ecology of proximity. The proximity of humans and animals, of rainforest and the city, and the closeness of countries that in fact are quite distant from each other, let visitors forget that ways of life from very different regions of the world have been artificially brought together.³ The slow but steady changes in the buildings, the enclosures and the selection of the animals also reflect the time boundedness of this urban zoo. It is a 'process that connects one event to another, into a sequence of meaning' (Von Dooren & Rose, 2012, p. 3f). In a number of ways, the order of zoological gardens has come to stand in contrast to the mode of operations of their environment, i.e. modern cities. Zoos 'juxtapose' and connect various ecological incompatibilities. An 'alignment of map and power' (Anderson, 2006, p. 249) has taken place in the cohabitation of humans and animals. Maps do not only reveal what the zoo *has* (in the form of animal stock, enclosures, territory, knowledge, trade relations with other zoos etc.), they also show what it would like to *be*. Similarly, not only do they list what visitors might be able to see, they also tell them what they *ought to see*, and even what they *ought and ought not to do*.

The way in which the late colonial state handled technologies such as the census, the map and the museum reflects how claims of power were made, and how empires were constructed (Anderson, 2006). The binding together and the concomitant creation of meaning in maps is not necessarily mirroring how animals (and people) have existed in zoos or cities over the years. When we take a look at the history of the maps of Zurich Zoo it becomes clear that the maps can be used to depict and point out a certain situation. They as well serve to create and even orchestrate an understanding of how this space might be seen, or with other words, following Winichakul (1994), a map can be 'a model for' as much as 'a model of' what it purports to represent.

2. Zoo maps and their changing cultural meaning

The first colour map of the Zurich Zoo was published in 1930, a year after the zoo opened, and it was followed by regular updates (Röthlin & Müller, 2000, p. 75). The initial map shows a rural landscape. One can infer that the number of represented species was not high.

The zoo's mission was similar to other zoological establishments in Europe: to manifest that the bourgeoisie was able to roam the world and to provide its' middle-class visitors with a 'contrast to the frenzy, noise and motion of modern urban life' (Wessely, 2008b, p. 153). It's founders privileged the well-situated premises easily reached by public transport (Röthlin & Müller, 2000, p. 35). The city council of Zurich supported financially and administratively the Tiergarten-Gesellschaft, which consisted of men of diverse professions – lawyers, merchants, accountants. The city council also had seats on both their board and on the most important zoo committees (Röthlin & Müller, 2000, p. 60).

The first map, along with the second that was issued nine years later, featured a realistic touch (Figures 2–4). Both were drawings of what one could see from the air when approaching the Zoo from the city. Parallel pathways lead the observers through the Zoo. Enclosures and cages are situated in rectangular shapes, with one parcel of land next to another. The order and ease of inspection of the animals were among the most important criteria. Tiny animal figures can be spotted in these maps, but they are barely recognisable and seem completely lost on the vast, green terrain. Animals are organised systematically, and their cages clearly separated from each other by bars and fences or other such constructions. Each map comes with a legend giving information about the Zoo's collections and telling visitors where to find which animals. While the number of animals increased between 1930 and 1939, both maps list *volières*, terrariums, bird lawns and free-roaming enclosures. Animal maintenance was understandably a challenge demanding scientific expertise that had yet to be established (Röthlin & Müller, 2000, p. 31). According to Anderson (2006, p. 185), giving every animal its own number is one aspect of a Panopticon-like politics of visibility. Both maps inform the reader about human-oriented activities such as elephant-riding, a children's playground and a restaurant. However, in the map of 1939, the visitor's encounter with the animals appears more planned. A red arrowed line indicates the directions for a 'bourgeois promenade' (Scobey, 1992, p. 208). While different animal species are demarcated from each other by fine lines, the boundaries between animals and human visitors are indicated by trees, bushes and other greenery, taking on a natural form.

The design of the 1953 and 1969 maps (Figures 5 and 6) reveals some interesting changes. From the 1950s onwards, townspeople began to have more leisure time. Zoological gardens became protagonists in the development of an urban culture of events (Wessely, 2008b). In the 1950s, animals were offered to sight on a variety of occasions: upon arrival of new animals at the zoo, as they were nursed, or even when they were paraded through the city. Signboards and other information were added next to cages (Röthlin & Müller, 2000, p. 126). At the same time, life expectancy for animals in the zoo improved significantly. Increased scientific knowledge enabled better treatment and controlled fertility. As the number of visitors was growing, new animal enclosures and facilities were built, with more attention to issues of ventilation and lighting.



Figure 2. Map, Zoological Garden Zurich, 1930. Source: Zurich Zoo Archives.

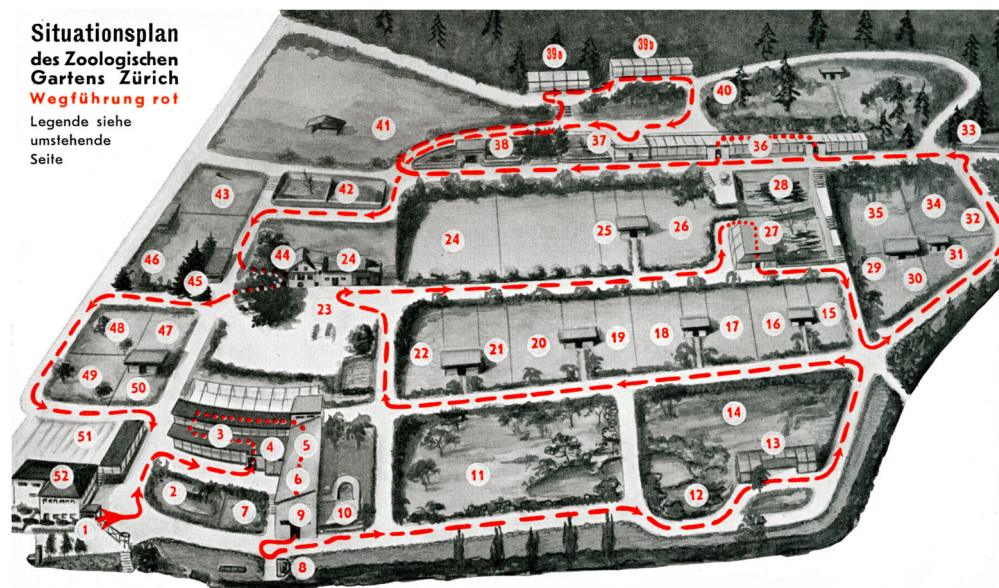


Figure 3. Map, Zoological Garden Zurich, 1939. Source: Zurich Zoo Archives.

Legende zum Plan des Zoologischen Gartens Zürich

Wegführung roter Pfeilstrich
(siehe Rückseite)

1 Kassa, Direktion	27 Affenhaus
2 Flamingo-Wiese	28 Affen-Freianlage
3 Vogelhaus, Volièren	29 Dromedare
4 Menschenaffen, Klein-Säugetiere	30 Kamele
5 Aquarium	31 Lamas
6 Terrarium	32 Ziegen
7 Krokodil-Freilandbecken	33 Tapir-Freigehege
8 Freilandterrarium	34 Hirsche
9 Elefantens Stallung	35 Hirsche
10 Elefanten-Freilauf mit Badebassin	36 Neues Raubtierhaus
11 Grosse Vogelwiese mit Schwimmvogelteich	37 Altes Raubtierhaus, Eisbären
12 Storchwiese	38 Fischotter- und Seehundsbecken
13 Fasanerie	39 Raubvogelvolièren
14 Hintere Vogelwiese	40 Waldgehege für Hirsche und Ziegen
15	41 Pony-Wiese
16	42 Bärengraben
17	43 Nilgau-Antilopen
18 Gehege für grosse Heufresser	44 Kleinsäugetiere
19 Rinder, Antilopen, Pferde	45 Emu, Kasuar
20	46
21	47 Gehege für kleine Heufresser
22	48 Antilopen, Kängurus
23 Elefantenreiten, Kinderspielplatz	49
24 Giraffenstallung und -Freilauf	50
25 Strausse	51 Restaurantgarten
26 Wasserbücke	52 Zoo-Restaurant

Toiletten für Damen und Herren befinden sich in Nr. 9, 36 und 52

Figure 4. Legend to the map of Zurich Zoo, 1939. Source: Zurich Zoo Archives.

The importance of animals has clearly increased in the map of 1953. Animals have become individuals. They are drawn bigger, and sketched in emblematic, graphic forms. The same graphic style will be used for several years: while animals are all shown in plain black, some of them, such as the camel, the wolf and the bear, seem in motion. Others stand completely still and can be admired. One specific animal, the chimpanzee, is even placed outside its compound, looking at its own species!

In the 1960s, the position of the zoo in the city becomes a topic on the map. Visitors now arrive by car – as indicated by the 'P' for parking lot. Pets are not allowed into the zoo but can be kept temporarily in cages – indicated by 'H', for 'Hundeboxen'. In 1953, the fences between the compounds of the animals were barely detectable; by 1969, they have disappeared altogether. The barriers between humans and animals are also omitted: they seem to live in the same green space and have become friends. Something about the promise of human-animal encounters has now changed.



Figure 5. "Overviewplan", 1953. Source: Zoo Zurich Archives.

The map of 1969 provides a glimpse into a process of change that reaches full fruition by the end of the century, when a masterplan to re-design the Zurich Zoo is produced. In the 1960s, the scientific, systematic method of displaying animals was overwritten. The Zurich Zoo was by no means unique in portraying itself less as nature isolated against an urban backdrop, and increasingly more as a *terra incognita*, a no-man's land within a vast jungle or ocean. The idea of representing the 'whole [ecological] world' is now advanced.⁴

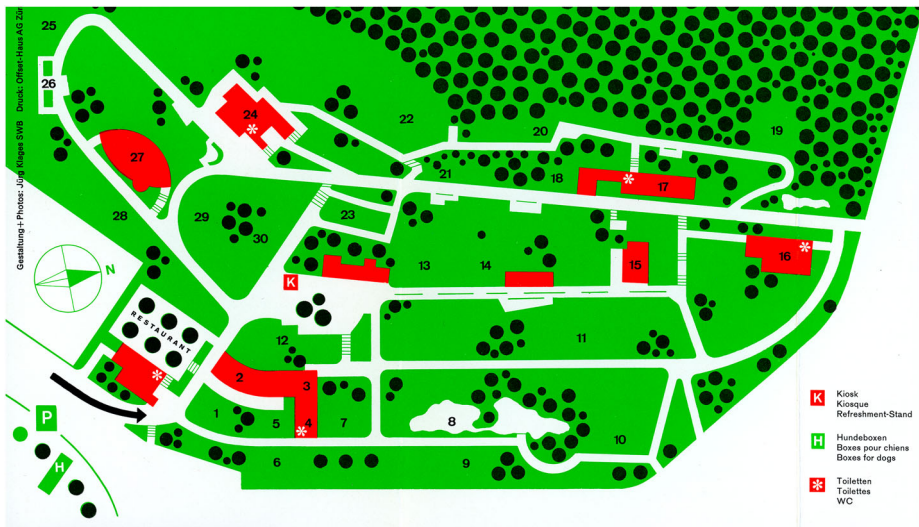


Figure 6. Zoo Zurich 1969. Source: Zürich Zoo Archives design & photos: Jürg Klages SWB, Druck: Offset-Haus AG Zürich.

The maps from the 2000s are crucial for modelling this vision of an encounter with a 'perfect' animal kingdom (Figures 7 and 8). Both maps present the Zoo's terrain from a bird's-eye perspective. One of them (from circa 2010, Figure 7) shows a relief-like structure into which animals are placed, the other (Figure 8) offers a sketch of a naturalistic landscape. Barriers and fences have disappeared, and animals appear to roam freely in various 'world regions', as if they had decided so out of their own will. The colours and the type of drawing on the map of 2000 (Figure 7) identify the continents, and elect certain bio-rich places such as the Masoala Rainforest in the northeast of Madagascar. Important national parks, some world rivers and major wetlands, such as Kaeng Krachang, Selenga and the Pantanal, are likewise mapped.

Great care has been taken in depicting the animals. The animals' contours are outlined carefully. They are perfectly recognisable, so lists of animals in separate legends are gone. Most importantly, the number of animals has much increased. On both maps, animals can sit on houses or stalls, and some of them even are placed outside of the map. Through the map, the zoo asserts its capacity to host animals from all over the world and protect all of them. At the same time, visitors might become aware that their own behaviour has come into spotlight. There is now a range of signals directed at the general public, providing information about facilities. Visitors are instructed where to park their cars, eat, shop, and how to return home: these are typical white urban signs, with which visitors are necessarily already familiar. Visual references to traffic signs clearly position the zoo as an urban institution, which takes care of humans and their needs with the same degree of mastery it exercises with animals.

3. The zoo as a heterotopia of shared space

All these maps that have been printed and distributed to visitors since 1929 constitute different visions for a shared but limited urban space. As we have seen, there are



Figure 7. Zoo Zurich Map, 2010. Source: Zürich Zoo Archives.

differences as to how the animals are presented, how the human presence is placed in space, and how ‘the world’ that animals and humans are expected to share is sketched. What kind of heterotopian flights from the city do these maps offer? What can we discover if we review them fast-forward?

In the founding years, the maps trained a systematic, ‘scientific’ gaze onto animals, creating an authoritative ‘order of things’. Over the decades, however, animals became increasingly individual entities, instantiating a different human-animal relation (Brighenti & Pavoni, 2018). Although these animals are not situated far away from civilisation – in fact, they live in a densely populated city that is Switzerland’s biggest – the zoo has seemingly come to provide a green haven for each of them. Such bio-abundance is, of course, largely an illusion. As the visitors enter the zoo and look for the animals, they soon realise how much patience is needed to spot them. Animals in the contemporary immersive zoo tend to live hidden in the furniture of their green compounds.

While humans are yet not visualised in the map, facilities such as restaurants, playgrounds, gift shops, and other service buildings are. Visitors are suggested to stroll around and spend as much time as possible on the premises. The zoological garden aims at providing an opportunity to spend a whole day absorbed in the experience, free to let one’s imagination fly in the context of a ‘natural’ landscape. Simultaneously, the number of signs directed to humans has increased and has replaced the legend that precisely listed and located animals. From teaching visitors how to look at animals, the zoo has moved to offer an immersive experience where human visitors are themselves projected as needing care and control.



Figure 8. Zoo Zurich 2018. Source: Personal archive Priska Gisler.

Most importantly, there has been an observable shift over the decades, from the scientific, 'objective' orientation towards animals from far away, to the biological accommodation of the 'whole world'. A 'zoogeographic system', designing a map like the page of an atlas, has gained reality in city zoos in the western world (Schaarschmidt, 2008; Schleich, 1996). The visual abolition of fences and cages also emphasises the discourse of a shared urban space for animals and humans. To be sure, cohabitation between animals and humans in a zoo is fictitious. Most of the time, animals are strictly kept in their enclosures, which humans are not allowed to enter. Discreet, but still physical barriers keep the animals in their own space.

4. Conclusions

Both, physical space and how a space is conceived and represented simultaneously affect human-animal interactions. Maps, in particular, contribute to stabilise knowledge and clarify the nature of the zoo as an urban institution. As I have tried to show by means of a genealogy of the Zurich zoo maps, heterotopias permeate our understanding of nature, our ecologies and social activities. A heterotopia is not limited to the 'other' space it designates: the heterotopian idea of a spaceship, of an oriental garden or a shopping mall, continues to persist even after one has left those spaces. It defines ways of travelling, gardening, shopping and so on.

In accord with Foucault's notion of the heterotopia, through its maps the Zurich zoo while located right in the middle of the city, appears far apart, somewhere out there, in the other space of 'nature'. In this case, the zoo is a space 'as perfect, as meticulous, as well-arranged as ours is disorganised, badly arranged, and muddled' (Foucault, 1998, p. 184). As 'models for' experience, maps contribute to the illusion of being able to share a 'whole world' with wild animals. By pointing out their obvious alterity – an exotic place of nature in contrast to the urban environment – zoo maps contribute to stabilising the idea of 'mute external contexts' (Bull et al., 2018) in which animals and humans are finally allowed to co-exist. But, as we also have seen, maps support a practice of guidance and control: they tell us about who is present, but remain silent about what is made absent. As a map user, the urban guest will remain unaware about the animals not selected by the institution, s/he will not be told about the complex geometry of zoo governance, nor about the geographic circulation of exotic animals between zoos and through wilderness and urban landscapes either ways.

With the help of a zoo map, the world can be displayed as one, as a common habitat that allows for the peaceful living-together of humans and non-human animals. In the process, the zoo provides a contrasting foil to the mess of big city life. The maps display a world in which boundaries have disappeared, where geographical regions seamlessly blend into each other, where urbanisation does not play a role, and where humans and animals know what to do and where they can roam safely. The map reminds us that social topoi are enacted and rehearsed, although they may be contradicted in practice.

By presenting animals from an array of world regions, the zoo is visibly juxtaposing 'several incompatible emplacements in one real place' (Foucault, 1998, p. 18). The illusion of an immersive 'whole world' of humans and animals lives on with the city dwellers after a visit. The zoo has indeed created for them an 'other space', a special heterotopia.

Notes

1. I came to this topic after a long-standing social and scientific engagement with human and non-human animal relations (via work on biomedical questions, the horseshoe crab, displaying and showing taxidermic specimens and so on). The idea for this article sprang from an ethnographic/artistic research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation called 'We are hibernating! A social-scientific and artistic enquiry of the human-animal relations in the Zoo', SNSF No. 137991. I should like to thank the sociologist Julia Siegmund and the artist and social anthropologist Luzia Hürzeler for participating in my archival research and helping with the reproduction of the maps, as well as for their commitment and our interesting intellectual exchanges, which went far beyond our collaboration in the project and

included advice while writing the present paper. Many thanks go to Chris Walton for his help and support with the translation and proofreading.

2. <https://www.zoo.ch/de/zoobesuch/anlagen/masoala-regenwald>, 30 November 2018.
3. To import wild animals into an urban context entails an elaborate practice in international trade relations. More notably, the import of exotic animals still follows a colonial logic of ordering and representing. Although Switzerland on a first sight seems unconnected to colonial practices (Purtschert, Lüthi, & Falk, 2012), a post-colonial logic is at play. For instance, the controversial Carl Hagenbeck has not only delivered Zurich Zoo with its first elephants, he has also provided zoos and cities all over Western Europe with human 'exhibits' (Rothfels, 2002, for Zurich, see Brändle, 2013). Animal trade between zoos is a continuing practice. It should also be recalled that Zurich Zoo is member of the WAZA, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. According to its website, WAZA promotes cooperation between member zoos, provides support for species conservation management and encourages its members to the highest standards, <https://www.waza.org/about-waza/>, 15 May 2019.
4. A similar idea is found for instance in the San Diego Zoo (<https://www.behance.net/gallery/8802517/San-Diego-Zoo-Safari-Park>), the Los Angeles Zoo (<https://www.lazoo.org/visit/zoomap/>), the Berlin Zoo (<https://www.zoo-berlin.de/de/besuch-planen/zoo-plan>), the Parc Zoologique de Paris (<https://www.parczoologiqueparis.fr/fr/preparer-sa-visite/les-parcours/plan-du-parc-2732>), the Aalborg Zoo in Denmark (<https://aalborgzoo.dk/frontpage.aspx>) and Ueno Zoological Gardens Tokyo Japan (<https://www.tokyo-zoo.net/english/ueno/>).

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