

## **Abstract**

This dissertation deals with research of the zoo as a social construct, which in its history and form represents the development of the relationship between society and nature, or man and animals. At the same time, it is a specific cultural landscape reflecting other changes in paradigms and needs in society. The current form of zoos has always reflected various economic, political, environmental and cultural aspects, or opinion and spatial changes of society. This work is a contribution to the discussion of the application of thematization typical of contemporary experience-oriented society. The aim of the thesis is to characterize the development of zoos and their current form in Europe, where this concept originated at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, and to discuss regional differences regarding the different geographical context of the post-socialist space. From the geographical point of view, this is a topic rarely addressed so far, both from a theoretical (the zoo as an example of the specific landscape) as well as a regional approach.

The first part provides a theoretical framework by means of a discussion of scientific literature and formulating the starting points of the research based on selected concepts and paradigms (social constructivism, the relationship between man and animals, concepts of cultural landscape, thematization, tourist attractiveness) key to the reflection of zoos and their forms, roles, and meanings in society in changing spatio-temporal contexts. Subsequently, the definition of 'zoo' is discussed, which is necessary for understanding the term as it is further worked with. Zoos are viewed as permanent exhibit facilities that keep and exhibit live animals. Animal collections were transformed into this public form as a result of changes in so-called Western society after the Great French Revolution and spread closely connected to urbanization processes mainly from the British Isles eastwards to continental Europe. Functions and typology of this social construct are also discussed. Furthermore, the research methods used (discussion of literature, analysis of several types of source documents, case study and field investigation) are explained in the context of the sub-objectives. This is followed by a part of the dissertation, which is neo-idiographically devoted to the discussion of the current development of the zoo concept with an emphasis on the spatio-temporal framework of driving forces and the identification of developmental milestones. At the same time, the development is also viewed from the tourism perspective and the relationship of the zoo to other tourist, or visitor attractions.

As a part of the reflection on the development of zoos, the co-evolutionary nature of changes and diversification of zoo types from the zoological garden as an almost exclusive type (form)

of zoo in the 19th century to a diverse system of many types of zoos in the 21st century is pointed out. It is also emphasized that in more than 200 years of its existence, the former institution of big cities has become an institution located often also in small settlements and in the countryside. Furthermore, the discussion of the literature shows that in the current form of the zoo concept there is a search for a balance between the growing conservation and educational mission with the need for financial self-sustainability, and therefore entertainment meanings and commercialization. For a long time, have also contained elements from other social constructs such as museums, botanical gardens, theatres, or theme parks. Zoos are a place for the protection of natural and cultural heritage and at the same time a place for thematization, especially with the help of geographic and biotope themes, which gradually replaced the typical taxonomic concept of the 19th century.

The next part of the dissertation is innovatively devoted to the reflection of the development of zoos in the post-socialist Central European area, which has been neglected in the literature until now, specifically illustrated by the example of Czechia. For the most part, the diffuse spread of zoos in the 19th century did not reach the region, so this area offers a valuable comparison of the traditional interpretation of the development of the zoo concept in a different geographical setting. The different timing had, among other things, an effect on the different location and size of the zoo. At the same time, research has shown that although the development of zoos in Czechia took place with a certain delay and partly with the help of other driving forces, the current form of the concept in Czechia and Western European countries has become very similar in recent decades.

Thanks to this, the research carried out expanded the existing geographical knowledge, and can be perceived as the first comprehensive work providing insight into the presented issue, at least in Czechia. The work proves that although everyone (approximately) understands the term zoo, this socially constructed concept takes on many forms, types, and meanings, which, moreover, change in time and space as society changes. Understanding the evolution of human perception of animals and how that perception has influenced the organization of zoos can provide clues as to where the social constructs under investigation may be headed.