

# Lobbying for Captivity: Discourse and the Legitimisation of Zoos and Aquaria

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**Abstract:** The present paper attempts to analyse the discourse of three lobbies representing the zoo and aquaria sector: The Iberian, the European and the worldwide zoo and aquaria associations. The objective of this study is to understand whether their discourse is speciesist, and how the use of language justifies the captivity of non-human animals, as well as to compare the discourses. The analysis has been conducted from a non-speciesist and non-anthropocentric perspective in an attempt to challenge the discursive strategies which legitimise the captivity of non-human animals. The methodological perspective applied is critical discourse analysis, focused on language as the source of power. As a result, the study reveals that the analysed discourse is highly speciesist and anthropocentric. The associations justify the captivity of non-human animals through their involvement in conservation programmes, and the supposed educational and research value of zoos and aquaria, while their discursive strategies only present minor differences.

**Keywords:** Zoos, aquaria, speciesism, anthropocentrism, discourse, lobby, interest groups, lobbying, critical discourse analysis, conservation.

**Type of project:** Research report

## Contents

1.	Introduction, objectives and topic presentation.....	3
1.1.	Introduction and objectives.....	3
1.2.	Topic presentation.....	4
2.	Theoretical framework.....	6
2.1.	Critical Animal and Media Studies.....	6
2.2.	Overview of interest groups.....	6
2.3.	Sentience in non-human animals.....	8
2.4.	Theoretical overview of speciesism and anthropocentrism.....	9
2.5.	Speciesist and anthropocentric discourse.....	10
2.6.	Discourse and representation of non-human animals in zoos.....	13
3.	Methodology.....	15
3.1.	Methodological perspective.....	15
3.2.	Instruments of analysis.....	16
3.3.	About the case of study.....	17
3.3.1.	Text selection and datasheet.....	17
3.3.2.	Limitations.....	18
4.	Findings.....	19
4.1.	Asociación Ibérica de Zoos y Acuarios.....	19
4.1.1.	Website.....	19
4.1.2.	Guide.....	20
4.2.	European Association of Zoos and Aquaria.....	27
4.2.1.	Website.....	27
4.2.2.	Guide: Standards for Accommodation and Care.....	29
4.2.3.	Guide: Strategic Plan 2017-2020.....	31
4.3.	World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.....	34
4.3.1.	Website.....	34
4.3.2.	Guide: Committing to Conservation.....	36
5.	Conclusions.....	47
5.1.	Speciesist discourse.....	48
5.2.	Justification of captivity.....	49
5.3.	Differences between the discourses.....	50
6.	Reference list.....	52

## 1. Introduction, objectives and topic presentation

### 1.1. Introduction and objectives

The purpose of this research is to analyse the discourse of three important interest groups lobbying in favour of zoos and aquaria: The Iberian Zoo and Aquaria Association (AIZA), the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), and their global counterpart, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). I have chosen the first as it represents my local context of Spain and Portugal, and the two remaining associations uniting zoos and aquaria in Europe and globally as they are the two most influential associations above the AIZA. All three associations explicitly recognise “influencing relevant legislation” (EAZA, n.d.), “campaigning and lobbying for conservation” (WAZA, n.d.) or “collaborating with public administration” (AIZA, n.d.) as their mission. These interest groups are the most powerful lobbies which shape the overall discourse on zoos and aquaria in the Iberian Peninsula and at a global level.

The problem identified as the main focus of my study is the highly and deliberately misleading language used by the three analysed interest groups aimed at creating a positive image of zoos and aquaria, despite significant criticism and substantial evidence against the captivity of non-human animals. Numerous studies have shown that non-human animals are sentient beings, able to experience pain and suffering (Allen & Bekoff, 1997; Bekoff, 2007; Bekoff & Pierce, 2009; Dawkins, 1980), therefore, from an antispeciesist and non-anthropocentric perspective which I have adapted, it is extremely unethical to deprive them of their freedom for human benefits such as entertainment and financial profit.

Several studies have also challenged the speciesist language, discriminatory towards non-human animals, which is used by the media and various industries, however there is considerably less research available on the discourse affecting the perception of zoological gardens and marine mammal parks, and even fewer studies focus on the links between zoos and interest groups with their persuasive communication. Therefore, my research is an opportunity to expand the existing analysis with a new and extremely relevant perspective.

The discourse employed by the three interest groups is highly influential among the public opinion and in the media, and their lobbying with institutions and administration is extremely successful. Therefore, I believe that there is an urgent need of analysing their discourse from an antispeciesist and non-anthropocentric perspective in order to challenge the oppression suffered by the captive non-human animals. This analysis could be an important step in order to create more awareness of ethical issues surrounding zoos.

The research questions which my study will attempt to answer are the following:

1. Do these three interest groups employ speciesist discourse in their communication output?
2. How do they justify the captivity of the non-human animals?
3. Are there any differences in the discourse employed by these lobbies?

I will start with providing the theoretical framework for my approach. First, I will describe the field which influenced it, namely Critical Animal and Media Studies, and further on I will attempt to explain the nature and function of interest groups, since zoological gardens and aquaria are directly involved in lobbying through influencing the public opinion, the media and policy makers. The following section will review the literature available on non-human animal sentience, as well as the representation of animals in zoological gardens. In this section I will discuss the literature on the discourse of several industries which exploit other animals for the benefit of humans, including the discourse of zoos and marine mammal parks. The main body of my research will be the analysis of the discourse of AIZA, EAZA and WAZA, followed by the conclusions.

## 1.2. Topic presentation

Zoological gardens and aquaria are one of the multiple surviving examples of colonial exploitation of virtually the whole world at the hands of several European empires. In the past, and mainly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both the humans and the non-human animals were legally subject to slavery and transported from the countries of their origin to the distant European capitals to be shown to the mostly upper-class public as a token of power and richness (DeMello, 2012b). Authors such as Malamud (1998) stress the crucial historical link between colonialism and zoological gardens which has endured until today. In his words, “the zoo's exercise of control and oppression, and insistence on the distant, subjugated subject as other, sustain an imperial hegemony” (p. 58). Malamud analyses zoos as texts in which zoogoers are the “paramount masters of all they survey” and the captive animals are the “subalterns” (p. 58). He compares zoos to colonial literature as both tend to appropriate and sell the “native experience” while simultaneously “contextualizing and distorting that experience with the inherent biases of the imperial culture” (p. 58).

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw some important changes such as the opening of zoos to a wider public or changes in the conditions of confinement. The enclosures in many zoos were altered in order to allow an unimpeded view for visitors. DeMello (2012b) observes that these changes were introduced “to make visitors happier—indeed, studies show that visitors do not like seeing animals behind bars because it reduces their own viewing pleasure” (p. 105). This change was also meant to enable zoos to compete with new forms of entertainment, while it also limited the animals' movements even more, since they had to live within viewing distance of the visiting humans (DeMello, 2012b). Additionally, according to DeMello (2012b), making the enclosures more naturalistic, resembling the natural habitat of the captive non-human animals, means that “visitors will feel satisfied with the treatment of the animals and thus feel that the captivity of animals in zoos is morally acceptable” (p. 105). Therefore, these new conditions provided a partial justification of their confinement.

Since the disintegration of the empires the main purpose of zoos has shifted from imperialist propaganda to a lucrative business. In the 1970s the public awareness of nature and species conservation started forcing zoos and aquaria to shift their marketing strategies from openly providing entertainment to showing them as educational and involved in the conservation of endangered species and research (Marino et al., 2010). However, this conservationist rhetoric ignores the involvement of the zoo industry in the destruction of the natural habitat of the non-human animals, which is the main reason for the threat of their extinction (DeMello, 2012b). Moreover, as it is argued in a text handed in by the ZOOXXI initiative in Barcelona to the local town hall, the preservation argument sustained by the zoos and aquaria is used mainly for propagandistic reasons, as, for instance, only one species out of more than three hundred living in the Barcelona zoo participate in the re-introduction programme (ZOOXXI, n.d., p. 3).

While in the past zoos used to commission hunters to capture free-roaming non-human animals which were later transported to the establishments, currently they still trade in individuals for breeding purposes or when their number cannot be managed by the zoo (DeMello, 2012b). Frequently zoos euthanise their ‘surplus’ animals, or sell them to private collections, exotic meat farms or canned hunting operations (DeMello, 2012b). Some animals such as pandas, elephants or orcas are considered more prestigious than others (DeMello, 2012b), and therefore they are especially sought by zoos and marine mammal parks, despite insufficient living conditions for these mammals.

Most importantly however, numerous studies highlight the serious health hazards for the captive non-human animals. For instance, Almiron (2017b) enumerates those suffered by orcas in marine mammal parks: respiratory infections, dental problems, sunburns, retinal damage, etc. Orcas also display unnatural behaviour including aggressiveness towards other members of their species or human trainers, which is related to their captivity, boredom and stress. Moreover, several reports by the ZOOXXI initiative condemn the insufficient infrastructure and living conditions of three species confined in the Barcelona zoo (ZOOXXI, 2015 & 2017). Malamud (1998) does not hesitate to describe the zoo as “a locus of pain”, which is mostly concealed from the visitors and happening “behind the scenes” (p. 179).

Therefore, bearing in mind the evidence of the harmfulness of captivity and the highly overrated impact of zoos and marine mammal parks on the conservation of species, it could come as a surprise that these venues enjoy such wide popularity. Many authors draw our attention to the lucrateness of the zoo business and analyse it in terms of capitalism and hegemony, as well as the discourse which legitimises the captivity. Nibert (2002) claims that the oppression of both humans and non-humans has increased significantly since the development of modern capitalism. As Malamud (1998) frames it, “the representations of animals in zoos and zoo stories are indebted to the machinations of capitalism and the agenda of capitalist hegemony” (p. 11). The commercial character of these establishments is often concealed behind a discourse which revolves around the educational and species conservation function of these establishments (Marino et al., 2010). What this discourse deliberately omits is the

suffering of the millions of animals deprived of their freedom for human entertainment in thousands of zoos and aquaria around the world.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Critical Animal and Media Studies

The theoretical perspective which I have adapted for my project is the field of critical animal and media studies (CAMS), a cross-disciplinary field which examines critically the oppression suffered by non-human animals at the hands of humans, with special attention paid to media coverage. Therefore, CAMS is a discipline which combines critical animal studies (CAS) and critical media studies.

Among the most important works in the field of animal ethics, one of the main inspirations for CAS, is Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1990/1975), representing a utilitarian view on the oppression of non-human animals. Another notable example is Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* (2004/1983), which provides the theoretical background for the rights view in animal ethics. Yet another important contribution to the field of animal ethics, is Richard D. Ryder's coinage of the term 'speciesism' (1970), which I will discuss in more details in another section.

CAS derives from animal studies (AS), which in itself draws from the field of animal ethics. As Almiron and Cole point out, the main deficit of AS, considered by them a more "mainstream" approach, is that "in some respects [it] reproduces and legitimates the oppression of other animals insofar as it is not explicitly rooted in vegan anti-speciesist praxis" (Almiron & Cole, 2016; p. 3), as CAS does by openly challenging the oppression and the political economy behind it. What they also note is that CAS is mostly focused on the non-human animals which are directly oppressed by the humans: the farmed and captive ones, which, as they claim, are the "most neglected in scholarly research" (p. 3), as opposed to the free-roaming other animals.

Critical media studies (CMS) and CAS share the "critique of capitalism and of intra-human oppressions", however CMS "tended to retain an anthropocentric standpoint" (Almiron & Cole; p. 2). Important authors who have influenced the field, such as Hall (1982), Murdock and Golding (1973), Herman and Chomsky (1988), all note that the media play a crucial role in the manufacturing of consent for oppressive social practice. As a result of the convergence of CAS and CMS, critical animal and media studies retains the focus on the political economy and cultural studies, as well as the critique of capitalism, while challenging anthropocentrism and speciesism.

### 2.2. Overview of interest groups

There are multiple interest groups involved in the process of lobbying in favour of industries that involve the exploitation of non-human animals in zoos and aquaria. Among those we can find several associations uniting zoological gardens and aquaria, such as the Asociación Ibérica de Zoos y Acuarios (AIZA), which represents zoos and

aquaria from Spain and Portugal. At the European level, the most important group is the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), while the global group is the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). In order to understand their importance, it is indispensable to define interest groups and the process of influencing public policies by these groups.

The policy-making process by a government should, in theory, favour the public interest. However, powerful pressure groups are often involved in the development of the process and tend to affect its outcome. These groups are defined as 'interest groups' which attempt to influence public policies responding to a certain private interest. Their action of exerting pressure on the public administration is called 'lobbying', and interest groups themselves are frequently referred to as 'lobbies'. In this section I will briefly explain the nature and functions of these groups, since they are extremely relevant when discussing the oppression of non-human animals at the hands of humans, as in the case of zoological gardens and aquaria, strongly supported by powerful lobbies.

Thomas (2004) provides a “useful” definition of an interest group as follows:

An interest group is an association of individuals or organizations or a public or private institution that, on the basis of one or more shared concerns, attempts to influence public policy in its favour. (p. 4)

Additionally, as Karr (2006) frames it, an interest group “functions as intermediary between its members and the state and vice versa” (p. 56). Interest groups can have different organisational structures and different goals. They can be constituted as, for instance, associations, foundations, institutes or research centres, some of which are also called 'think tanks', a term that defines “organizations involved in the political process through knowledge production” (Almiron, 2017a, p. 4350). The scope of interest of lobbies is also very diverse: There are some which represent industries, religious groups or a social cause. Moreover, some interest groups are profit-oriented while others do not pursue financial gains.

There are various theoretical approaches which define and classify interest groups especially according to their goals and impact. Perhaps the most conservative and extended one is pluralism (Thomas, 2004), which upholds the plurality of views among the interest groups. According to Foley (1991), this perspective distinguishes “a vast profusion of group interests represented and embodied by political groups, none of which has the power to prevail over the rest” (p. 87). Almiron (2017a) adds that the interests “may not have the same resources and goals, but there is ultimately a pluralist representation of views” (p. 4352). This perspective accepts the “giant concentrations of power as inevitable” (Thomas, 2004; p. 41). According to the pluralist view “groups become the means by which individuals gain access to the political system” (p. 41). However, this view has often been criticised for being “too uncritically descriptive and too optimistic in assuming some kind of fair contest among protagonists” (p. 42). Most critics highlight the fact that the power to influence political decisions is not evenly distributed among the different interest groups.

Contrary to this widely contested approach, there is also the more critical elitist

view (Thomas, 2004) which “stresses that interest groups are neither disinterested actors devoted to the progress of knowledge nor competing equally in shaping public policies” (Almiron, 2017a; p. 4352). This view sustains that interest groups “should be analyzed as tools of capitalist ruling class power” (p. 4352), while also agreeing with pluralists “in rejecting the concept of a single power-elite in control of the important issues” (Thomas, 2004; p. 47).

Other common approaches include the neo-Marxist view (Thomas, 2004), stressing the class struggle as the main factor to consider when analysing interest groups, while the institutionalist and the political economy perspectives do not consider interest groups as entirely negative or centred on gaining political power (Thomas, 2004). Out of these perspectives, arguably the elitist view is the one which depicts the nature of interest groups most accurately. While some successful lobbies are truly non-profit oriented and advocate changes for the well-being of oppressed groups, their impact is often limited by the lack of resources, compared to lobbies which represent, for instance, an industry.

Jordi Xifra (1998) identifies several different types of lobbying, for example according to the strategy used. Direct lobbying involves working directly with public institutions, while indirect or grassroots lobbying is carried out by influencing the public opinion through different communication methods (Xifra, 1998). Xifra also classifies lobbying according to the subject initiating the process: Integrated lobbying is exercised by a company, while independent or professional lobbying involves specialised third party lobbies representing the interests of a company or group. We can also distinguish between lobbying by a single multinational or national company, or by a large group, federation or confederation. As Xifra distinguishes, lobbying can also be addressed either to the legislative power or the executive power (Xifra, 1998).

### 2.3. Sentience in non-human animals

In 2008, Alicia, an adult elephant and matriarch to her companion Susi, was euthanised in the Barcelona zoo due to long-lasting and severe gastric problems caused by the ingestion of toxic items, including toys and a pennant used to mark her territory. To make matters worse for Susi, she witnessed her companion’s death and the cutting to pieces of her body. After losing the matriarch, Susi started showing signs of extreme distress and depression, and it became clear to the Barcelona zoo that Susi’s life is in danger (FAADA, 2010). However, despite several campaigns in favour of moving Susi to an animal sanctuary, the Barcelona zoo decided to import another elephant, Yoyo, to keep Susi company, ignoring the voices of animal rights groups such as FAADA (2009) and ZOOXXI (2017b), which warned about the psychological risks for both elephants. Scientific research conducted on elephant longevity has proven that individuals in captivity live much shorter lives than in their natural habitat, especially due to “stress” and “obesity” (Clubb et al., 2008). Thus, the Barcelona zoo, backed by the local government, prioritised its financial interests and its image over the interests of the two elephants, since displaying elephants is considered a source of prestige for zoos

(DeMello, 2012b).

The story of Susi, Alicia and Yoyo shows what has been scientifically proven multiple times: That non-human animals are sentient beings. The question of sentience of non-human animals has been discussed throughout the history of humankind. As early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham famously centred the debate on moral rights of non-human animals on sentience, by stating that “the question is not can they *reason*, nor can they *talk*, but can they *suffer*?” (Bentham, 1781/2007). Following numerous studies and solid research, their sentience is now widely recognised by the scientific community and the academia (Allen & Bekoff, 1997; Bekoff, 2007; Bekoff & Pierce, 2009; Dawkins, 1980).

Moreover, scientists such as Bekoff (2007) discuss ethical behaviour and morality in non-human animals, which have been proven in several experiments involving different species. He describes several situations in which other animals such as elephants, grizzly bears, rhesus monkeys, mice, lions or dolphins have displayed moral values, such as care for a weaker or injured individual, or antipredatory behaviour. As he claims, there are abundant examples of empathy, sense of humour, self-awareness and morality in some non-human animals (p. 13).

Emotions tend to be divided into two categories: the primary, which “require no conscious thought” (Bekoff, 2007; p. 7), and secondary, which are “not automatic” but “processed in the brain” (p. 8). The former “include Darwin’s six universal emotions: fear, anger, disgust, surprise, sadness, and happiness” (p. 7), and the latter “could involve core emotions of fear and anger, or they could be more nuanced, involving such things as regret, longing, or jealousy” (p. 8). Bekoff states that scientists “now agree on the universality of the primary emotions based on studies that show that humans and animals share similar chemical and neurobiological systems”. They also recognise that “scientific data and numerous stories indicate that animals feel a wealth of secondary emotions as well” (p. 10).

Finally, an important step towards the recognition of sentience in non-human animals was the Cambridge Declaration of Consciousness (2012), signed by renowned scientists representing several different fields. As they declare, “the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness. Non-human animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates”.

#### 2.4. Theoretical overview of speciesism and anthropocentrism

As many authors have argued, sentience needs to be recognised as the most important criterion in the evaluation of moral consideration. Nonetheless, as Bekoff reminds us, still “human interests almost always trump animal interests” (Bekoff, 2007; p. 21). Non-human animals are exploited by humans for food, entertainment, clothing, experimentation, and numerous other purposes. Therefore, provided that animals can feel pain, they are exposed to immense suffering, which is taken for granted due to the prevalent speciesist and anthropocentric worldview.

Dunayer (2004) defines speciesism as “a failure, in addition or practice, to accord nonhuman being equal consideration and respect” as humans (p. 5). While some authors such as Horta (2013) consider speciesism a bias or discrimination, others, as Nibert (2002) prefer to label it as an ideology. According to the latter, speciesism is a set of beliefs assumed by most humans as true, which enable the human exploitation of other species. As other dominant ideologies, it is concealed and not considered an ideology, as it naturalises and legitimises the beliefs and prejudices which stem from it. Nibert disagrees with the view of speciesism as a prejudice, since it takes for granted “the social structural causes of oppression of other animals” (p. 7). According to him, by considering speciesism as a prejudice, we are losing sight of the structural and systemic grounds which facilitate the discrimination. An exploitative dominant ideology provides justification for the exploitation while remaining concealed and largely unchallenged. Finally, Dunayer (2004) seems to agree with both authors by considering speciesism as “both an attitude and a form of oppression” (p. 5).

Another worldview which creates consent for the oppression of non-human animals is anthropocentrism, defined by Horta (2013) as “the idea that human interests are morally weightier than those of nonhuman animals” (p. 2). Horta also distinguishes two types of anthropocentric views: the simple, which only recognises human moral considerability; and the combined one, which recognises that non-humans have interests, however still gives priority to human interests. As he claims, “according to simple anthropocentric views, any use of nonhumans will be acceptable, while on the combined anthropocentric view this may or may not be true, depending on the other premises it accepts” (p. 2). Therefore, both anthropocentrism and speciesism enable human exploitation of other animals, as their moral status is either not taken into account or considered less important than the moral status of humans.

## 2.5. Speciesist and anthropocentric discourse

There are several authors who analyse speciesist and anthropocentric discourse, either in the media or in the communication of animal product industries. Singer (1990/1975) is one of the scholars who first paid attention to the language which conceals the oppression of non-human animals. He uses the word 'meat' as a clear example of this linguistic strategy: “The very words we use conceal its origin, we eat beef, not bull... and pork, not pig” (p. 95). Stibbe (2001) also analyses the influence of language on the social construction of animals, looking especially at the meat industry. One of the main problems he identifies in the oppression suffered by the non-human animals is that they are not “participants in their own social construction through language” (p. 146). As he claims, “the external discourses of animal product industries contain hidden ideological assumptions that make animal oppression seem inevitable, natural, and benign” (p. 158). As a result, the representation of animals in mainstream culture is not only as entirely different beings but also as inferior to humans. Stibbe provides a list of expressions which mirror how language shapes our perception of animals, out of which only those related to birds and insects show a more positive attitude. He argues that

“The closer the relation of dominance of a particular species by humans, the more negative the stereotypes contained in the idioms of mainstream discourse” (p. 150).

Another linguistic strategy often employed when reference is made to animals, is using “mass nouns instead of count nouns”, which “removes the individuality of the animals” (Stibbe, 2001; p. 151). Stibbe also analyses the use of personal pronouns such as 'we', 'our' or 'they', in order to explain the mechanism of differentiation between humans and other animals. He argues that the use of the pronoun 'it' “objectifies” non-human animals (p. 151). As a conclusion to his research, Stibbe summarises the discursive strategies used by the animal product industries as follows:

The external discourse of animal product industries contains hidden ideological assumptions that make animal oppression seem “inevitable, natural and benign.” The internal discourses encourage pain and suffering to be disregarded for the sake of profit. (Stibbe, 2001; p. 158)

In a later work, *Animals Erased: Discourse, Ecology and Reconnection with the Natural World* (2012), Stibbe provides a more complete critique of the speciesist discourse which legitimises the oppression of non-human animals. The second chapter is an analysis of the pig industry discourse, and the third one looks at the media discourse concerning the foot-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom in 2001. The language used to describe the mass slaughter of animals infected with the virus distances the reader from the affected animal. The choice of individual words or the passivated verbs influence the reception of the news, which could be considered disturbing by the public opinion otherwise. Apart from analysing the discourse, Stibbe also proposes alternative discourses to counter the speciesist language used by the animal product industries (p. 58).

Carol Adams (2016) explores the parallels between speciesism and misogyny, as well as the crucial link between meat eating and hegemonic masculinity. In her research, she analyses press articles and advertisements from an antispeciesist and gender perspective, paying special attention to images and language. The findings can be resumed in the three discursive strategies which perpetuate both speciesism and misogyny. One of them is the absent referent: the living being exploited by humans is substituted with an object, such as a food item, in the case of farmed animals. This in turn leads to objectification, and fragmentation: the consumed non-human animals and women are both reduced to body parts. In some advertisements, Adams found that farmed animals were as sexualised as women and portrayed as desiring the consumption. Therefore, she concludes that such strategies result in “the intersecting oppressions of gender, race, and species” (p. 70).

Dunayer (2004) devotes the preface of her book *Speciesism* to speciesist language, which begins with a statement that “words have political effect” as “they can foster oppression or liberation, prejudice or respect” (p. xi). She draws a parallel between the different types of oppression: “Just as sexist language denigrates or discounts females, speciesist language denigrates or discounts nonhumans; it legitimizes their abuse” (p. xi). Apart from the use of mass nouns, frequently employed by the

industries and groups which exploit non-human animals in order to remove individuality and create detachment, Dunayer points out to the use of categories which classify non-human animals according to their function from a human perspective. Thus, some individuals are referred to as “lab animals”, while those which are hunted are called “game animals” (p. xiii). Such categories are assigned by the victimisers who exploit them, rather than being an inherent characteristic of the individuals. Moreover, to oppose speciesist discourse, Dunayer suggests avoiding such terms as ‘livestock’ or ‘wildlife conservation’, as non-human individuals are not stock or a resource to be conserved (p. xiii). Finally, she resumes the important role of language in the social construction of oppression as follows: “The way we speak about other animals is inseparable from the way we treat them. Along with our actions, our words must accord them full consideration and respect” (p. xiii).

In *Animals and Science* DeMello (2012a) describes what she calls the “social construction of lab animals” (p. 180) through a range of linguistic strategies such as de-individualisation, or de-animalisation. For example, the animals used for experimentation purposes are referred to as “models” instead of “animals” (p. 180). They are also de-individualised through the use of numbers instead of names, and de-specified when they are used as a mere “human simulacrum” in tests (p. 182). DeMello also mentions a writing technique called “objective detachment”, which uses a specific scientific vocabulary in order to “to create a distance between animal and researcher” (p. 182). For example, the individuals used in experiments are “sacrificed” and not killed, and they suffer a “hemorrhage” instead of bleeding (p. 182). DeMello notices other strategies such as passive voice, which converts the non-human animal into the “absent referent in scientific writing” (p. 182). These discursive practices are summarised as follows:

They do not act, choose, or play a role in what happens to them. They are acted upon. In short, in the language of science, animals are objects—and never subjects—of their own lives (p. 182).

Similarly, Freeman (2009) analyses 106 news stories on farmed animals from several media outlets in the United States to reveal, among other things, “the role of language in oppression” (p. 4). Her conclusions show that the media mostly show concern for the consumers and the businesses, ignoring the animal welfare or rights perspectives:

Findings reveal that the majority of the news stories in the sample (approximately 90%) tend to reinforce speciesism by objectifying farmed animals. Objectification was found to be a result of three discursive methods by the news media: (1) talking about farmed animals as commodities; (2) failing to critique the ethics of the situation from the animal’s perspective and ignoring emotional issues they face; and (3) denying farmed animals individual identities. (p. 18)

As she notices, references to farmed animals in the analysed media included mainly

such words as “livestock, beef cattle, pork, dairy cows, veal, calves, poultry, or seafood, instead of more essential references to them as living beings, such as cow, pig, bird, or fish” (p. 19), which contributes to the above discussed de-individualisation and de-specification.

Further on, Freeman (2009) analyses the language employed by the media during the mad cow disease and the foot-and-mouth disease, and her findings show that the media mostly focused on the economic losses of farmers and businesses instead of the avoidable deaths of the non-human animals. Freeman also notes that the language “often neutralizes or trivializes farmed animal deaths” while “overlooking farmed animal emotions” (p. 21). In most news stories “word choices tend to neutralize any sense of injustice, compassion or mourning for the animal victims of mass slaughter” (p. 21). Freeman provides several examples of these word choices, such as the personification of the ‘poultry’ industry, with a simultaneous objectification of the exploited chickens. The trivialisation is achieved through the use of puns, which “put a light-hearted frame on disease stories that deserve a more serious tone” (p. 22).

Freeman (2009) notes that most news stories about vegetarianism focus on health benefits rather than an ethical choice in favour of the exploited non-human animals. She states that “because the news media frame these stories around product quality and not animal welfare, it implicitly encourages consumers to make product choices based on self-interest instead of ethical values” (p. 20). What is also pointed out is the use of adjectives to describe taste or texture of the animal’s flesh, while adjectives are not applied when referring to live farmed animals (p. 25). Farmed animals are also “denied individual identities” through the use of the pronoun “it” instead of personal pronouns (p. 24). Freeman concludes that “news discourse keeps the public comfortably detached from the unpleasant reality of modern farming methods and its negative effects on the animals themselves” (p. 31). In addition, she adds that the media discourse does not question the status quo, namely the “anthropocentric worldview” (p. 32).

## 2.6. Discourse and representation of non-human animals in zoos

Several scholars have also particularly challenged the anthropocentric and speciesist vision of zoos and aquaria, which completely disregards the suffering of the enslaved animals. Among them is Randy Malamud, whose *Reading zoos: Representation of Animals and Captivity* (1998) starts with a critique of zoos as remnants of European colonialism. Further on, Malamud looks at the action of spectatorship and how it affects both the human spectators and the captive animals. In the fifth chapter, titled *Spectatorship*, he explicitly links the zoo-goers action of watching the caged animals to voyeurism. This link is also explored in a later work, *An Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture* (2012), in which Malamud categorically rejects the authenticity of the zoo experience:

The zoo experience is voyeuristic, imperialistic, inauthentic, and steeped in the ethos of consumer culture, which is antithetical to nature and ecology, and hence

a danger to animals. The animals do not belong there. They cannot possibly be happy there, which negates the possibility that a zoo visit can be an educational experience (the *raison d'être* advanced today by zookeepers to justify the existence of zoos). Zoos contain sad animals, constrained animals, displaced animals, but zoo spectators are induced to sublimate this, and pretend they are looking at real animals. (p. 115)

Similarly, DeMello (2012b) questions the authenticity of the forced encounters between humans and other animals in zoos and aquaria. According to her, “zoos offer visitors a chance to escape the city and journey into “nature” yet there is nothing natural about keeping penguins, tigers, or elephants in a city zoo” (p. 111). Therefore, as she claims, zoos disappoint, as there is no “connection” between the visitors and the caged other animals (p. 112), whose behaviour is not natural but typical for captivity.

Lori Marino et al. (2010) have also questioned the supposed educational value of zoos and aquaria by examining the change of attitude in visitors in the United States. They critically evaluate a widely cited 2007 report conducted by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, which confirms an attitude change in zoo and aquaria visitors (Falk et al., 2007). They find the results of the report “potentially suspect” (p. 132) mainly due to a flawed methodology, which largely conditioned the interviewees. As the authors conclude, “there remains no compelling evidence for the claim that zoos and aquariums promote attitude change, education, or interest in conservation in visitors” (p. 126).

Zoos and aquaria frequently employ conservationist rhetoric to justify their existence and to conceal their economic interests, however authors such as DeMello (2012b) dismiss this discourse by pointing out that actually “less than 10 percent of zoos and marine parks are involved in conservation programs” (p. 108), and “the majority of animals in zoos are not even endangered” (p. 106). DeMello reminds us that zoos and aquaria are not able to provide care for the immense majority of non-human animals, which are threatened mainly by habitat loss and pollution: “Even habitat conservation and reintroduction programs can do only so much when thousand acres of rain forest are being paved over or burned every day” (p. 106).

In her analysis of captive orcas in marine mammal parks, Almiron (2017b) draws our attention to “the ideological conditioning that marine zoos have consistently created to obtain social rationalization and legitimization for their actions” (p. 62). The analysis of SeaWorld’s 2014 annual accounts shows this discursive conditioning in practice:

It is revealing that the word *captivity* did not appear one single time [...], while *care*—referring to the animals forced to live in its three parks— appeared up to 32 times. Thus, rather than having orcas in captivity, SeaWorld refers to this as having orcas under *human care*, a blatant display of how marketing and advertising have redefined concepts by using language as a tool for masking reality. (p. 63)

Instead, words such as “*endangered species, conservation, rescue, rehabilitation, love, respect, and care*” dominate in the discourse of several websites of marine mammal parks and their research centres (Almiron, 2017b). The language of care was also employed by the industry after the public outrage following the documentary *Blackfish* (Cowperthwaite, 2013). As Almiron (2017b) notes, SeaWorld first reacted angrily and attacked the documentary as “propaganda” and “lies”, however, they later joined the public opinion by launching campaigns with a “we also care” message (p. 65).

Finally, Almiron (2017b) argues that zoos and marine mammal parks “mask entertainment behind a veil of education and scientific research” (p. 62) while also performing “invasive research projects aimed at furthering knowledge about marine animals mostly for human interests” (p. 64). The final conclusion is that “the message sent out by zoos of any kind is that captivity is normal, concealing the fact that forced confinement is cruel and forced exhibition simple slavery” (p. 66).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Methodological perspective

The critical perspective which I will use for this study is critical discourse analysis (CDA). The choice of this theoretical approach is owing to its commitment to unravelling and challenging the underlying structures of power and the implicit systemic inequalities, such as, for example, the ideological oppression of non-human animals. It is frequently used to analyse and de-construct racist and sexist discourse, however, as Singer (1990) argues, “the fundamental objections to racism and sexism... apply equally to speciesism” (p. 6).

According to Fairclough (1995), discourse is the “use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis is analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice” (p. 7). Furthermore, Wodak (Wodak & Meyer, 2001) phrases the definition of critical discourse analysis as follows:

CDA may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequalities as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimised and so on by language use (or in discourse)” (p. 2)

Therefore, the primary concern of CDA is the emancipation of any oppressed group, where oppression is legitimised by discourse, defined by powerful groups such as governments, lobbies, the media or transnational organisations. In the case of speciesist discourse, it is mainly defined and promoted by powerful interest groups representing the animal product industries. Moreover, CDA focuses on problems which are “needed in order to sustain” the social order (Wodak & Meyer, 2001; p. 126), as in the case of the subordination of non-human animals, which could be considered one of the pillars

of the current social and economic order.

Some of the main approaches to critical discourse analysis include the social actors approach (Van Leeuwen, 1996), which is concerned with the representation of actions and how these actions mirror social structure. Another approach is the dialectical-relational approach (Fairclough, 1995), focused on the linguistic manifestations of social conflict. Other common approaches are the sociocognitive approach (Van Dijk, 2008), and the discourse-historical approach (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

Another reason for the choice of CDA as the method for my research is its concern with ideology as the primary motor behind the different discursive strategies, for instance, in politics or in the media. According to Fairclough (1995), ideology is not only a synonym of ‘worldview’ but a “means through which social relations of power are reproduced” (p. 17). As he explains, “naturalized implicit propositions of an ideological character are pervasive in discourse, contributing to the positioning of people as social subjects” (p. 23). Following Nibert (2016), I will consider speciesism an ideology which enables the exploitation of non-humans at the hands of humans.

Finally, Stibbe (2010) emphasises the importance of critical discourse analysis in challenging speciesism in the following words:

Underlying the activity of critical discourse analysis is the hope of change — that if discourses construct society along inhumane or unsustainable lines, then it might be possible to discover and promote discourses that encourage more harmonious relations with animals and the natural world (p. 4).

As he concludes, “discourses have the power to erase animals or work against the forces of erasure” (p. 4). Hence, CDA is arguably the most convenient perspective in order to reveal and challenge the ideology which perpetuates the discrimination and unequal power relations between humans and non-humans, such as in the case of zoological gardens and aquaria.

### 3.2. Instruments of analysis

In my analysis I will pay attention to a wide range of linguistic strategies. In particular, I will conduct a lexical analysis of wording, while also looking for signs of over-lexicalisation: a frequent use of particular words or their synonyms, which results in an over-description. There are other discursive strategies which will be considered. For instance, the social actors approach, as detailed by van Leeuwen (1996), classifies the actors in a discourse according to the pronouns used or whether they are collectivised, individualised, personalised or impersonalised. The social actors could also be nominalised or functionalised, specific, generic, anonymised or aggregated.

Fairclough (2003) adds other strategies such as suppression, which consists in a deliberate omission of words or phrases in order to conceal a particular reality from the reader. The use of passivated verbs without agents or nominalisation of actions distorts

the agenda and the responsibility for actions. Fairclough also pays attention to assumptions or presuppositions, which are ideas assumed to be true implicitly, and crucial in terms of reinforcing an ideology. Modalization is another strategy, involving modal verbs, adjectives, adverbs and even reported speech, which reveals the author's "commitment" and "how the author identifies himself or herself" (p. 171) with regards to a topic. Hedging is often employed to soften the discourse, create detachment or avoid specific claims, while the different use of quoting verbs could condition the interpretation of a statement. Another extremely common method is the use of rhetoric tropes such as metaphors, metonymies, synecdoches or hyperboles.

In the present analysis I will follow especially Stibbe (2010), whose work provides detailed characteristics of speciesist discourse, along with the typical discursive strategies. Such strategies expected in the case of speciesist language are mostly related to the agenda of the captive non-human animals. As social actors, their agenda could be removed by collectivisation, objectification or the use of passivated verbs without agents. Other anticipated elements of discourse involve over-lexicalisation, which also distracts attention from the captive non-human animals as individuals, and instead focuses the discourse on conservation and education as the main functions of zoos and aquaria. The use of suppressions and presuppositions is also typical for speciesist ideology, as noted by Stibbe (2010). To summarise, I expect to encounter a range of linguistic strategies serving the purpose of convincing the public opinion that zoological gardens and aquaria are positive for conservation, education and research.

### 3.3. About the case of study

The purpose of this research is to analyse the discourse of three important interest groups lobbying in favour of zoos and aquaria: The Iberian Zoo and Aquaria Association (AIZA), the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), and their global counterpart, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). The research questions which my study will attempt to answer are the following:

1. Do these three interest groups employ speciesist discourse in their communication output?
2. How do they justify the captivity of the non-human animals?
3. Are there any differences in the discourse employed by these lobbies?

The hypothesis assumed is that the discourse employed by AIZA, EAZA and WAZA is speciesist, and therefore legitimises the captivity of non-human animals enslaved in zoological gardens and aquaria.

#### 3.3.1. Text selection and datasheet

Firstly, the analysis will cover the content of the three lobbies' websites which describes their mission and vision, as well as objectives related to conservation, education and

research. The main body of the analysis will involve the three interest groups' publications related to these supposed positive contributions of zoos and aquaria. When selecting texts for analysis, the length was an important criterion due to limited space, however the main criterion was the nature of the documents. Hence, I have selected guides related to conservation strategies, as well as zoo and aquaria management policies, which present a higher probability of revealing the nature of the three lobbies' discourse on the captive non-human animals.

After considering the above described criteria, I have chosen the only text available in English which was written in collaboration with AIZA, *The Zoological Park: A New Ally for Biodiversity* (Rodríguez-Guerra & Guillén-Salazar, 2006). The main limitation in this case is the fact that the guide is not of AIZA's authorship, however, since the association participated in the edition, I have considered it representative of its discourse. With regards to EAZA, I have chosen the two most relevant and most recent guides regarding their conservation strategies and management policies, while the selected publication by WAZA is *Committing to Conservation: The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy* (WAZA, 2015). However, it must be admitted that the selection from multiple publications available on the associations' websites, is only a broad selection for a preliminary discourse analysis, which could be further expanded in a possible PhD project.

The analysis was conducted with the use of datasheets with four columns, out of which the first contains the analysed fragment of the text, the second resumes the idea proposed in the fragment, while the third one constitutes an explanation of the discursive strategy employed. Finally, the commentaries in the last column analyse whether the relevant fragments confirm the hypothesis of the research. The datasheet is embedded in the below file:



CDA\_main.xlsx

### 3.3.2. Limitations

The first possible limitation is of linguistic nature, as, strictly speaking, I am not a native speaker of English. However, it is a language which I have always used for communication and academic purposes, hence I believe it will not be an obstacle.

The most important limitations expected in the development of this research project are related to the little experience with the methodological perspective. Moreover, the results of critical discourse analysis are more difficult to replicate than those of other commonly used methods. Nevertheless, the advantages of this method are far outweigh the limitations, since it allows to challenge effectively the oppression suffered by the non-human animals confined in zoos.

Another limitation which I have identified is the nature of the documents, which have a highly persuasive aim and deliberately leave out an important part of the reality. This will be one of the challenges of the research as I will need to analyse not only the

language employed by the studied interest groups but also any relevant information which might have been deliberately omitted.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Asociación Ibérica de Zoos y Acuarios

#### 4.1.1. Website

The website of Asociación Ibérica de Zoos y Acuarios (AIZA) is designed to stress the role of zoological gardens and aquaria in the conservation of non-human animal species. The main page shows an image of humans, presumably marine life specialists, carefully releasing a sea turtle into the water, with the slogan reading “Working united for species conservation” (“Trabajando unidos por la conservación de las especies” in Spanish). The alternative image shows two, most probably young, jaguars on a blurred background and the message of “Allies of biodiversity” (“Aliados de la biodiversidad”). The ‘Misión’ section of the website shows a giraffe and a hippopotamus with their respective calves. The images, along with the attached messages, are a clear indication of the main focus of AIZA’s discourse, namely the conservation of non-human animal species.

This objective is recognised in the ‘Misión’ section of the page and the guide for the implementation of a new law regulating the activities of zoological gardens and aquaria in Spain, *The Zoological Park, a new ally for Biodiversity* (Rodríguez-Guerra & Guillén-Salazar, 2006):

[To] achieve the recognition of zoological entities as educational and scientific institutions that protect animal species, promote biodiversity, and help raise public awareness on the importance of biodiversity and the need for its conservation (p. 48).

Apart from this primary goal of conservation, the other three involve ensuring compliance with standards of “animal welfare” (p. 48) set out in the new law, fostering cooperation between the members, and working with the public administration “in the establishment of a legal framework for zoological parks and aquaria, acting as the voice and interpreter for zoological institutions” (p. 48). Therefore, AIZA admits that lobbying in favour of the zoo and aquaria sector is one of its primary objectives. The main strategy of creating a positive image of AIZA’s establishments is to build the discourse around the conservation of non-human species, education, and research, with the last two goals also focused on conservation.

#### 4.1.2. Guide

##### 4.1.2.1. *Preface*

*The Zoological Park, a new ally for Biodiversity* (Rodríguez-Guerra & Guillén-Salazar, 2006) is a guide for the implementation of the 31/2003 law on the conservation of non-human animal species in zoological parks in Spain, published in collaboration with AIZA. Although technically it is not published by the association, it figures among its publications due to AIZA's collaboration in the editing of the guide, and therefore it has been considered as representative of its discourse. In the preface by Maite Martín-Crespo Muro, concern is expressed about the natural environment, with a call for international cooperation. Air, water and even "biodiversity" are classified as "our", meaning human public resources, and called "gifts of nature" (p. 18) - presumably to humankind. There is criticism of the incorrect use of resources, however they are still treated as belonging to humans. Therefore, the gravity of the environmental issues is acknowledged as a threat, but mainly to human interests. It is humanity which is in charge of the resources and has a responsibility to manage them efficiently. Although the preface defends biological diversity, it is still treated as a good which exists for human use, and which should be available for every citizen equally, since the author demands "the fair and equitable access to, biological diversity" (p. 18). Further on in the text the idea from the preface is perpetuated, as we read that in Spain citizens have the right "to enjoy a suitable environment" (p. 34), which carries the assumption that the environment is a resource managed by humans, who are enabled to exploit it in "suitable" conditions.

##### 4.1.2.2. *Biodiversity, history of zoos and aquaria*

The guide opens with a chapter named 'The conservation of biodiversity, everyone's concern', where the basic assumption is that awareness of the deterioration of the environment and of the loss of "biodiversity" is widespread in society (p. 19). Further on, it is stated that zoos "provide children and adults with the opportunity to observe and learn about live animals of wild species" (p. 21). The word "wild" as opposed to "domesticated" refers to "animals that live [...] independently of people, in natural conditions and with natural characteristics", however it could also mean "uncontrolled, violent, or extreme" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Moreover, suppression is employed in the fragment, since the behaviour of the captive non-humans does not reflect the one in their natural habitat.

Suppression is also used in the following references to the history of zoos and the development of the conservation and animal welfare awareness: "The exploration of new lands, and the subsequent discovery of new species, further contributed to the popularity of zoological parks" (p. 43). The fragment deliberately avoids making explicit references to colonisation, instead employing euphemisms such as "exploration" and "discovery". As it has already been discussed in the introduction to this paper, zoos

have a colonial origin, and thus carry some of the responsibility for the colonial exploitation.

The following excerpt reveals certain presuppositions:

Because the visitors to those 19th century zoological parks viewed animals as mere extravagances of nature, not as representatives of a rich and complex biological diversity, the mere exhibition of specimens was seen as more than sufficient reason to justify the existence of zoological parks. But this perspective would soon change. With the gradual development of audiovisual media over the course of the 20th century, and the increasing ease of travel to the furthest corners of the world, the interest of keeping wild animals captive simply for their exhibition was called into question. This, coupled with greater social concern for animal welfare, led a growing number of citizens to reconsider the advisability of having zoological parks, and even to question their very legitimacy (p. 43).

The main implicit idea behind this fragment is that zoos have changed and adapted to the external social atmosphere and awareness. As it is stated, they no longer exhibit non-human animals for entertainment since the society no longer considers them “extravagances of nature” but “representatives of a rich and complex biological diversity”. The use of the word “even” in last sentence sheds light on what the authors consider a moderate and reasonable stance – the reconsideration of “the advisability of having zoological parks”, and what they consider a more extreme, and consequently perhaps less reasonable, position: the questioning of the legitimacy of zoos and aquaria. Despite admitting the criticism, the guide draws a clear line between the old zoos, focused merely on entertainment, and the new ones, involved in conservation, education and research, which in turn justifies their existence.

One of the sections is dedicated to the concept of the zoological garden and it is called ‘What does the sector think?’. As much as the zoo and aquaria sector is personified in the title, the text objectifies and collectivises the captive animals by referring to them as “animal collections” and “wild fauna” (p. 46). In the description of the facilities that a zoo requires in order to function, the authors mention “an emergency reaction plan in place for the escape of potentially dangerous animals” (p. 62). Therefore, the captive animals are classified from a human perspective according to the degree of danger that they can pose to humans and their activities.

#### *4.1.2.3. Conservation*

The guide recognises the current need “to justify the motivations for wild animal captivity, beyond the scope of public entertainment” (p. 21). Despite this initial criticism of exhibiting non-human animals for commercial reasons, captivity is still considered justifiable if zoos participate in conservation and provide education to the visiting public. As the text states, “zoos are increasingly called upon to assume greater responsibility for the care of the animals they house”. As could be inferred from the

paragraph, the agent in this sentence is the society, which “has gained sensitivity to animal welfare and a better understanding of the value of the conservation of certain species” (p. 21). Thus, the assumption underlying this fragment is that the society has become more aware of the environmental issues and species extinction, and, as a reaction to this increased sensitivity, zoos and aquaria became engaged in conservation actions. It is important to note the use of the euphemism “house” in the paragraph. Throughout the entire text, the captive individuals are said to be “housed” instead of possible alternatives such as “enslaved” or “caged”, although the adjective “captive” and the noun “captivity” are employed several times.

Figure 1 (p. 21) consists of a table which is extremely revealing, since it indicates a shift in the focus and objectives of zoos after the application of the law discussed in the document, comparing the activities and focus “before” and “after” its application. What it suggests is that following this implementation, zoos are no longer “recreational establishments” focused on “public entertainment” and have converted to “conservation institutions” and “training and education centres”. The “purpose of the use of animals” is no longer “commercial” and “recreational” but focused on conservation, education and research. According to the comparison drawn in the table, the conditions of the enclosures are now adapted to the captive animals now rather than the public. The fragment involves a suppression, since the individuals kept in zoos and aquaria are still deprived of their freedom despite the application of the new law. As it is stated further on in the text, while previously zoos and aquaria adapted an “antiquated role as living museums” (p. 46) and “dedicated to the mere exhibition of animals” (p. 44), the new conservation function requires that they convert “into modern institutions, equipped to perform relevant and quality work” (p. 44). “Social appreciation and prestige” is recognised as one of the objectives too (p. 21).

As it is explained in the following paragraph, “law 31/2003 on the conservation of wild fauna in zoological parks, which was drafted and passed in a climate of tremendous social concern for animal welfare and for the environment”. According to the law “the keeping of wild animals in captivity and their exhibition in zoos is not justified unless the conditions and objectives established within the framework for the conservation of biodiversity are met” (p. 22). Thus, AIZA positions itself in favour of the new conditions and against, what it considers, unjustified captivity. At the same time, the authors show commitment to the well-being of the captive individuals, and sensitivity to the demands of the society. The new law requires zoos to engage in conservation programmes. The main implicit idea in this paragraph is that involvement in conservation of non-human species justifies keeping individuals of these species in captivity.

Among the instructions in the guide, it is recommended that, regardless of their participation in conservation programmes, zoos avoid becoming “animal menageries”, which are defined as “an accumulation of animal species for the sole purpose of exhibition and commercial exploitation” (p. 68). The exact difference between an animal menagerie and a zoo which does not participate in any captive breeding programmes is not explained, however the implicit idea suggested in this paragraph is that zoos and aquaria are more than just animal menageries due to their involvement in

conservation, education and research.

As the guide suggests, the main conservation goals include “establishing new protected areas, mitigating the pressure caused by hunting and by the capture of living wild animals for trade, and developing special protection measures for critically endangered populations” (p. 42). Threats such as hunting and the capture of free-living animals, as well as pollution are human-induced, which is not mentioned in this fragment, although it is recognised in other parts of the text. The euphemism “pressure” is chosen to replace more accurate words such as “destruction” or “damage” caused by the hunters, who kill free-living animals for entertainment or profit. The guide does not suggest challenging the killings explicitly, and instead suggests “mitigating” the damage caused to free-living populations of animals, and not the affected individuals. What is also suppressed in this fragment is the fact that none of the measures listed require the participation of zoos and aquaria, hence the authors suggest that the role of these establishments should be to “support the conservation of endangered animal species and their ecosystems by establishing gene banks” (p. 42).

Captive breeding is yet another point raised in the guide as the main conservation-related programme. Despite admitting that it is “not without its controversies”, the authors claim that “animals kept in zoological parks [...] constitute our only hope of recovering a species whose wild populations have, or are about to, disappear from the wild” (p. 67). The suppression in this sentence conceals the real reason for the extinction of non-human species: habitat loss due to human activities. The possible reintroduction of the individuals of such endangered species is also not mentioned.

The guide also legitimises the trade in captive individuals by demanding a more coherent legislation:

The European Union is one of the three main markets for international trade in wild flora and fauna, and the regulatory legislation on such trade constitutes a priority for species conservation (p. 27).

The excerpt makes it clear that the trade in non-human animals is accepted by AIZA as co-editors of the guide, despite the call for more regulation. The document also specifies that “zoos are prohibited from acquiring or making use of certain wild species unless specifically justified for purposes of research and education, repopulation, reintroduction or breeding” (p. 28). Collectivisation is employed in this fragment as the non-human animals are again referred to in terms of “species” as a whole, not as individuals. Their agenda is also removed as they are “made use of” as species by the zoos. Moreover, it is important to note the distinction which is made between “certain” species which are involved in the trade and those which are not.

#### *4.1.2.4. Education*

Furthermore, the educational value of zoos and aquaria is emphasised, as under the new law “modern-day zoological parks must become scenarios in which the zoogoing public

gains a greater understanding of the value of biological diversity, wild flora and fauna, ecosystems, and the interdependence of all living organisms on Earth, including the human species” (p. 22). The modal “must” is characteristic of showing a high degree of commitment, while another discursive strategy employed in this fragment is the use of mass nouns such as “fauna” to refer to the living individuals. Further on, the authors also employ other nouns such as “collection” and “wildlife” since the captive individuals are collectivised as “ex situ collections” involved in research conducted in “wildlife research facilities”. Throughout the text, terms such as “zoological collections” and “wildlife” are repeated frequently, which reinforces the collectivisation and objectification as some of the main discursive strategies employed.

Figure 3 (p. 24) is also highly revealing as it openly discusses several of the zoo and aquaria sector’s weaknesses such as the lack of adequate policies and conditions and the “deficiencies in skills, knowledge, technology, information and financial resources”. It also expresses regret about the “general societal ignorance of the conservation role of modern zoological parks”, which suggests that AIZA’s zoos deserve more recognition for their conservation efforts, despite the previously mentioned deficiencies. One of the sentences objectifies the captive individuals, as it reads that the Spanish zoos lack a policy on “animal acquisition” and the planning of “collections”. Moreover, the captive animals are called “specimens” from “zoo collections”, which creates further emotional detachment through objectification and collectivisation. The enclosures are also referred to as “housing”, which is a euphemism employed to soften the discourse around confinement. This wording is characteristic of the entire text, although the generic word “enclosure” is not avoided.

#### 4.1.2.5. *Animal welfare*

The authors dedicate a substantial part of the document to the welfare of the captive animals and to conservation in the following statement:

[Z]oos must guarantee the welfare and proper accommodation of the animals involved, and if animals are exhibited to the public, this exceptional situation must be justified for non-commercial reasons, such as education, research or captive breeding, and oriented toward the conservation of biodiversity (p. 28).

Hence, captivity is justified only for non-commercial and conservation-related purposes. Suppression is used as the interests of the captive individuals are not taken into account. It is human interest in education and in retaining a diverse environment for purely human purposes which is decisive, as it justifies the captivity of non-humans in zoos and aquaria.

The guide also assumes that the new law ensures that the captive animals are kept in appropriate conditions, through “housing of the animals under conditions that enable the fulfilment of their biological and conservation needs”, as well as through environmental enrichment, which is to “promote the development of species-typical behavior patterns and improve general well-being” (p. 38). The fragment is focused on

welfare, while collectivising the captive animals in terms of their species and using euphemisms such as "housing" in reference to the enclosures. The agenda of the captive individuals is removed as they are "managed", however not as individuals but as species. Moreover, a human perspective is applied with regards to "conservation needs", assigned to the captive individuals.

As far as the welfare of the captive animals is concerned, the authors admit that there is a "compelling social debate" regarding the nature and future of zoos and aquaria:

Zoo proponents and detractors alike have long sought a solution to the ethical dilemma arising when the needs of the "species" (whose conservation depends, among other actions, on the establishment of self-sustaining captive populations) come into conflict with those of the "individual" (whose welfare may be negatively affected by captivity in conditions unlike those to which it is adapted) (p. 44).

The excerpt describes a debate between conservationists, who focus on species, and those who represent a welfarist or antispeciesist approach, who defend the individuals and their needs. The wording looks for a balance between the environmentalist and animal rights approaches and puts both at the same level in terms of ethics. However, perhaps most importantly, it is assumed that non-human animals have needs as a species, while ignoring their needs as individuals. There is also a suggestion that the survival of whole species depends on captive breeding programmes. The use of the modal "may" is meant to soften what is being said and express low probability of a possible impact of captivity on the captive individuals' health.

Moreover, commitment to animal welfare is declared through the implementation of the new law, which enables authorities to prohibit "the exhibition of animals in establishments with a wide range of activities (i.e., restaurants, discotheques, hotels, etc.), where animals are frequently used as decoration, to attract customers, or simply for amusement" (p. 51). Thus, the quoted fragment involves an attempt to show care for the captive animals by drawing an implicit comparison between the zoos and aquaria which apply the new law, and those establishments which only exhibit non-human animals for entertainment and commercial purposes. However, there is a suppression involved in this statement, since zoos and aquaria also exhibit animals to attract visitors and for entertainment.

Further on, the guide stresses the importance of ethics in animal welfare by affirming that "the animals housed in zoological parks are directly dependent upon our care, due to which, we have the moral obligation to ensure their welfare and satisfy all of their biological needs" (p. 57). The suppression in this statement conceals the fact that the moral obligation of humans towards the captive non-humans is an artificial dependence imposed by the unequal power relations, with an evident economic interest in the survival of the enslaved animals. Moreover, by connecting the welfare efforts with satisfying the captive individuals' biological needs, an assumption is made that a space which is not arbitrarily limited by human-imposed boundaries is not one of their

biological needs.

A practical reason for focusing on animal welfare is provided in another fragment: “a poor state of welfare not only reduces an animal’s survival and reproductive capabilities, but also makes it more difficult to achieve the conservation purpose for its captivity” (p. 57). This implies that animal welfare is important for human purposes, since an unhealthy animal is not productive and useful for the objectives established by the zoo, as it cannot reproduce in captivity and it does not guarantee the continuity of the exhibition to the public.

The guide promotes environmental enrichment by recognising such needs for captive individuals as “an appropriate social environment [...], sufficient space for adequate physical exercise, the ability to predict and control social and physical variables [...] and the existence of visual barriers, resting areas, alternative escape routes, etc.”. As the document states, in the past zoo enclosures were “non-complex environments, lacking in appropriate stimuli to enable the species of animals they housed to express a full range of typical behaviors”, which made them “overly predictable” due to “lack of novelty or variation in daily routines”. Such circumstances “not only compromised animal welfare, but also the very function of zoological parks”. As part of environmental enrichment, the authors consider the “development of training programs that promote the acquisition of behaviours that increase the survival of animals freed into the wild” (p. 57). However, what is not mentioned in this passage is that such reintroduction programmes involve very few species and individuals, such as in the case of the Barcelona zoo, discussed previously in the introduction.

Despite the defence of animal welfare, the focus on the public’s experience above the well-being of the captive individuals becomes evident in the following excerpt which states that “when animals are housed in social groupings like those of their natural habitat, they tend to exhibit a broader range of natural behaviours that makes their observation much more interesting to the public, without compromising the conservation value of the colony” (p. 59). Therefore, the priority is the visitors’ pleasure of viewing, while the captive animals’ comfort and well-being are important, although secondary.

Claims of incompatibility of conservation with animal welfare are dismissed by the authors as “occasional arguments to the contrary”, since the success of environmental enrichment “shows [...] that animal welfare and conservation are not necessarily conflicting propositions” (p. 59). The use of the adjective “occasional” downplays the importance of the arguments. The verb “shows” takes for granted that the statement against such arguments is true. At the same time, the suppression involved in the statement ignores the fact that the ethical debate is mostly not between conservation and animal welfare but rather human entertainment and animal welfare.

Further on, it is claimed that “zoos must be capable of demonstrating to society (and of course to the competent public authorities) that they are making effective and efficient contributions” to conservation (p. 65). Through such claims, they express commitment to conservation by applying strict measures regarding conservation and animal welfare. By involving the society in the statement, the guide suggests that zoos need to gain credibility, which reveals a possible assumption that it is currently at stake.

Such strict measures of animal welfare are to be followed, for example, in public displays of captive animals which are detailed in the education standards: “public demonstrations using zoo animals [...] must always contain a conservation message and respect the identity and integrity of the animals” (p. 66). The assumption which is made in these instructions is that a respectful display of a captive animal is possible. At the same time, respect is an unspecified action, and therefore cannot be evaluated. The next point in the education standards explains how animal welfare can affect education: “For education and interpretation programs to be successful, zoological parks and aquariums must exhibit animals in the best of conditions, in enclosures that enable them to live as naturally as possible and to exhibit behaviours typical to their species” (p. 66). Thus, the captive non-human animals are expected to behave typically for their species, hence the emphasis is not on their individuality but their supposed species identity.

The guide also promotes what is called “behavioural competence” in the captive individuals:

Promoting behavioural competence in captive populations provides another benefit not to be disdained: observing the diverse and complex behavioural repertoires of animals exhibited in well designed enclosures is more attractive to the public, and so facilitates the task of knowledge dissemination (p. 67).

What is assumed in this excerpt is that the individuals which behave typically for their species are more attractive for the public in zoos. In other words, the well-being of the captive animals is important for the profit of zoos, as the public expects to see the animals which behave in a "natural" way.

## 4.2. European Association of Zoos and Aquaria

### 4.2.1. Website

The website of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) shares some of the characteristics of the previously analysed AIZA website. The images are mostly high-quality close-ups showing several different non-human animals, while none of them show the enclosures. In some images the background is blurred as the focus is on the individual, whereas in others the surroundings resemble the natural environment. The message behind such images is related to the conservation of non-human animal species, which is confirmed by the content of the page and the analysed documents.

The Animal Welfare section of the page explains animal welfare as follows: “Animal welfare refers to the physiological and psychological well-being of animals – effectively, this is how the individual animal is coping, both mentally and physically”. EAZA recommends applying a “multi-disciplined, scientifically evidence-based approach to assure that the animal’s needs and wants are met”. Among the needs, they list “providing individuals with the opportunity to perform their species-specific behavioural repertoire and promoting positive emotional states” (EAZA, n.d.). Just as

AIZA, their European counterpart also shows commitment to animal welfare, and aim at allowing the captive animals to display natural behaviours, which reveals the assumption that such behaviours are possible in captivity.

Animal welfare is also the reason to conduct research on animals according to the same section of the page: “Through conducting this research and applying the knowledge gained, animal welfare best-practice continues to progress” (EAZA, n.d.). It is assumed that the knowledge obtained in research programmes will improve the non-human animals’ well-being while they remain in captivity.

Moreover, euphemisms are employed in the section regarding breeding programmes, which “aim at conserving healthy populations of animals in captivity while safeguarding the genetic health of the animals under our care” (EAZA, n.d.). Despite naming “captivity” at first, its meaning is softened with expressions such as “safeguarding” and “in our care”, which emphasise the conservation function and focus on animal welfare. Moreover, EAZA adds that its campaigns aid “in the protection of natural habitats and promotes education to help local populations value their wild neighbours” (EAZA, n.d.). The assumption in this statement is that local populations do not value the free-living non-human animals. As Stibbe (2010) points out, such presuppositions that only local people are responsible for the loss of biodiversity is typical for “shallow” environmentalist discourse (p. 133).

Such discourse is followed throughout the next section on Education, as EAZA makes a highly critical statement, which reinforces the role of zoos and aquaria:

EAZA further believes that the emotional power of an animal encounter is a major factor in persuading people to live sustainably, respectfully and altruistically. In an age where the values we need to promote to maintain our planet are under constant attack from materialism and the profit motive, meeting animals can reinforce our sense of belonging to a wider, more wonderful world; these encounters remind us, even in the face of constant advertising and information overload, that a future populated by a wide diversity of animals and plants is more important than buying the latest smartphone (EAZA, n.d.).

An “animal encounter” in a zoo or aquarium and “a future populated by a wide diversity of animals and plants” are opposed to the threats and “constant attack” coming from materialism, information overload and profit-oriented mentality, all of them illustrated with the example of “buying the latest smartphone”. Therefore, by using a language filled with emotion, such as in the case of “emotional power” and a “wider, more wonderful world”, EAZA shows concern about the environment, and commitment to the future described in the fragment.

Regarding the educative value of zoos, EAZA stresses empathy as one of the key values: “Learning about animals and their habitats awakens empathy with the natural world and helps people to access their intrinsic values and foster a sense of responsibility and stewardship” (EAZA, n.d.). The sentence makes use of the dichotomy between the natural and the civilised, whereby humans need to empathise with the “natural world”, from which they are excluded as part of the ecology discourse (Stibbe,

2010), in order to feel responsible for its fate.

#### 4.2.2. Guide: Standards for Accommodation and Care

##### 4.2.2.1. Enclosures

In EAZA's *Standards for the Accommodation and Care of Animals in Zoos and Aquaria* (2014), the first pages are dedicated to definitions. The definition of animals includes "mammals", without counting humans in this category. The enclosures are euphemistically referred to as "accommodation". Moreover, the non-human animals are divided into categories according to the degree of danger that they might pose to humans: hazardous animals, dangerous carnivores (p. 1). Several other terms are employed throughout the text to refer to various human-generated categories of other animals, including "non-hazardous" (p. 11) or "venomous" animals (p. 12). The individuals which cannot be catered for by the zoo or aquarium are defined as "surplus animal stock" (p. 14), which includes an objectification through the word "stock".

The first section details the regulations on enclosures. According to EAZA, the enclosures must take account of the "space and social needs" of the captive individuals, among other aspects. What is suppressed in this regulation is that such needs of the enslaved animals will inevitably be compromised by captivity. EAZA recommends using environmental enrichment, which is detailed in point 3 under "Design must take into account" (p. 2). This involves the personification of design, which stands for the zoo or aquaria management who design the enclosures. Nominalisation through the noun "management" is used to denote various ways in which the captive animals are kept under human control and manipulated by humans, as in the expressions "management of conflicts" or "management of breeding animals".

Further on, points 5 and 6 state that the captive animals "should never be provoked for the benefit of the viewing public" and that individuals "in visibly adjoining enclosures to be those which do not interact in an excessively stressful way". However, point 8 contradicts this concern with the animals' psychological well-being through the "provision of a high standard of public viewing experience, that demonstrates fully the animals and their behaviours" (p. 2). The three points combined conceal the possibility of stress as a result of the exposure of the captive animals to the public, since the "high standard of viewing experience" would require the individuals to be constantly in viewing distance of the visiting humans.

EAZA also makes use of nominalisation in statements such as "the animals should be used to entering [the] enclosure for management purposes (e.g. veterinary examinations and collection management)" (p. 4). While "veterinary examinations" is a specific example of the ambiguous term of "management purposes", "collection management" is an unspecified action which further adds to the overall ambiguity, as human intervention in the enclosures is legitimised.

According to EAZA zoos and aquaria also constitute a shelter from "pests" and "predators" coming from the external environment, as the following fragment suggests:

A safe and effective programme for the control of pests and, where necessary, predators to be established and maintained throughout the institution. Animals must not escape from the zoo or aquarium and create an ecological threat for native wild species (p. 7).

Such focus is characteristic of the discourse of ecology, since the non-human animals are considered at a species level and classified according to their function or degree of threat posed to human interests. The captive animals are viewed as a possible threat to local species in case of escape. Whereas some are seen as a threat to local ecosystems, others are a threat to the captive individuals. "Control" is an unspecified action referring to what the zoos do to "pests" and "predators" in order to protect the captive animals.

In addition, points 4.8 and 4.9 regulate the functioning of the so-called "drive through enclosures", which allow visitors to watch non-human animals in semi-freedom from a vehicle. The focus of the safety measures is on the visitors, as "hazardous animals can be killed in an emergency if this will save human life or injury" (p. 11).

#### *4.2.2.2. Euthanasia, captive training, feeding*

What is especially revealing is EAZA's stance on the killing of the unneeded non-human animals which is detailed in point 1.9: "Euthanasia may be an alternative to hand rearing particularly when introduction potential into the group is low, behavioural problems are expected and/or when sufficient future "quality of life" cannot be guaranteed" (p. 4). Through this statement EAZA prioritises the group of captive animals and the establishment's interests above an individual's life. The use of the modal verb "may" softens the meaning of the phrase, while "euthanasia" itself adapts the role of a euphemism which stands for killing. The stance is detailed in point 9 with the following statement: "Euthanasia as a structural solution for undesired surplus animals may be acceptable under certain conditions beyond veterinary indication" (p. 9). The killing of an individual is encouraged and euphemistically called "a structural solution", as the individuals could be considered "undesired surplus animals" or "undesired subspecies" (p. 9), in which case their lives are of no value to the zoo or aquarium. Since the killing is considered a solution, the fragment also implies that the "surplus animals" are a problem for the zoo or aquarium.

At the same time, "anthropomorphic interpretations for the purpose of commercial gain" (p. 4) are discouraged, which could be interpreted a sign of respect for the captive animals' identities, or perhaps an attempt at creating distance and detachment between humans and non-humans.

Another point details the so-called "animal training for public demonstrations" with the main assumption being that non-human animal displays create awareness of wildlife conservation. EAZA supports the training of animals for shows and displays, despite expressing apparent care for the well-being of the individuals chosen for such events. The aim of such displays is to show "natural behaviour" of the captive animals without causing unnecessary stress or showing disrespect towards the individual.

"Handling sessions" is one of the terms employed to refer to the displays which "allow visitors to get close to, and even have contact with, animals" (p. 5) in order to educate on conservation.

As far as feeding is concerned, EAZA initially expresses equal concern for both: groups and individual captive animals, with regards to dietary needs. What is extremely revealing is the stance on feeding the carnivorous individuals using live "prey": "When feeding live prey, local legislation must be followed, and the welfare of the prey must be taken into consideration to ensure stress is minimised" (p. 6). This statement is incoherent and contradictory, as it suppresses the fact that any "welfare" measures for an individual which is used as food for another one will inevitably fail to avoid the stress and pain.

#### 4.2.3. Guide: Strategic Plan 2017-2020

##### 4.2.3.1. Conservation

In *Strategic Plan 2017-2020: Progressive Zoos and Aquariums Collaborating to Lead on Conservation* (EAZA, n.d.) conservation is recognised as the association's "primary goal" (p. 7). The very title of the document involves the discursive strategy of over-lexicalisation, in this case of positive terms such as "progressive", "collaborating" and "lead". As a result, it implies modern facilities, progressive values and a leading role in conservation of species.

Such discourse of progress is employed when EAZA pledges to make sure that they "do not fall back on simply what we do now but continually strive to improve our ability to communicate the values and scientific work of progressive zoos and aquariums" (p. 10). The wording, with expressions such as "continually strive to improve" and "progressive zoos and aquariums", once more implies the commitment to constant improvement, modernity and scientific research.

There is more over-lexicalisation in the opening paragraphs such as in EAZA's mission statement:

EAZA's mission is to facilitate co-operation within the European zoo and aquarium community with the aim of furthering its professional quality in keeping animals and presenting them for the education of the public, and of contributing to scientific research and to the conservation of global biodiversity. It will achieve these aims through stimulation, facilitation and co-ordination of the community's efforts in education, conservation and scientific research, through the enhancement of co-operation with all relevant organisations and through influencing relevant legislation within the EU (p. 1).

The fragment includes several verbs and abstract nouns denominating positive actions aimed at the preservation of "global biodiversity": "facilitate co-operation", "enhancement of co-operation", "furthering professional quality", "stimulation",

“facilitation”, “co-ordination of efforts”.

The European association considers its role crucial to preventing the extinction of species, which is the explicit idea in the following statement:

EAZA Members care for tens of thousands of animals, with high standards of welfare employed throughout. Many species thriving in our zoos and aquariums [...] are extinct in the wild or critically endangered, with our work a key role in helping safeguard their future (p. 4).

As in the case of AIZA and EAZA’s previously analysed document, the euphemism "care for" stands for keeping non-human animals in captivity, while "species" is a frequently employed synecdoche which replaces the captive individuals. "Thriving" is employed to denote successful growth inside EAZA’s establishments, while the external environments are considered threatened and increasingly deteriorated. Finally, "members" is preferred to “zoos and aquaria” throughout the text.

EAZA admits that “there has been increasing discussion in the media about the roles and value of zoos” (p. 5), showing awareness of the increasingly intense critique, and understanding of the social tendency. However, they reaffirm themselves in the extremely important role of their establishments for conservation:

[N]ever before, in their long history, have zoos and aquariums been more relevant and important, not only for the conservation of wildlife, but also culturally and scientifically (p. 5).

#### 4.2.3.2. *Research, education*

In terms of research, EAZA claims that its zoos and aquaria “undertake research to benefit both the animals in our care but also those in the wild” (p. 4). The text establishes the previously mentioned dichotomy between the non-human animals supposedly in human care, and those which are “in the wild”.

The importance of education is also emphasised and considered a crucial activity of zoos and aquaria:

EAZA zoos provide a core collective of unique knowledge and experience from which conservation can take place, they offer an essential link to nature, an opportunity to engage with wildlife in a time when more and more of our wild places are disappearing (p. 5).

Over-lexicalisation of positive adjectives is used as a discursive strategy employed in this excerpt: “core collective”, “unique knowledge”, “essential link”. Suppression is also involved since the "engaging with nature" occurs at the cost of the individuals who suffer from deprivation of their freedom. The metaphor of disappearance adds to the alarmist tone used throughout the text, when, for example, concern is expressed regarding the planet’s “diminishing resources” (p. 5), while “threats to the natural world

accelerate” (p. 6). The latter expression involves a metaphor of the threat as a moving, dangerous object or living being which accelerates.

According to EAZA, there is another reason for the existence of zoos and aquaria: their supposed cultural role. As they claim, “zoos add to the cultural mix of cities and towns and provide much needed space where people of all ages and backgrounds can interact and experience the wonder of the natural world” (p. 5). It is presupposed that zoos represent the natural environment in an urban setting, which offers the people the desired link to nature. Also, zoos are considered an attractive and necessary space of social confluence, which contributes to the diversity of urban areas.

Moreover, zoos and aquaria provide “a physical link from urban centres to the wilderness”, which constitutes “a tangible opportunity for people to understand that their zoo visit can help save species, making all visitors conservationists for a day” (p. 6). Suppression is used in this statement, since neither the cause of the habitat loss, nor the more efficient conservation methods are mentioned. Instead, a zoo visit is granted the importance of a conservation effort.

#### 4.2.3.3. *Animal welfare*

With regards to animal welfare, EAZA reiterates that it focuses equally on the individual captive animals and the species: “A key aspect of being able to achieve this is by managing the twin needs of providing positive animal welfare for individuals whilst also maintaining healthy populations of species” (p. 7). The words “humane” and “compassionate” are also employed to describe how the captive animals are to be treated. Through another statement, EAZA shows its commitment to animal welfare: “Excusing poor animal welfare on the grounds of the conservation or educational value is simply not acceptable” (p. 7).

Furthermore, the ethical side of zoos and aquaria is discussed, since managing such establishments is considered “a complex interaction of science, ethics and culture”. However, further on, the “application of a considered culling policy” is mentioned. Therefore, we observe an incoherence between the commitment to ethical values and compassionate treatment, and the support for the policy of killing unneeded individuals.

EAZA’s objectives regarding conservation, education and lobbying are summarised in the following sentence:

We will use our unique knowledge and skills in combination with partnership working to influence relevant policy and best practice to the benefit of all; from the smallest and least known animal in our care, to providing spaces for people to connect with nature and each other, to supporting holistic species recovery in the wild (p. 11).

What is assumed in this statement is that the strategies benefit the captive animals whether they are in human “care” or “in the wild”. This set of objectives conceals the ethical issues related to captivity. Further on, EAZA also emphasises another benefit of zoos and aquaria, which are “key economic drivers and a respected voice for nature” (p.

11). The metaphor of the voice suggests the passivity and vulnerability of “nature”, which needs to be represented by humans in order to survive.

### 4.3. World Association of Zoos and Aquariums

#### 4.3.1. Website

The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) is the most important interest group uniting zoos and aquaria globally. The main page of their website shows a snow leopard on a blurred background; therefore, the recognition of the surroundings is not possible. According to the description on the same page, WAZA is “the unifying organisation for the world zoo and aquarium community”. The slogan beneath reads: “The world zoo and aquarium community welcomes over 700 million visitors annually. WAZA members are leading zoos, aquariums, associations, affiliate organisations and corporate partners from around the world; together, we are 'United for Conservation'” (WAZA, n.d.).

The ‘About WAZA’ section of the page reveals the association’s objective, which is “to guide, encourage and support the zoos, aquariums and like-minded organisations of the world in animal care and welfare, environmental education and global conservation”. The commitment to conservation and animal welfare is reaffirmed in the ‘Vision’ site through the “desire to achieve the potential of zoos and aquariums globally to make a real difference for animals, species, habitat conservation and sustainability” (WAZA, n.d.).

The ‘News’ section features such headlines as *Zoos help save critically endangered Saola* and *WAZA Conference to Confront Major Crises in Berlin*. The description of the latter also reveals concern with the environment and sustainability: “Over 250 leading zoo and aquarium officials from 46 countries will gather in Berlin to discuss key issues such as conservation, animal welfare, marine litter, illegal wildlife trade, and palm oil” (WAZA, n.d.). In the ‘Press Releases’ section a title reads *Orang-utans are disappearing*. The metaphor of disappearance is used to draw attention to the endangered status of the species and show concern. In the ‘Statements’ section we find several publications defending the killing of unneeded captive animals, called “management euthanasia” (WAZA, n.d.). At the same time, another statement condemns the sedation of captive animals in order to use them in exhibitions with public.

The ‘Conservation’ sub-site is designed to persuade the readers of the importance of WAZA’s programmes. One of the discursive strategies employed is over-lexicalisation, such as in the following description of the organisation’s functions:

WAZA supports science and research, promotes environmental education, motivates environmental sustainability, combats climate change, advocates for exemplary zoo and aquarium design, encourages animal welfare and participates in international campaigns (WAZA, n.d.).

The sentence involves a wording which abounds in positive terms denoting active advocacy in favour of animal welfare and conservation, as WAZA “promotes”, “motivates”, “combats”, “advocates” and “encourages”.

WAZA admits that “preserving individual species in human care is not enough to protect global biodiversity” as the “conservation of intact ecosystems is the only chance for the survival of our planet's wildlife”. Thus, keeping captive individuals for breeding is still considered important, however in situ conservation is seen as crucial to the survival of free-living non-human species. It is assumed that not all zoos and aquaria are involved in in situ programmes, since the organisation’s aim is “to further increase the number of zoos and aquariums involved in the conservation of wild species and habitats” (WAZA, n.d.).

One of the justifications for the existence of zoos and aquaria is their involvement in translocation of individuals in order to protect genetic diversity, which “is likely to become an increasingly important conservation tool”. As it is stated, the possible contribution to translocation of zoos and aquaria with their “skills and knowledge” grants them an important role in such programmes. Further justification is provided when WAZA declares “the end of the ex situ and in situ conservation dichotomy” (WAZA, n.d.), as zoos and aquaria would be considered part of the in situ conservation effort instead of remaining a profit-oriented entertainment industry.

The importance of in situ conservation is further emphasised in the ‘Conservation Breeding Programmes’ sub-site, as WAZA admits that “animal collections in individual zoos and aquariums are typically too small by themselves to be of much value to long-term conservation”. In other words, it is assumed that zoos and aquaria cannot make a significant difference to conservation unless they are involved in in situ programmes. The captive animals are collectivised in this paragraph, as they are referred to as “animal collections” and “populations”, as WAZA calls on its members to “to form larger, viable populations” through “cooperative international or regional ex situ breeding programmes” (WAZA, n.d.).

However, further on in the text we find that such involvement in these conservation programmes is not obligatory for WAZA’s members:

The measures implemented by regional associations may be limited to the collection of data (regional studbooks), they may aim to maintain a long-term ex situ population or they may be linked to in situ conservation, for example by producing animals for reintroduction into the wild (WAZA, n.d.).

This is an example of incoherence, as despite the emphasis on conservation, WAZA admits that the regional associations are not obliged to participate in breeding programmes and in situ conservation. Finally, the sentence also involves an objectification, as zoos are “producing” animals within the breeding programme.

#### 4.3.2. Guide: Committing to Conservation

##### 4.3.2.1. *Images and Preface: Appeal to Zoo and Aquarium Directors*

WAZA's *Committing to Conservation: The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy* (2015), the latest guide on the organisation's conservation strategies, opens with images of a sea turtle and a gorilla, presumably in their natural habitats. Other pictures throughout the document show a group of elephants in a national park, a veterinary practitioner holding a gorilla (p. 31), or a hand in a rubber glove holding a turtle to display it to children (p. 44). The images are mostly high-quality close-ups portraying free-roaming non-human animals instead of the captive ones. This is an obvious suppression of how zoos and aquaria really function.

The preface, *Appeal to Zoo and Aquarium Directors*, features the definition of conservation as "securing populations of species in natural habitats for the long term" (p. 12) which involves collectivisation, typical for conservationist discourse. "Securing" the population stands for the survival of the species, while the fate of individuals is deemed irrelevant unless low survival rate poses a threat to the whole population.

Further on, we can find over-lexicalisation in WAZA's vision of zoological gardens in phrases such as the following:

Zoos and aquariums must take an action-driven, leadership role in the conservation of wildlife. Zoological institutions must create sustainable business plans to support field conservation efforts while simultaneously facilitating pro-environmental behaviour change. This balanced approach is the only way to address effectively human threats to wild populations (p. 12).

Positive language is employed through such expressions as "action-driven", "leadership", "sustainable business plans", "pro-environmental", "balanced approach". WAZA also establishes the dichotomy between human-induced environmental destruction and the free-living non-human animals. Finally, the modal "must" indicates a high degree of commitment.

WAZA explicitly encourages its zoos and aquaria to participate in conservation programmes to gain the support of the public: "When visitors understand that zoos and aquariums are working to save animals in the wild, their support of us improves dramatically". In order to convince the society, WAZA claims that "the zoological community needs to demonstrate [...] commitment to protect species in the wild, while delivering the very best in 21st century animal care and guest experience" (p. 12). Hence, the focus on guest experience is elevated to the same level of importance as animal welfare and species conservation.

Apart from influencing the public opinion, WAZA's objectives include lobbying the relevant authorities, as it is explicitly mentioned in the following statement:

Our conservation commitments also help to bolster the perception of zoos and aquariums in the minds of government officials who enact and enforce the

laws that affect our operations. It is essential that we gain the trust, confidence and support of the multiple authorities that control and regulate activities that directly impact our future (p. 12).

Nevertheless, as it is stated later, the involvement in conservation programmes “emphasises” the reason for the existence of zoos and aquaria, however it “does not alter” their functioning (p. 12). Participating in conservation provides the justification of keeping non-human animals in captivity, while at the same time it does not alter the functioning of zoos and aquaria as they did before changing their focus.

WAZA stresses the importance of zoos and aquaria as “informal learning centres that inspire visitors to connect with the natural world”. Further on, the establishments are also described as “cultural and tourism assets that provide compelling visitor experiences”, while they also “fight extinction” and “save animals in their wild habitats”. WAZA also pledges to “change people's attitudes and behaviours” until they become “exemplary advocates for conservation” (p. 12). The lack of modalisation and the choice of verbs in these fragments show certainty and confidence in WAZA’s actions.

Finally, the preface expresses the hope of “finally” realising “the enormous potential of our zoological institutions to become ‘conservation powerhouses’, universally respected by all sectors of society”. Involvement in conservation is further encouraged as “the questions must not overshadow the commitment because the rewards far outweigh the sacrifices”. The closing lines express a more alarmist tone: “We must act now while there is still time to save the species and habitats we cherish so dearly” (p. 13). The fragment involves a presupposition that participation in conservation will silence criticism of zoos and aquaria, and ensure the “universal” respect of “all sectors of society”, and, consequently, the ultimate justification of keeping non-human animals in captivity. Similarly, committing to conservation is seen as a “sacrifice” for a noble cause. What this statement deliberately suppresses, is the fact that conservation efforts constitute the necessary justification of the existence of zoos and aquaria, and therefore guarantee the continuity of their business. Finally, “species” and “habitats” are considered goods, which humans “cherish so dearly”.

#### *4.3.2.2. Conservation: Alarmist tone*

The conservationist discourse in WAZA’s guide is expressed mainly through the focus on entire species above the interests of captive individuals. Mass nouns or collectivisation are employed, such as in the examples of “fauna” and “wildlife” (p. 16). Moreover, as in the previously analysed documents, the individuals are also collectivised as the whole species, for instance “species are cared for” (p. 17). It is also important to note the passivated verb, which removes the agenda from the captive animals. WAZA also classifies the non-human species according to their function or degree of threat that they can pose to human activities or ecosystems, as in the example of “invasive species” (p. 25) or “research animals” (p. 41).

When describing the ecosystems and environmental issues, WAZA employs a

highly alarmist tone, illustrated by the metaphor of the “tide of extinction” (p. 18) and the expression “extinction crisis” (p. 31). Another fragment enlists the various threats to “wildlife health”:

New and emerging diseases and pathogens are becoming an urgent concern, epitomised by the catastrophic declines in amphibians (chytridiomycosis), and the pandemic diseases that threaten both humans and animals (p. 31).

Such alarmist tone provides justification of the existence of zoos and aquaria, as they “are ideally positioned to be species champions” in the face of increasing “environmental threats” (p. 31). WAZA illustrates this role of zoos and aquaria as a refuge for non-human animals by referring to the establishments as “‘arks’ or reservoirs to facilitate replacing extinct wild populations” (p. 31). This idea is further developed in the following statement:

Zoos and aquariums have acted as ‘lifeboats’ for the survival and subsequent reintroduction of zoo- and aquarium-bred individuals, preventing the extinction of some species (p. 32).

The biblical reference to the ark and the lifeboat metaphor imply that the external environment is full of threats and does not guarantee the survival of non-human animal species, while zoos and aquaria “readily accept the responsibility that comes with maintaining and caring for animals” (p. 17). The lifeboat metaphor is reinforced by the hedging involved in the statement that “some global scientists and conservationists are already convinced there are no real wild areas remaining” (p. 32).

Further on, modalisation and over-lexicalisation are used to justify captivity, while maintaining the alarmist tone characteristic of the guide:

It is preferable to manage populations proactively before their numbers decline precipitously or they disappear completely from the wild, and to support healthy species so they remain resilient in the face of threats (p. 32).

The modalisation in “it is preferable” is characteristic of scientific discourse (Stibbe, 2010), which is highly impersonal and hence implies the idea of objectivity. We can also observe an over-description through words related to threat and extinction: “decline precipitously”, “disappear from the wild”, “threats”. Such phrases are aimed at justifying “preventive” captivity in order to avoid possible extinctions. There is also a synecdoche used, as “healthy species” stands for the sum of healthy individuals.

To counter the multiple threats to free-living animals and ecosystems, WAZA shows confidence in the important role of zoos and aquaria through the use of over-lexicalisation of positive terms:

With vast living populations of animals, devoted and talented staff, and extraordinarily large, diverse and engaged audiences zoos and aquariums have

the power to facilitate the vital work of caring for and conserving living wild animals and ecosystems (p. 17).

The adjectives describing the captive populations, staff and visitors all carry a positive connotation, which reinforces the idea of importance and professional work performed by zoos and aquaria in favour of conservation.

#### 4.3.2.3. *Conservation: Discourse of ecological economics*

What is assumed as one of the central ideas underlying the discourse of the guide, is that the fate of humanity is linked to the survival of other species. This is made clear in the following statement:

Ensuring the well-being of other species is essential if humans are to ensure their own. The quality of the land, air and water not only affects wild populations of animals and plants but will eventually determine humanity's fate as well (p. 17).

WAZA admits that environmental issues such as “growing human populations, continued pollution and over exploitation of natural resources, and climate change” are anthropogenic, thus showing concern for the future of “natural ecosystems” (p. 17) in a “human-dominated world” (p. 32). However, despite this initially disinterested appeal for involvement in conservation, WAZA's discourse shifts to ecological economics (Stibbe, 2010) when they recognise the importance of conservation for economy:

It must also be made clear that species conservation has economic value: the richer the diversity of life the greater the opportunity for medical discoveries, economic development and adaptive responses to the ominous impacts of global climate change (p. 17).

Therefore, conservation is seen as beneficial for humanity as "biodiversity" is a means of securing the future of the human species. "Global climate change" is a threat to human activity, and the conservation of "natural ecosystems" is perceived as a preventive action. This discourse is first introduced with the use of hedging in the following statement: “While many believe that species and habitat conservation are innately valuable, others need to be convinced of the material importance of conserving living fauna and flora” (p. 17). This discursive strategy introduces ambiguity and obscures commitment through the use of such expressions as “while many believe [...] others [...]”. Hence, WAZA does not commit to any of the two stances, while expressing interest in possible funding of conservation projects from those who are seeking profit.

This interest is reiterated through the proposal of WAZA to align “conservation objectives with human-development goals”, since this will “resonate more strongly with political and philanthropic ambitions and the perceived relevance of support required for species conservation, and the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services” (p.

32). As it can be inferred from the statement, it is assumed that financial support for conservation projects is highly unlikely without economic interest of potential partners, donors and authorities.

The importance of financial support is further stressed through another use of hedging, which softens the appeal for funding by making it less explicit:

While money and donations do not always translate into quality conservation efforts, funds are still an essential requirement for the implementation of conservation action (p. 32).

The idea of ecosystems as providers of resources for humanity is also central to the ecological economics discourse, as noted by Stibbe (2010) and it can be observed in phrases such as “ecosystem services are degraded” (p. 17), “depleted and fragmented populations in nature” (p. 31) and “protecting and restoring natural resources, including species” (p. 23). Non-human animals are collectively treated as resources made available to humans through ecosystems, while biodiversity is to be preserved and “used” sustainably, according to one of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets detailed in the document (p. 23).

#### *4.3.2.4. Conservation as justification for zoos and aquaria*

Despite claiming that “zoos and aquariums enjoy wide-ranging levels of public credibility and trust” (p. 17), WAZA dedicates the entire guide to justifying their existence. One of the arguments for their defence is captive breeding as a means of support for free-living populations of animals, since zoos and aquaria are “to provide for populations of species most in need of genetic and demographic support for their continued existence in the wild” (p. 17). The assumption in this statement is that free-living animals require genetic and demographic support from humans if they are to survive as a species. The so-called ‘One Plan Approach’ is applied to ensure that “animals maintained in zoological facilities play a conservation role that benefits wild counterparts” (p. 18), which conceals the fact that such mutual dependence is entirely artificial and human-generated.

The previously discussed environmental destruction is used as a justification of captivity throughout the guide, as “human impacts now affect all ecosystems, a rising number of species will benefit from, and increasingly require, intensive population management”. It is assumed that free-living species will require human intervention in order to survive, as the destruction of ecosystems enables zoos and aquaria to increase their control over free-living non-human animals. “Intensive population management” (p. 53) stands for human control over non-human animal populations, however the nominalisation softens the interpretation of such an intervention.

Moreover, a survey discussed in the guide (p. 23) also shows how WAZA legitimises captivity of non-human animals with the presupposition that most people who question the existence of zoos and aquaria adapt this critical stance since they are unaware of the establishments’ conservation involvement, and change their opinion

when they are informed about it. The survey reveals that the respondents who have been provided this information tend to approve of captivity as a means of conservation of species.

#### 4.3.2.5. *Conservation projects selection: incoherence*

The previously analysed preface to the guide features several steps which describe how to achieve “conservation leadership”. Step 6 is extremely revealing in terms of the selectivity of the conservation programmes, as it advises to “identify and prioritise species which allow you to deliver conservation victories that clearly demonstrate the impact the animals in zoos and aquariums have on our ability to save their wild counterparts” (p. 13). Such instructions encourage zoos and aquaria to prioritise some species over others whenever it is easier to demonstrate the effectiveness of the conservation programmes.

Throughout the text there are more instructions recommending the selection of species in order to achieve successful conservation and “to focus limited resources on those for which a long-term and broadly protective difference can be made” (p. 53). The suppression in this statement conceals the reality of those species which are not included in the conservation programmes. The selection of species is based on several requirements, as “wild-animal populations in human care must be demographically robust, the animals must be behaviourally competent and genetically representative of wild counterparts” (p. 54). “Demographically robust” implies a certain, unspecified number of individuals, “behaviourally competent” involves behavioural conditioning, while “genetically representative” means that the animals need to be able to contribute to the genetic diversity of the free-roaming populations. Thus, only some captive populations and individuals are selected for the breeding programmes and reintroduction.

However, these practical policies are incoherent with the following statement, which suggests giving priority to the most endangered species:

While resources may not extend to providing support for every species, conservation actions taken for the most threatened populations will have a positive impact on all species within that habitat (p. 31).

The most evident incoherence in WAZA’s conservationist discourse consists in the fact that only certain species, and not necessarily the most endangered ones, are to participate in the conservation programmes, and therefore, numerous individuals in captivity represent species which are only exhibited for the entertainment of the viewing public.

However, there are more examples of incoherence, such as the one between WAZA’s support of the killing of unneeded individuals and the statement supporting the rescue and treatment of ill or injured free-living individuals:

We have a duty to [...] act as rescue-and-release centres for threatened animals in

need of immediate help, with the best knowledge and facilities to care for them until they are fit to go back to the wild (p. 17).

#### 4.3.2.6. *Hedging and euphemisms: Softening of discourse*

The discursive strategy of hedging and the use of euphemisms is frequently employed in order to soften the discourse around captivity, and seek its justification. We can find euphemisms in the following statement:

Zoos and aquariums are redefined by society as organisations that save populations of species in the wild, while delivering the highest standards of care and welfare for their resident animals (p. 30).

The euphemism employed in this sentence, "resident animals", replaces "captive animals", as it has a more positive connotation of comfort and satisfactory living conditions. Moreover, the presupposition involved in the statement is that the zoo and aquaria sector's concern about the environment and conservation is a reaction to the social climate of preoccupation. Through such statements WAZA reiterates its commitment to society and its sensibility.

Another euphemism can be found in the phrase which describes "connecting animal experiences in zoological facilities to conservation in the wild" (p. 31). "Animal experiences" stands for captivity or captive breeding, however it adds a more positive connotation to the phrase.

Hedging is also employed in reference to the "Strategic Plan for Biodiversity" discussed in a WAZA conference in 2011:

WAZA and all its member zoos and aquariums, and other zoological facilities that want to conserve species and habitats, have a potentially powerful role to play in the achievement of many of these targets (p. 18).

WAZA expresses prudence through vocabulary such as "potentially powerful role", "many of these targets", as it is assumed that possibly not all the targets will be met. Similarly, a euphemism is used in the list of "challenges" to the conservation efforts by zoos and aquaria, which include "the management of group-living species, low reproductive success, metapopulation management and adaptation to being kept in human care" (p. 55). "Challenges" is the preferred choice of word instead of "problem" throughout the guide, which softens the discourse, just as "adaptation to being kept in human care", which stands for forced adaptation to captivity.

#### 4.3.2.7. *Discourse on education*

In order to stress education as one of its aims, WAZA appeals for the creation of a "culture of conservation", which will generate "the attitude and will needed to save

species and maintain healthy ecosystems” (p. 22). The educative value of zoos and aquaria is emphasised through persuasive language, meant to convince humans to change their lifestyle and participate in the conservation efforts promoted by WAZA. For these efforts to be successful, humans “must change how they live, and how they apply knowledge and skills” and they “must be inspired to understand that life on earth is fragile” (p. 17). The use of modalisation in such phrases expresses WAZA’s high level of commitment to education and conservation.

This discursive strategy is further employed in other phrases: “Essentially people must understand and believe that visiting a zoological facility helps to save animals in the wild”, “they should learn enough to feel inspired and motivated to become active supporters of zoological facilities and advocates for conservation”, “visitors must be engaged” and “it is essential to reach not only the minds but also the hearts of visitors” (p. 25). The explicit idea behind these statements is that a zoo visit contributes to saving species in their natural habitats, and inspires humans to actively support the conservation of species and ecosystems. The idea is further reinforced as zoos and aquaria supposedly provide “exceptional, behaviour-changing, guest experiences” (p. 30).

One of the educational objectives detailed in the guide is “instilling in all visitors a strong sense of excitement about and a desire to care for life on earth will create a solid platform for fulfilling the promise to care for and conserve wildlife” (p. 17). Such discourse portrays the non-human animals as vulnerable and needing human protection. WAZA also establishes the dichotomy between humans and non-humans as it attempts to “mitigate human–wildlife conflicts” (p. 32) as part of its educational strategy. Moreover, WAZA claims that zoos and aquaria build “compassion and awareness” (p. 45). However, this promotion of compassion is incoherent with WAZA’s *Seafood Watch* programme mentioned in the guide, which encourages humans to eat sustainable “seafood” (p. 46). Collectivisation and objectification are both employed to create detachment and classify the marine animals according to their function from human perspective.

Connection to other species as an educational benefit of a zoo visit is explained in the following fragment:

Zoos and aquariums provide a unique opportunity to increase understanding of wildlife species, their environmental needs and their ability to adapt. This can fill an important gap in knowledge that cannot be gained from wild populations because of cryptic animal behaviour, inaccessible environments, limited access to the animals, prohibitive costs of studying enough individuals and the likelihood of the study itself impacting on the animals being observed (p. 37).

What is suggested is that outside a zoo, humans cannot effectively learn about other animals because of their inaccessibility and behaviour in their natural habitats. In captivity the other animals are exposed and can be observed easily. Another presupposition involved in the statement is that non-human animals should be accessible for humans. Moreover, while the study of non-human species in their habitat

can impact them, the possibility of an impact of a study of captive individuals is suppressed in the fragment. The “access to individuals” provides “context and life-history parameters” (p. 37). This phrase suppresses the fact that the access is unwanted by the captive non-human animals, and forced by humans. While some context is provided to the human visitors regarding the entire species, rather than the captive individuals, the non-human animals are removed from their context - the habitat, climate and often also the social context. The same is suppressed in the following phrase on the emotional connection between the captive individuals and the visiting humans, as WAZA claims that zoos and aquaria “leverage the special emotional connections between animals and visitors to provide formal and informal learning opportunities in conservation education and the broader environmental-education sciences” (p. 45).

Similarly, environmental enrichment of the enclosures is also focused on the visitors’ viewing pleasure, as it is admitted that “well-designed environments for healthy animals are strong vehicles by which to engage visitors” (p. 46). Further on, one of the recommendations regarding the educational function of zoos and aquaria is to define “the composition of zoo and aquarium species and animal behaviours to engage visitors in pro-conservation behaviours” (p. 49). Thus, WAZA considers the possibility of providing the desired species and animal behaviours to the public - supposedly for the sake of engaging the visitors in "pro-conservation behaviours".

#### 4.3.2.8. *Animal welfare*

The section of the guide dedicated to “animal welfare” opens with the definition of ideal animal welfare:

Excellent animal welfare is fundamental to achieving a shared wildlife-conservation goal. Demonstrating that the welfare of animals is of the highest possible standard is crucial and must be conspicuous in all zoos and aquariums. While conservation of wildlife is the core purpose of zoological facilities, positive animal welfare is their core activity (p. 59).

The definition involves an over-lexicalisation of adjectives denoting importance: “fundamental”, “crucial”, “core”. Also, “excellent” and “highest possible” refer to the degree of animal welfare. Similarly, the list of welfare objectives of zoos and aquaria involves hedging, as their main aim is “to provide for the complex needs of animals and aim, as far as possible, to allow species in their care to express as wide an array of natural behaviours as possible” (p. 59). The use of hedging in “as far as possible” and “as wide an array” introduces ambiguity regarding the question of natural behaviour in captivity. The implicit assumption is that not all natural behaviours can be displayed by the captive animals due to their confinement. Moreover, "species" stands for individuals, since species do not express behaviours as individuals do.

WAZA describes the value of the captive individuals through their “high conservation value” but also “high intrinsic value”. However, as it is stressed as equally

important, the captive non-human animals “are often loved by visitors —and can become a focus of intense public interest and emotional engagement” (p. 59). Thus, the value is highly dependent on the public’s interest in particular species and individuals.

Another suppression is involved in a statement regarding sentience of non-human animals, as despite acknowledging the existence of “psychological states of animals”, the effects of captivity on the individuals’ health are not mentioned. What is suggested as a possible improvement is environmental enrichment, which assures “positive animal welfare”, achieved for an individual “when its physical and psychological needs are met, and when the environment provides it with rewarding challenges and choices over time” (p. 59). Apart from the objectification through the use of the pronoun “it”, the sentence suppresses the possibility of a psychological impact of confinement and exposure to human public on the captive individuals’ psychological health.

Furthermore, hedging obscures the authorship of the following statement regarding the captive animals’ importance for conservation:

It is widely held that animals in zoos and aquariums are ‘ambassadors’ for animals in the wild and assist in communicating key messages to society on the conservation of biodiversity (p. 59).

“It is widely held” implies a presupposition that the idea is widespread in society. Moreover, it is deliberately not mentioned that such “ambassadors” are human-appointed and do not communicate the messages willingly or consciously.

The guide also provides recommendations for “animal demonstrations or interactions with the public”, in which a “strong conservation messages should also be communicated and the process must always be undertaken in such a way that the welfare of individual animals is not compromised” (p. 59). It is assumed that such exhibitions are possible without stress caused to the individuals due to exposure to a human public. Furthermore, the conservation message provides a justification for the use of individuals in the exhibitions.

WAZA defends the behavioural conditioning of the captive animals involved in breeding programmes for later reintroduction into the natural habitat. It is admitted that such practices “may be considered by some as ‘stressful’ for individual animals and/or against their positive welfare” (p. 60), however such claims are played down through the use of hedging in the words “by some” and the modal verb “may”, which implies low probability. Further on, behavioural conditioning is detailed as follows:

Many breed-for-release programmes undertake pre-release conditioning, which may include pre-release predator training that instigates flight responses; the manipulation of diet to replicate food availability in the wild; or introducing live prey items (p. 60).

It is assumed that human-initiated training will increase the survival of individuals reintroduced to their natural habitats, while the use of “live prey” is also supported. The

conditioning is also defended through the use of nominalisation, such as in “intensive management and associated conservation actions” or “strategic and higher-level conservation outlook” (p. 60). These terms denoting unspecified actions soften the description of the pre-release conditioning, and obscure the real actions.

Finally, we find a statement on animal welfare which is highly revealing with regards to WAZA’s policies:

Controversial practices should be subjected to ethical review or a critical-evaluation process to make sure that the end justifies the means. [...] positive welfare represents a net accumulation of positive over negative experiences in the life of an animal, the transient nature of these strategies are acceptable in that they meet the broader strategic objectives of conservation welfare (p. 60).

Hence, compromising an individual’s welfare is acceptable when “the end justifies the means”, and namely if the controversial practice is performed in the name of conservation of species. Moreover, according to WAZA, subjecting an individual to negative experiences is acceptable if the individual has more positive experiences than negative ones. In spite of such policies, WAZA expresses its commitment to animal welfare with the following statement: “We commit to: Treat all animals in our zoos and aquariums with respect” (p. 61).

#### 4.3.2.9. *Research, lobbying*

The lobbying objectives, listed explicitly in the document, also involve a wide range of discursive strategies aimed at justifying the captivity of non-human animals. One of the aims of WAZA’s conservation strategy is “mobilising social and political will on behalf of wildlife” (p. 17). The free-living and captive non-human animals are collectivised as “wildlife” and their agenda is removed as they require lobbying on their behalf.

Research conducted by zoos and aquaria is another justification of captivity, since it “leads to better management of the animals in their care and wild populations, and thus contribute to the viability of species in a world that faces an enormous conservation crisis”. Objectification is used when the captive animals are treated as a “valuable resource to academic-community researchers” (p. 37).

In terms of welfare of the captive animals who are researched on, WAZA observes that “studies must not compromise the well-being of animals”. However, it is revealed that “potential temporary reductions in welfare” are acceptable if they are outweighed by “the benefit in terms of gained knowledge” and the research “benefits the conservation mission of zoos and aquariums” (p. 37). Hence, WAZA approves of research on captive individuals, while taking for granted that the well-being of the individuals used for such studies will be compromised. The use of adjectives such as “potential” and “temporary” softens the discourse, since they reduce the probability and importance of the individual’s suffering.

## 5. Conclusions

In the previous sections I have analysed the discourse of the three most important interest groups uniting zoos and aquaria in the Iberian Peninsula (Asociación Ibérica de Zoos y Acuarios or AIZA), in Europe (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria or EAZA) and the worldwide association (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums or WAZA). The objective of this analysis was to answer the following research questions detailed in the introduction to this paper:

1. Do these three interest groups employ speciesist discourse in their communication output?
2. How do they justify the captivity of the non-human animals?
3. Are there any differences in the discourse employed by these lobbies?

The main reason for performing this analysis is to challenge the possible speciesist and anthropocentric discourse from a non-speciesist perspective. As there is little research available on the discourse affecting the perception of zoological gardens and marine mammal parks, and even fewer studies focus on the links between zoos and interest groups with their persuasive communication, my research could be an opportunity to expand the existing analysis with a new and extremely relevant perspective. Since the discourse defending the existence and functioning of zoos and aquaria is highly successful with the society and authorities, there is a significant need for conducting such a discourse analysis.

The methodological perspective applied in this study is critical discourse analysis (CDA), which consists in the analysis of lexical structures, suppressions, presuppositions, modalisation, rhetoric tropes and other discursive strategies which reinforce unequal power relations. The perspective is especially relevant in the study of racist or sexist language, however it is also extremely useful in the analysis of speciesist or anthropocentric discourses. The texts selected for this analysis are the contents of the three associations' websites regarding their values and objectives, as well as four guides which detail their conservation, education and research strategies.

The findings show that the three interest groups use a highly speciesist discourse in their websites and the analysed publications, while also justifying the captivity of the enslaved non-human animals through emphasising the importance of zoos for the conservation of species, education and research. Apart from speciesist discourse, all three associations employ the discourse of conservation or ecological economics, which are highly anthropocentric. The differences found between the discourses of the three lobbies are mostly nuances, as their language and objectives are extremely similar.

The below sections provide an explanation on how the findings relate to my research questions, in an attempt to understand how the three lobbies' use their persuasive communication to influence the public opinion.

### 5.1. Speciesist discourse

Although all three interest groups commit to animal welfare and the conservation of non-human animal species, their discourse is clearly speciesist and anthropocentric. This is manifested especially through the frequent use of objectification and collectivisation, as in the expressions “specimen”, “fauna”, “wildlife”, “prey”, “surplus animal stock” or “seafood”. The frequent use of the adjective “wild” to refer to the captive and free-living animals is another sign of speciesist language, as observed by Dunayer (2001). Hence, the captive and free-living individuals are considered in terms of their species, or as entire populations, as the main concern is about self-sustaining populations of non-human animal species in their natural habitat, and their genetic diversity. Furthermore, the agenda of the non-human animals is often removed through the use of passivated verbs, and wording which presents them as vulnerable and requiring human assistance.

Speciesist bias is further visible in the multiple suppressions used in all the analysed texts and websites, which conceal such controversial issues as the psychological effects of captivity on the health of the individuals. It is also employed in order to conceal the colonial past of zoological gardens, or the reasons for the loss of habitat of free-living non-human animals, which then allows the three interest groups to elevate captive breeding to the same importance as in situ conservation. Finally, one of the functions of suppression is also to conceal the agenda and interests of the captive individuals, which further reveals the speciesist ideology behind the discourse of all three interest groups.

Furthermore, several presuppositions also reveal the speciesist ideology underlying the analysed discourse. The three zoo and aquaria associations emphasise the importance of meeting the captive animals’ needs, assuming that living in an environment which is not limited by artificial, human-imposed boundaries is not one of the needs. Several analysed fragments describe the role of connecting humans to nature as one of the advantages of a zoo or aquarium visit, which conceals the assumption that non-human animals should be available for humans for viewing pleasure and education. Another common presupposition is that exhibiting non-human animals is possible without compromising their welfare, as human interests are decisive. Such implicit or sometimes explicit ideas, which ignore the captive animals’ interests and sentience, are characteristic of speciesist discourse.

What is even more revealing of speciesism is EAZA’s and WAZA’s stance on the killing of unneeded captive individuals, which is referred to as “euthanasia”, “management euthanasia” or “culling”, and described as a “structural solution”. Even if such killings are performed painlessly, as the associations claim, the interest of the individuals in remaining alive is not considered and they are deprived of further experiences, as criticised by such authors as Horta (2013).

Additionally, all three interest groups stress the importance of ethics in their treatment of the captive animals, while WAZA also mentions the word “morality”. However, despite the intended reinvention of zoos and aquaria as conservation-oriented institutions, the captive individuals are still being exhibited for profit and most of them

never participate in reintroduction programmes. The discourse of AIZA, EAZA and WAZA is clearly speciesist inasmuch as it does not consider the interest of the captive individuals, who are deprived of the freedom of movement, and mostly spend their entire lives in artificial enclosures, significantly smaller than the territories typical for their species in their natural habitat.

The other discourses found in the analysed content are centred around conservation and ecology. Such discourses, as noted by Stibbe (2010) are highly anthropocentric, since they value ecosystems, populations or whole species above the individual non-human animals. The main feature of these discourses is the collective treatment of non-human animals as resources, and the ecosystems as providers of services and goods. According to the conservationist perspective, the survival of species and the protection of the environment are important since they ensure the survival of humans.

## 5.2. Justification of captivity

The discourse of all three interest groups is organised around three pillars, which are meant to justify the captivity of the non-human animals: Conservation, education and research. Throughout the analysed texts, AIZA, EAZA and WAZA display significant interest in persuading the reader that keeping non-human animals in captivity is a means of securing the future of biodiversity, hence this objective justifies the methods, as WAZA admits explicitly in its guide.

The alarmist tone which characterises the discourse of the analysed interest groups creates a sense of threat to the natural habitats of free-living animals. This leads to the conclusion that zoos and aquaria provide shelter for non-human animals and guarantee their survival as species, which would otherwise be endangered in the external world. Zoos and aquaria are presented as a refuge from the threatened, hostile natural environment. They are necessary for the protection of free-roaming individuals from environmental deterioration, habitat destruction, hunting, etc.

Focusing the discourse on species instead of individuals, as well as the use of hedging and euphemisms, are discursive strategies meant to create emotional detachment and soften the discourse on captivity. The enclosures and cages are referred to as “housing” or “accommodation”, while the captive animals are “resident animals” or animals “in human care”. Euphemisms are also employed in order to introduce ambiguity in sentences describing the treatment of the captive individuals, who are “managed”, “handled” or “cared for” by the zoos and aquaria. Hedging further obscures the authorship of statements regarding conservation or animal welfare. In other occasions it is used to introduce statements which could be considered controversial, such as the importance of funding and the economic value of conservation for humans. Hence, these linguistic strategies result in a softening of the discourse with regards to ethically questionable practice or, for example, economic interest.

Another discursive strategy aimed at justifying the captivity of non-human animals can be observed in the images used in the analysed websites and some of the

documents. None of the images portray captive individuals in their enclosures, which suppress the fact that the main function of zoos and aquaria is the exhibition of non-human animals for entertainment and profit. Most images show healthy individuals in their natural habitat, sometimes with blurred background, as objects of research or being released into their natural environment as part of a reintroduction programme. The main reason for this choice of photographs is to emphasise the supposedly important role of zoos and aquaria in the conservation of species both through in situ and ex situ programmes.

While the conservation efforts of zoos and aquaria involving captive breeding or “gene banks” provide a justification for keeping non-human animals in captivity, the captive breeding programmes have been strongly criticised as a “fallacy” (Malamud, 1998; p. 45) for its little effectiveness, since “the majority of animals in zoos are not even endangered”, as noted by DeMello (2012b, p. 106).

The educational objectives achieve the same for the purpose of exhibiting the individuals to the public. All three analysed interest groups emphasise the importance of viewing animal behaviour for the education of zoo and aquaria visitors, however, as many authors such as Malamud (1998 & 2012) or DeMello (2012b) have noted, the behaviour of the captive animals is far from natural and rather typical of captivity. Their criticism of exhibiting non-human animals for mere entertainment and profit conceals the fact that zoos and aquaria exhibit the captive individuals for the same reason.

Furthermore, all three interest groups express their concern with environmental issues which affect non-humans and humans. They acknowledge the seriousness of the environmental issues which affect most, if not all ecosystems, as well as the fact that this deterioration is human-generated. In other words, they seek to legitimise their activities through showing commitment to the society and its future. At the same time, the image of zoos and aquaria as modern, progressive and professional establishments is promoted through the use of over-lexicalisation of positive terms, mainly including abstract nouns and adjectives with positive connotations.

The high commitment to animal welfare, expressed especially through frequent modalisation in the form of such modals as “must” or “may”, is also meant to ensure public credibility, and consequently secure the legitimacy of captivity. All three interest groups stress that the redefinition of zoos and aquaria with the new focus, is a reaction to public awareness and social demands, and therefore they reiterate their social commitment. Finally, the continuity of zoo and aquaria business is also guaranteed through the participation of these establishments in research projects.

### 5.3. Differences between the discourses

No substantial differences between the discourses of the three interest groups have been found, however some nuances have been observed. For instance, the guide published in collaboration with AIZA is the only document which frequently employs the word “captive” and “captivity”, while EAZA and WAZA choose to replace with such euphemisms as “in our care”, “housing” or “accommodation”. Furthermore, in

comparison to their European and worldwide counterparts, the guide co-edited by AIZA expresses much more self-criticism. Throughout the analysed document, old zoos and aquaria are criticised for being entertainment and profit-oriented. Validity of criticism for what is considered “unjustified captivity” is accepted, however this carries the assumption that captivity can be justified. Moreover, the social debate around the role and existence of zoos and aquaria is accepted and considered “compelling”.

The authors also admit the controversy around captive breeding programmes, however the frequent practice of killing unneeded individuals in zoos and aquaria is not mentioned. Similarly, it is admitted that captivity could have adverse effects on an individual’s well-being. The guide also more openly admits the deficiencies and weaknesses of its member zoos and aquaria.

Another characteristic of the guide shared by AIZA is the apparent strong rejection of the vision of zoos and aquaria as profit-oriented business. For example, captivity is only seen as justifiable if the aim is non-commercial, as the authors express distance from those establishments which display non-human animals only for profit and entertainment. Additionally, the economic interest of zoos and aquaria and their partners in conservation programmes is not discussed.

EAZA shares some of the characteristics of the discourse in AIZA’s guide, as, for example, the strong criticism of materialism and profit-oriented mentality. The European association also expresses its disapproval of any commercial interest in keeping non-human animals in captivity. However, EAZA’s tone concerning environmental issues is arguably more alarmist and the website involves a highly emotional language, meant to involve the wider public in conservation efforts. The analysed guides include a more ambiguous language than in the case of AIZA’s, owing to the multiple nominalisations. Moreover, EAZA explicitly discusses the killing of unneeded individuals in its zoos and aquaria as a management method. Finally, little attention is devoted to the criticism of zoos and aquaria, which is only briefly mentioned as a media debate.

WAZA’s guide on conservation is generally more focused on in situ conservation programmes than the ones developed in zoos and aquaria, as it is admitted that ex situ programmes are limited and cannot make a significant long-term impact. As far as conservation is concerned, WAZA employs the most alarmist tone out of all three interest groups, which reinforces their justification of captivity.

WAZA also stresses the importance of the guest experience more than the guides published by AIZA and EAZA, which paid more attention to animal welfare. Moreover, the worldwide association explicitly admits its lobbying objectives and openly discusses the possibility of an economic interest of partners and authorities in conservation projects. Hence, the commercial nature and the benefits of conservation for humans are openly admitted, unlike in the discourses of AIZA’s and EAZA’s guides.

Furthermore, the discourse of WAZA is perhaps the most incoherent, especially with regards to the selection of species for breeding and conservation programmes. In the preface to its guide, WAZA admits that it prioritises the breeding of some species over others, more difficult to breed, in order to show the effect of the conservation programmes. The statement breaks the coherence of the guide’s discourse on

endangered species conservation. Finally, the worldwide interest group is the only one to openly admit that compromising a captive individual's well-being is acceptable in the name of conservation, education or research.

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