

As Design for Interaction student I was excited about joining the DfAnimal lab, as it provides many opportunities for new types of interactions. It tries to step away from the 'human-centred' focus in the current industrial design field and be 'animal-centred' (too). I felt it would be a missed opportunity to, naturally assume the current focus on the need for 'practical use', instead of concentrating on finding something more fundamental about animals, connected to design. Therefore the first question I asked myself was:

## WHAT TO DESIGN FOR WITHIN THE DfANIMAL LAB?

First of all I saw a unique relationship between humans and dogs. Taking a purely animal-centred focus instead of a human-centred one felt like yet another extreme. This all together made me choose to take a human-dog perspective. Further more I wanted to take a future perspective, to avoid aiming to solve a current problem, in my attempt to concentrate on finding something 'more fundamental'. This let me to decide to research the following question:

## WHAT MIGHT THE FUTURE HUMAN-DOG RELATIONSHIP LOOK LIKE?

I decided to explore the future human-dog relationship by using **design as a means of speculating (on the human-dog relationship)**. I felt this might create the possibility to explore something abstract as the future, by enabling people to consider (alternative versions of) the latter. Using so called **speculative design** during this graduation project, raised the following question:

## WHAT TO SPECULATE ON? [1]

What subjects might be of influence on the future human-dog relationship was determined in the following way. An analysis of respectively the current, past and future context was made, considering the questions:

what describes the current human-dog relationship?

what has happened leading up until this moment in time?

what does this mean for the future?

## WHAT DESCRIBES THE CURRENT HUMAN-DOG RELATIONSHIP?

I consider the following meaning to be derived by humans from the roles dogs fulfil at present:

dogs offer 'safety'

dogs are seen as being 'family'

dogs create 'independence'

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED LEADING UP UNTIL THIS MOMENT IN TIME?

I presume the relationship has evolved in the following way in the past:

dogs have continuously provided 'safety'

## WHICH FACTORS MIGHT INFLUENCE THE FUTURE?

I expect the factors of most influence on the future context to be:

humans are becoming more and more technology dependent

humans will become increasingly aware of their ability to alter the environment

humans will become increasingly aware of their impact on/ responsibility for the environment and animal welfare

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE FUTURE ?

dogs might provide 'safety' in a new way by being humans' 'bridge to nature'. To do so they should not become us, but remain autonomous

how can dogs come even closer to humans?

why not give dogs back some of their independence?

how can the mutual symbiosis be restored to a more equal level?

## WHAT IF DOGS HAD RIGHTS SIMILAR TO OUR HUMAN RIGHTS ?

Now, I could start with designing these different rights themselves, to speculate on the future-human-dog relationship, by asking the question:

## WHAT RIGHTS (ARE RELEVANT) TO CREATE FOR DOGS?

I decided to not just design these rights themselves, but to ask the question:

## WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF THESE RIGHTS WERE IMPLEMENTED?

I chose to answer this question, to take it further and look at what this might mean for the way and the environment in which dogs and humans might live together in the future.

I started to design for the facilitation of these rights for dogs.

## HOW CAN SPECULATING ON THIS FUTURE BE ENABLED (THE BEST)? [2]

Taking different considerations on speculative design into account, I decided it was best to (not just focus on designing one or a few (detailed) physical products, but to) design a film to embody the speculative design and best convey the idea as a whole.

## DOES THE FILM ELICIT SPECULATING ON WHAT THE FUTURE MIGHT LOOK LIKE?

To evaluate whether the film elicited speculation, 12 people of different ages, male and female, with a dog and without a dog, were interviewed. They were asked about their view on:

the future human-dog relationship, before seeing the film

the future human-dog relationship right after seeing the film  
The difference in view before and after shows us the impact of the film on enabling people to speculate about the future (human-dog relationship).

The content of the answers after seeing the film shows us the attitude of people towards the future (human-dog relationship).

The outcome which I presumed to be best was, the film sparking its viewers imagination and enable them to come up with even more alternatives: this did not happen!  
Before seeing the film most felt no change would occur in the relationship.

Right after, they reflected (positively and negatively) on the shown idea of this future alternative. They did not come up with their own alternatives.

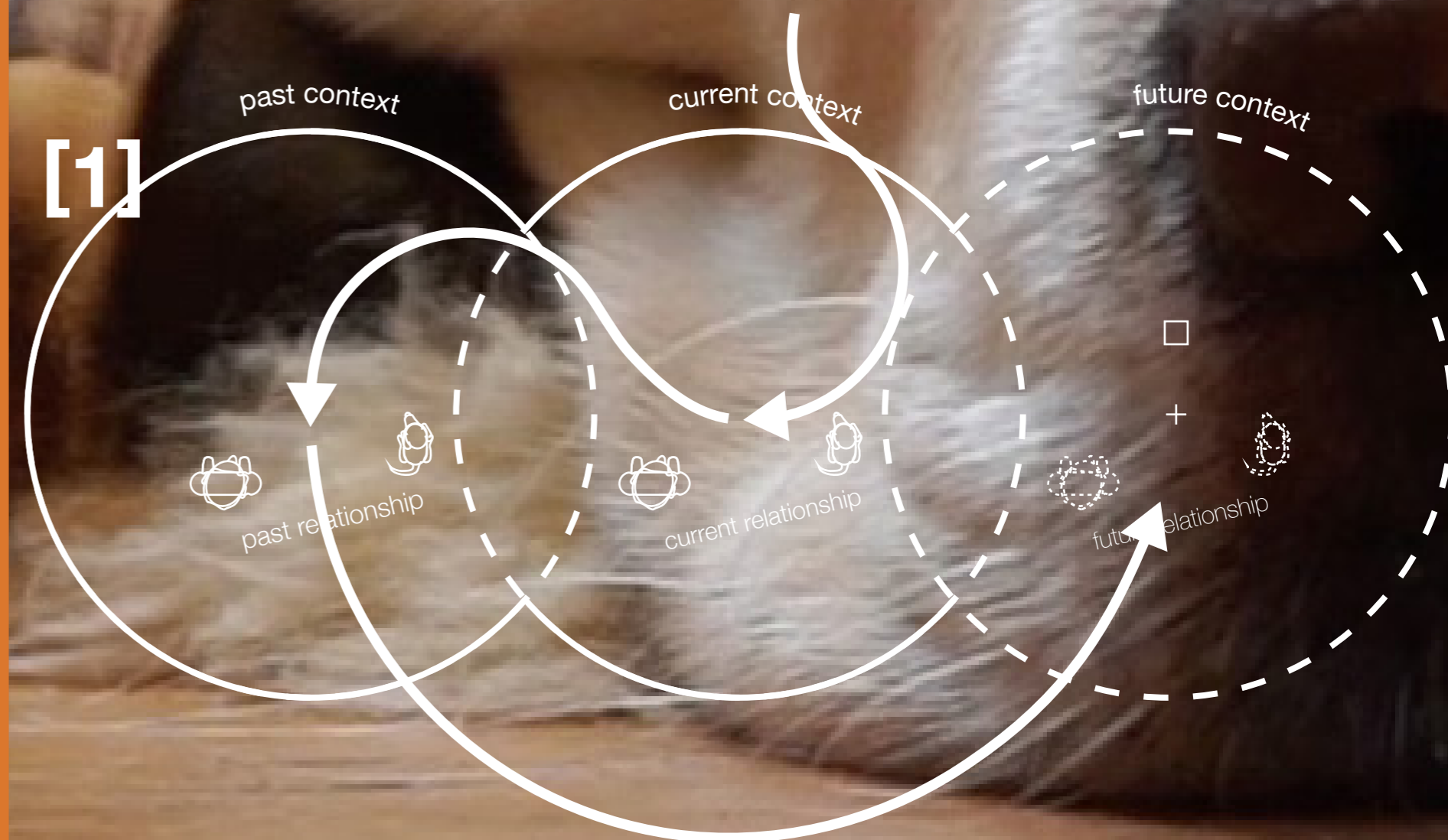
I decided to ask about their view again, longer after they had seen the film: They now did come up with alternative, but these were primarily reflections on their current interactions with dogs.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS?

Although the result, where the film would enable its viewers to come up with alternative futures by themselves, did not occur to the extent I had hoped for, it did spark the imagination of its viewers. What was most interesting was that the film instead of, to a great extent, change people's perception of what the 'future' (human-dog relationship) might be like, changed their perception of dogs themselves.

They now more clearly see the individuality of a dog. This is considered to be a sign there is more potential to further investigate what might be seen as a (desirable) future, where dogs are (more) autonomous individuals in their relationship with humans.

## WHAT WILL THE FUTURE BRING? [2]



moving from the current, to the past, to the future context



film still of the speculative film

# A DOG'S PURPOSE

exploring the future human-dog relationship

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