

A FORAY INTO NOT-QUITE COMPANION SPECIES: DESIGN EXPERIMENTS WITH URBAN- ANIMALS AS SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

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This article has been selected for a special issue of the online journal *Artifact*.

whom we share urban space. Through three design experiments developed around speculative prototypes and co-design tools, we attempt to bring 'wild' urban animals - like magpies and gulls into contact with the residents of a senior retirement home, to explore what new practices can arise between, otherwise, unconnected life-worlds. We expand the notion of *companion species* from philosopher of science Donna Haraway and begin to position the current project within a growing interest in animals in contemporary design research. Through analysis of the design experiments and the subsequent discussion, we argue, that a foray into interspecies relations, can inform the practical research agenda, and, help to re-articulate the dominant anthropocentricity of design research.

to extend design research into new areas of the sociocultural or natural domains. While most of the research projects analysed in this paper maintain a close affinity to technoscience, they almost univocally depict animals, as what American feminist, biologist and philosopher of science, Donna Haraway (2003, 2008) has called a *companion species*. This paper seeks to expand on the concurrent notion of companion species by proposing a category of familiar animals in an urban context, that *not-quiet* fits the interspecies dependencies we would attribute to *significant others*. Or, to be more precise, the precarious potentiality of new relations between animals and humans that raises significant new questions regarding the predominant anthropocentricity in design and design research.

Importantly, these design experiments do not aim to eradicate the human perspective. Rather, it is an attempt to investigate the possibility of a pluralisation of perspectives in design by insisting on placing human and animal actors as equally capable of action. Hence, we aim to expand the horizon of *how* and *whom* we design *with* and include into the design process. As an exploration of what decentralization of the human perspectives in design might entail, we explore the notion of foray¹ through our current design research project *Urban Animals and Us* (UA & Us). The term is

¹ The title of this paper is, unsurprisingly, meant to resonate with Uexküll's notion of foray, as it mimics the title of his booklet: *Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* (2010)