

## Subway, workday, **dogplay**

In San Francisco, a pioneer city of post-family urban lifestyle, in 2020, there were around 120,000 dogs for just 53,000 children under the age of twelve. That's more than two dogs for every child. A symbolic inversion, but far from trivial. This is no Californian specificity : it's an unstoppable wave. A magnifying mirror of the silent transformations of our lifestyles.

In the world's major metropolises, the birth rate is falling. San Francisco is not alone. In Tokyo, the dog population has outnumbered the child population since 2017. In Berlin, there is now one dog for every seven children under ten. In Paris, the crossover could occur by 2035, if trends continue: the number of children has fallen by 12% in ten years, while the number of dogs, already estimated at 300,000 in the Paris region, is growing steadily, particularly in the homes of childless adults.

Behind these figures, lifestyles are asserting themselves. The dog becomes the companion of a lifestyle model based on mobility, remote working, chosen families and less standardized routines. A loved one, less restrictive than a child, more flexible in an unstable daily life. No longer a pet. It's a member of the household. In San Francisco, nearly a third of luxury apartments have a built-in dog bathroom. In Paris, more and more shops - cafés, bookshops, pharmacies - display a "dog welcome" sticker. In Lyon and Bordeaux, some new buildings now include a "dog room" in common areas.

Big cities are redesigning their parks: fewer play areas, more secure dog zones. Dogs no longer share space with children: they replace them. Raising a child in Paris costs around 150,000 euros between

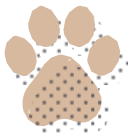
0 and 20 years old. A dog? Around 15,000 to 25,000 euros over a 15-year period. The difference is striking. Couples or singles who give up on parenthood for economic reasons often opt for an animal, perceived as less involving - but no less emotional. Start-ups now offer "peternity" leave. Mutual insurance companies reimburse veterinary care in the same way they used to reimburse pediatricians. The dog is becoming the symbolic child of urban modernity.

Projections for 2045 are more than an extension: they outline a new social, urban and emotional organization. If the birth rate continues its current downward trend (1.83 children per woman in 2023), by 2045, France could have as many dogs as children under the age of fifteen in its major metropolises. In some communities in the Paris region, this could happen before 2040. Cities such as Paris, Lille and Marseille could see ratios of 1.5 dogs to one child, redrawing the hierarchy of urban priorities.

Animal cloning, now marginal (around \$50,000 per operation in the United States), could become commonplace. Lower costs, combined with the rise of genomics will make it possible to keep "the same" companion for decades to come. At the same time, innovation in veterinary medicine - genetic treatments, health monitoring implants, tailor-made nutrition - could double dogs' life expectancy to 25 or even 30 years. The emotional bond, once short-lived, would become almost intergenerational.

Accepting dogs on public transport will no longer be a matter of tolerance: it will be a self-evident truth. In Paris, by 2045, one metro train in three could include "mixed spaces" for humans and animals, with special coatings, noise sensors, water dispensers and rest areas.

Digital interfaces could offer "sensitive zone" alerts for people with allergies or fears, and conversational AI agents integrated into stations could respond to our... paw-senger's needs.



## The story

Lille, 2044. An automatic metro train whizzes through the hushed silence of the city's basements. On board, footsteps and murmurs are interspersed with other sounds that have become familiar: restrained yapping, the rubbing of paw pads on the non-slip floor, purring perceptible in the transparent backpacks. A soft, synthetic voice calls out: "Next stop: Rihour. Please keep your companions under surveillance."

This picture is the result of a gradual shift. For decades, public transport was designed for humans alone. Animals were tolerated on the margins, muzzled, contained and discreet. Then society changed. Fewer children, more animals. A declining birth rate, late or absent couples, solo lives, increased urban loneliness. In Lille, as elsewhere, dogs and cats have taken on a new role: that of constant companions, including in daily mobility.

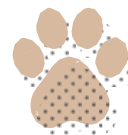
In 2028, the MEL (Métropole Européenne de Lille) launched the first experiment: allowing small animals on streetcars, subject to conditions. In 2031, a second step was taken: medium-sized dogs, on a leash, were allowed on certain lines with limited service hours. In 2035, the "Inclusive Animal Mobility Act" has enabled transit authorities to open up their transport systems to all pets, subject to suitable facilities. In Lille, the first pet-friendly trains saw the light of day in 2036: automatic fountains, cleanable surfaces, signalized zones, olfactory sensors to spot incidents and on-board AI to monitor the atmosphere. In 2040, animal tickets were abolished. Access became free of charge, subject to a charter of good conduct signed when the animal was registered with MEL. Today, over 80,000 animals are registered as "regular users" of the Ilevia network.

Éloïse, 38, lives in Fives. Every day, she takes the metro with Pixel, a lively golden Labrador. Pixel is a clone - the third in a line started in 2020. Thanks to an anti-aging treatment developed by the Pasteur Institute, he could live to be 30. He is also genetically modified to avoid dysplasia. In the trains, Pixel doesn't surprise anyone: he shares space with an exoskeleton-equipped Newfoundland, a Siamese cat in an air-conditioned bubble and a dwarf rabbit in a back harness. A young woman comes home with a child who must be two or three years old. The toddler seems very upset and starts screaming. All the passengers turn around. Éloïse says to herself in a low voice: "It's unbelievable to take your children in the metro, it should be forbidden."

Her neighbor, the one with the dwarf rabbit, says: "I quite agree with you." The owner of the Siamese cat gets up and offers the poor mother his seat if she'd like to sit with her son. The latter, intimidated by the stranger, immediately falls silent. The mother smiles and accepts the offer, sitting down with her son on her lap between Pixel and the dwarf rabbit.

On the train's screen, a government announcement is playing to raise passengers' awareness of the need to stop abandoning animals. Shelters are saturated. The longevity of animals, social pressure to own a companion and the spread of low-cost cloning services have increased the number of indelicate masters, often because no one wanted to take back the animal after the death of its owner. In 2040, the Companion for Life program was born: subsidized veterinary care, emergency shelter, adoption and bereavement leave and free transport. Outside, the city slowly fades away. Pixel, exhausted, falls asleep against Éloïse. A screen shows an advertisement for a new clinic offering canine memory enhancers.





## The scenarios

### BEST CASE SCENARIO

#### The birth rate rebounds

Against all expectations, a societal turnaround occurred in the 2030s: encouraged by proactive public policies, a revaluation of parenthood, flexible working and a better work-life balance, the birth rate began to rise again. Paris, Lyon, Lille and Nantes are once again recording an increase in the number of children born. Births, driven by more optimistic young adults, better housed and supported by innovative schemes such as intergenerational housing, shared vacations and universal family mutual insurance.

In this new context, the dog remains a popular companion, but he doesn't replace the child: he works alongside him. Cities are designing shared facilities: cohabiting parks, parent-pet cafés and even "mixed" transport lines that accommodates both strollers and pet backpacks.

### MODERATE SCENARIO

#### The silent seesaw

By 2045, trends have continued without shock or rupture. The number of dogs has quietly overtaken the number of children in major metropolises, but without making any noise. Cities have adapted only partially, in small steps, without rethinking the balance of uses.

In transport, dogs are tolerated, as are children. But both are perceived as constraints. The infrastructure is neither designed for families nor for animals. Tensions multiply: barking, children crying, annoyed looks, silent reproaches. In the city, dog-friendly facilities are limited to a few specialized areas, while playgrounds are empty.

Children are becoming a minority in cities, sometimes absent from certain gentrified neighborhoods where daycare facilities have disappeared. Mobility is segmented: families on the outskirts, singles in the city center, seniors in between. social cohesion is fading. Public transport is becoming the discreet stage for a society where attachments intersect, but no longer communicate.

### WORST CASE SCENARIO

#### The post-family city

In 2045, the birth rate has continued to fall. The classic family model is no more than a statistical memory in cities. The dog, cloned, modified and augmented, has become the main companion of urban dwellers. Children are rare, often relegated to the outskirts of the city and associated with lifestyle choices deemed archaic or too costly.

In public transport, everything has been designed with the animal in mind: biometric sensors, adaptive ventilation, soothing olfactory coatings, behavior-regulating AI. Children are not forbidden on public transport systems, but their presence often provokes comments from passengers, as they are noisy and irritate the animals.

Emotional credit programs enable everyone to adopt an animal tailored to their emotional profile. Tax credits encourage ownership of a regulated companion, while withdrawing parenting financial aid. Humans, isolated but connected to their canine doubles, no longer cross paths with children. The very notion of generation is fading. The metro carries mostly single individuals accompanied by their augmented companions. 