

Things are People too

An analysis of our relationship to the internet of things from an animist point of view

Overview

- On Animism
- Research Design
- Findings and Implications

**“Animism had endowed things with souls;
industrialism makes souls into things.”**

- Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno

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Animism

So... about this term?

Animism

- treating or seeing the other-than-human as a subjects
- different sources; why
- different expression; how

Active Expression

successful integration

Animism
Mental Model

Re-Active Expression

unable to integrate

Phenomenological

Epistemological

Source

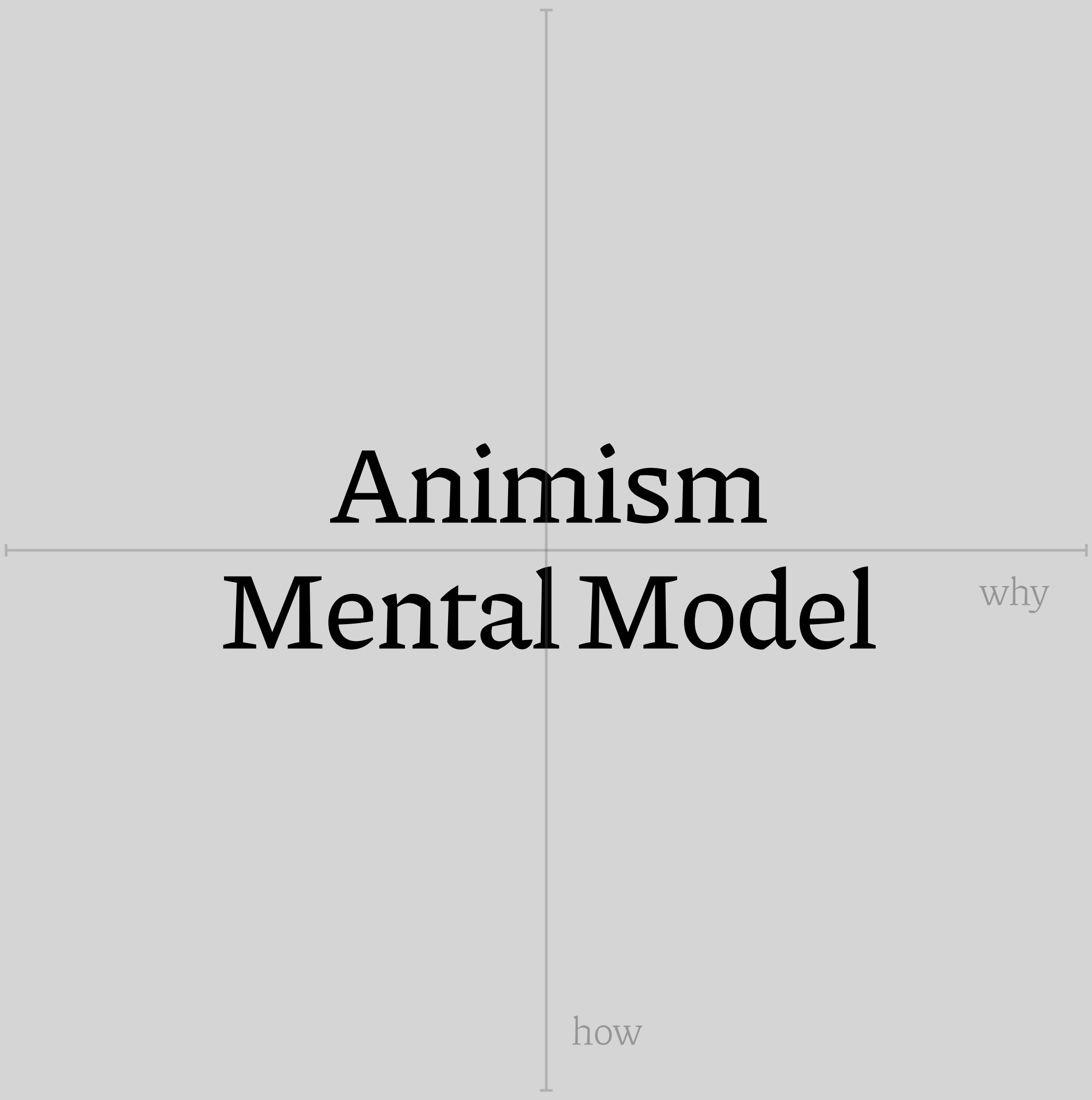
Source

perceived as
having agency,
being alive, etc.

qualities attributed
through knowledge

why

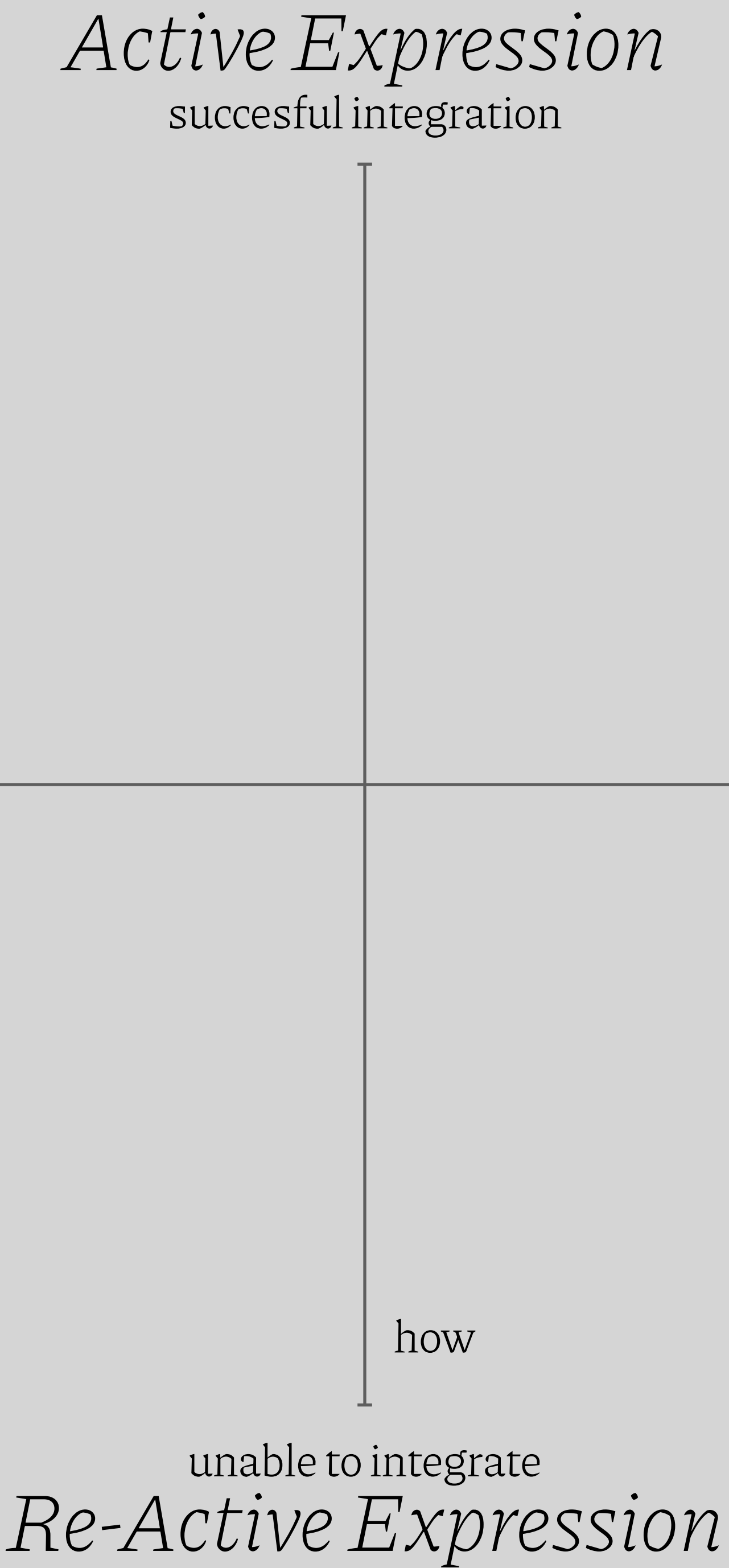
how



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Phenomenological

Source



Epistemological

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through knowledge

Hari-Kuyo

Festival of Broken Needles



Photos via <https://mostlyneedlepoint.com/a-tradition>, May 2021



Guth, C. M. E. (2014). Theorizing the Hari Kuyō: The Ritual Disposal of Needles in Early Modern Japan. *Design and Culture*, 6(2), 169–186.

<https://doi.org/10.2752/175470814X14031924627068>

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Roomba

The Capybara of Household Electronics



Steve Gorton and Tim Ridley, Alexander Hafemann/Getty Images



Sung, J.-Y., Guo, L., Grinter, R. E., & Christensen, H. I. (2007). "My Roomba Is Rambo": Intimate Home Appliances. In J. Krumm, G. D. Abowd, A. Seneviratne, & T. Strang (Eds.), *UbiComp 2007: Ubiquitous Computing* (pp. 145–162). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-74853-3_9

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Aibo

Robot-Pets ... with Souls

Toshifumi Kitamura/AFP/Getty



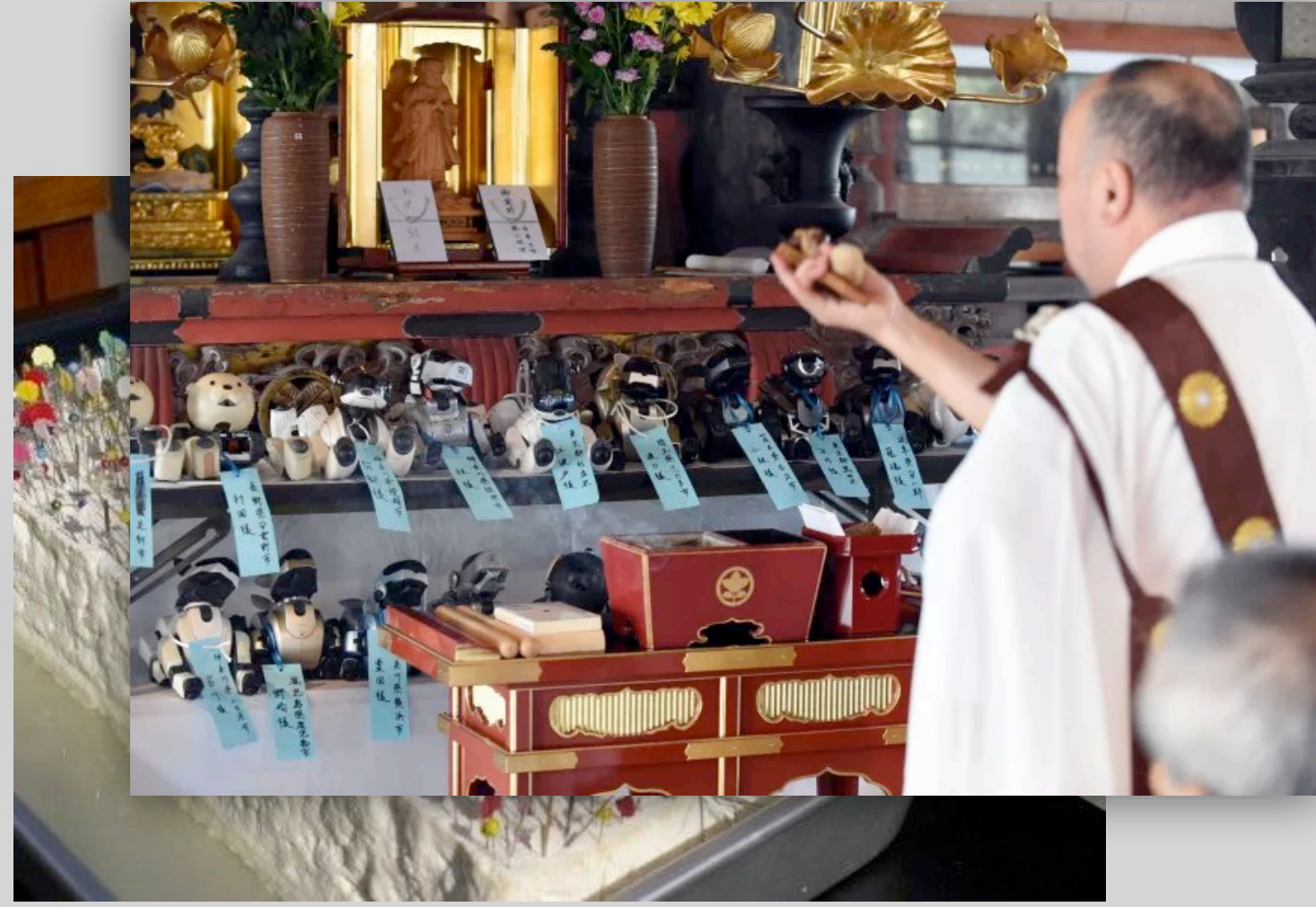
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Hypothesis

Animism can aid in the development of emotional durable design.

How could we use that potential in designing our relationships to consumer electronics?

Research Design

- Swiss Participants
- Voice Assistants
- Emotional Durable Design
- Weak Signals



“*Waste* could be seen as nothing more than a symptom of a *failed relationship*.”

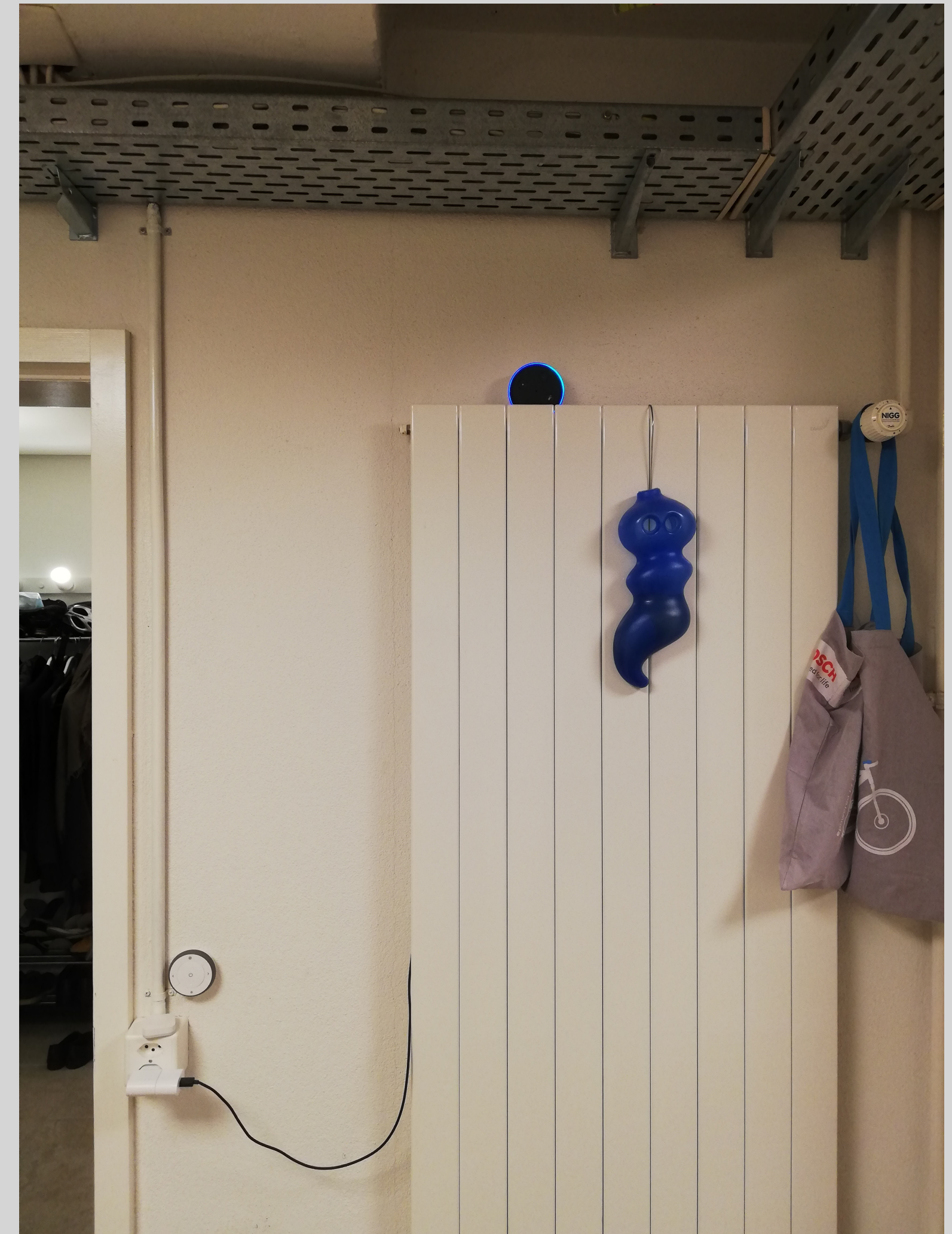
- Jonathan Chapman

Weak Signals

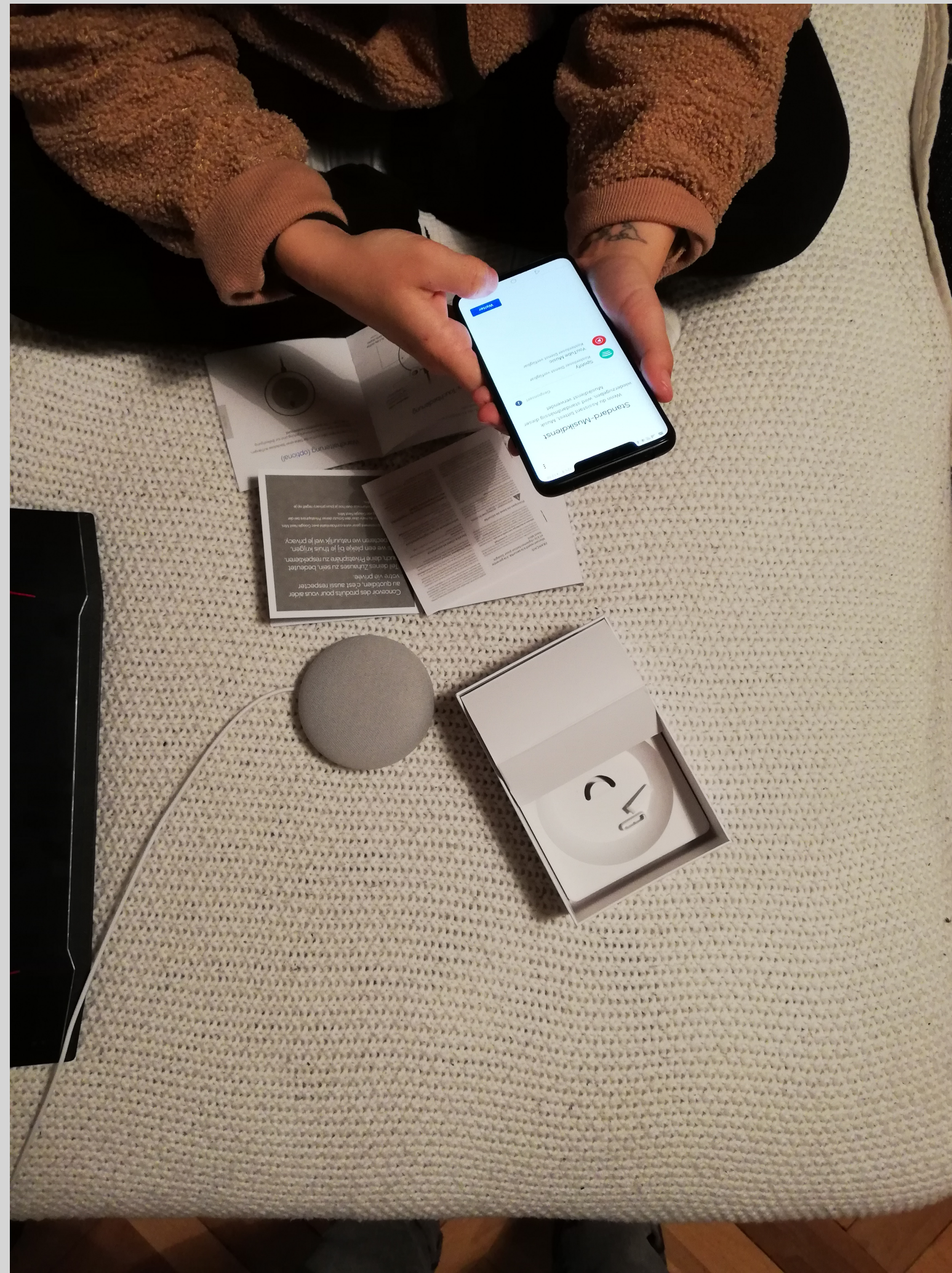
- Speculative/Future Design
- Like Micro Trends

Data Collection

Data Collection, Observation and Interviews



Data Collection, User Journeys



Data Collection, Netnography

- user experience reports
- brand utopias through advertisement
- hacked and customised devices

Data Colle

- user experi
- brand utop
- hacked and

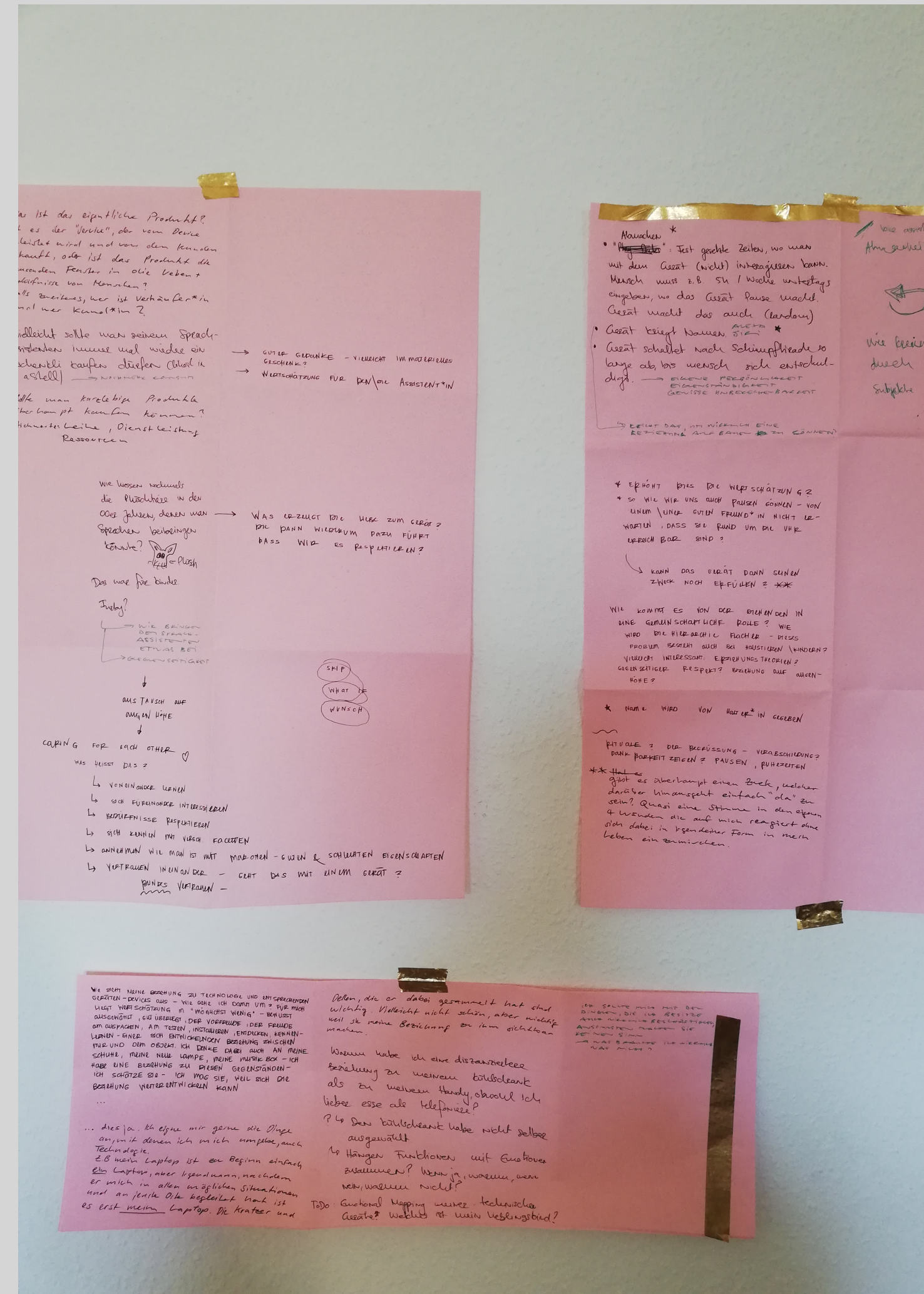
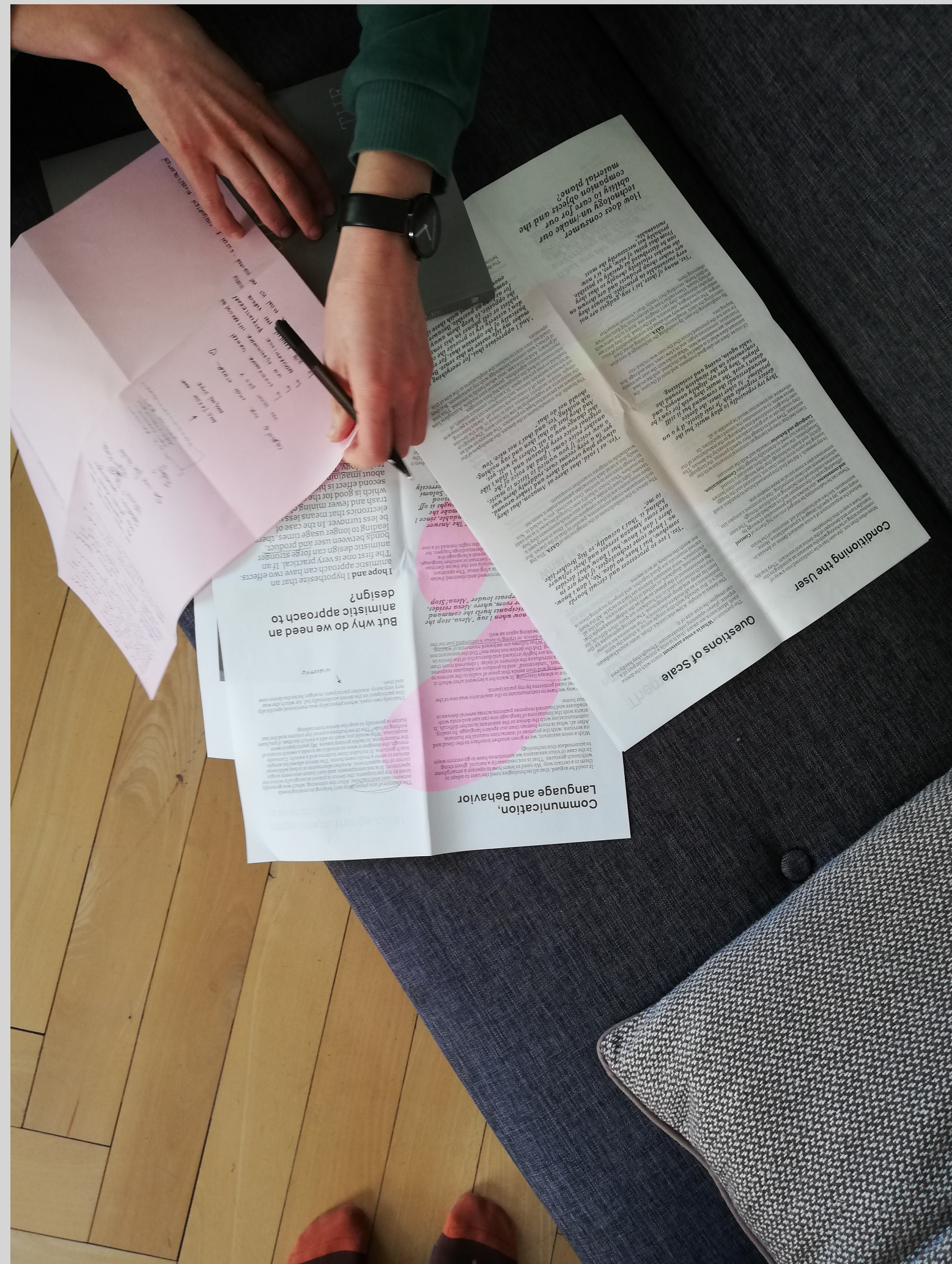


Data Collection

- user experience
- brand utopias
- hacked and cu



Data Collection, Expert Workshop



Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis

reflexive approach after Brown and Clarke

- Classical qualitative data analysis; coding
- Themes don't emerge, they are actively created
- Trail of Truth through reflexive journal

Findings

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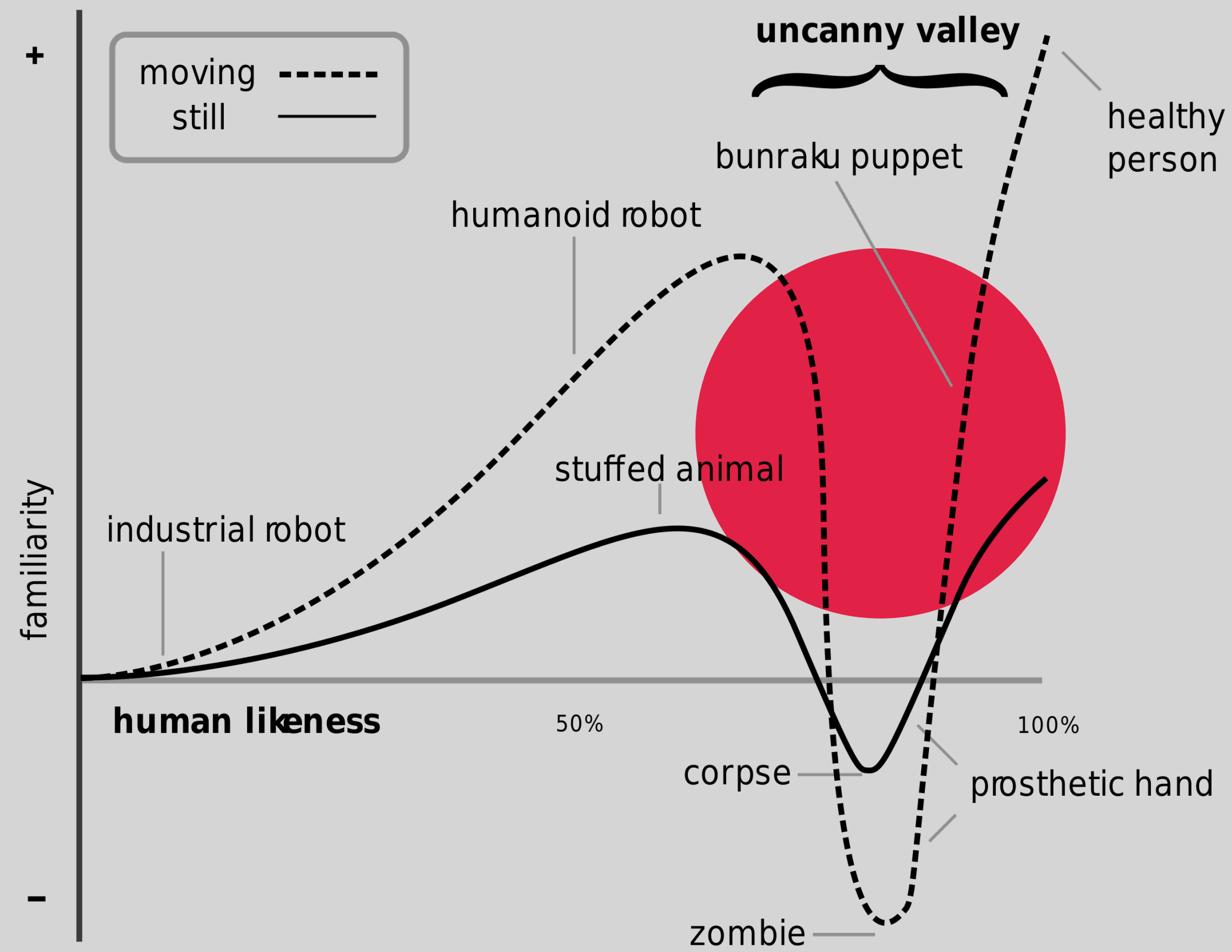
- Uncanny Valley
- Trust Issues

Uncanny Valley

Contrasting feelings

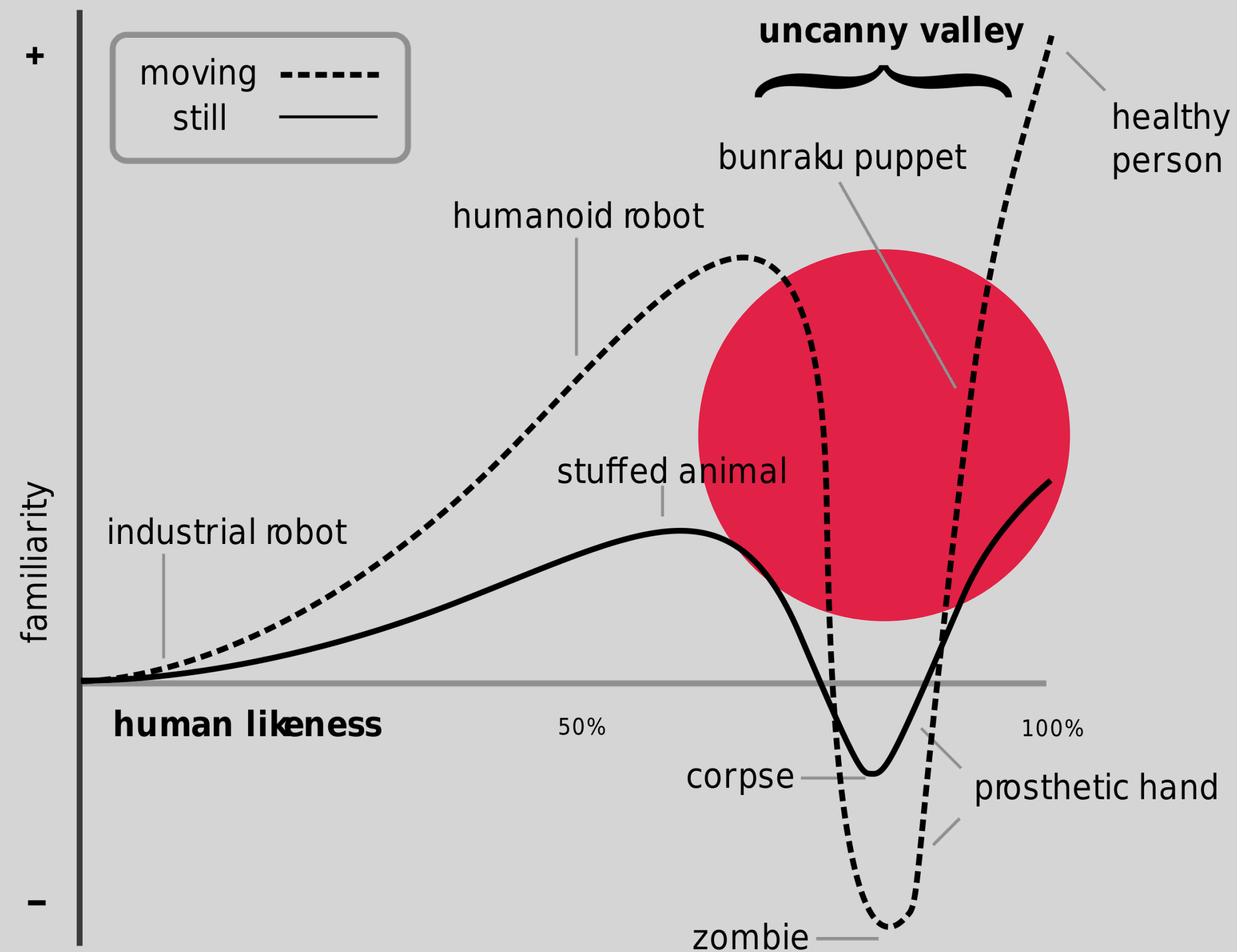
Findings

Uncanny Valley



Findings

Uncanny Valley



“[...] it seems the closer these smart objects get to human behavior, the more they trigger contrasting feelings.”

- Jean-Marc Buchert

Findings

Uncanny Valley

Human Voice versus Non-Human expressions

- activity without interaction
- uncanny communication
- ghostly presence

Findings

Uncanny Valley

Participants miss a proper vocabulary to deal with the other-than-human presence in case of errors and generally have a hard time bonding with voice assistants.

Trust Issues

Privacy, Intimacy, Consent

Findings

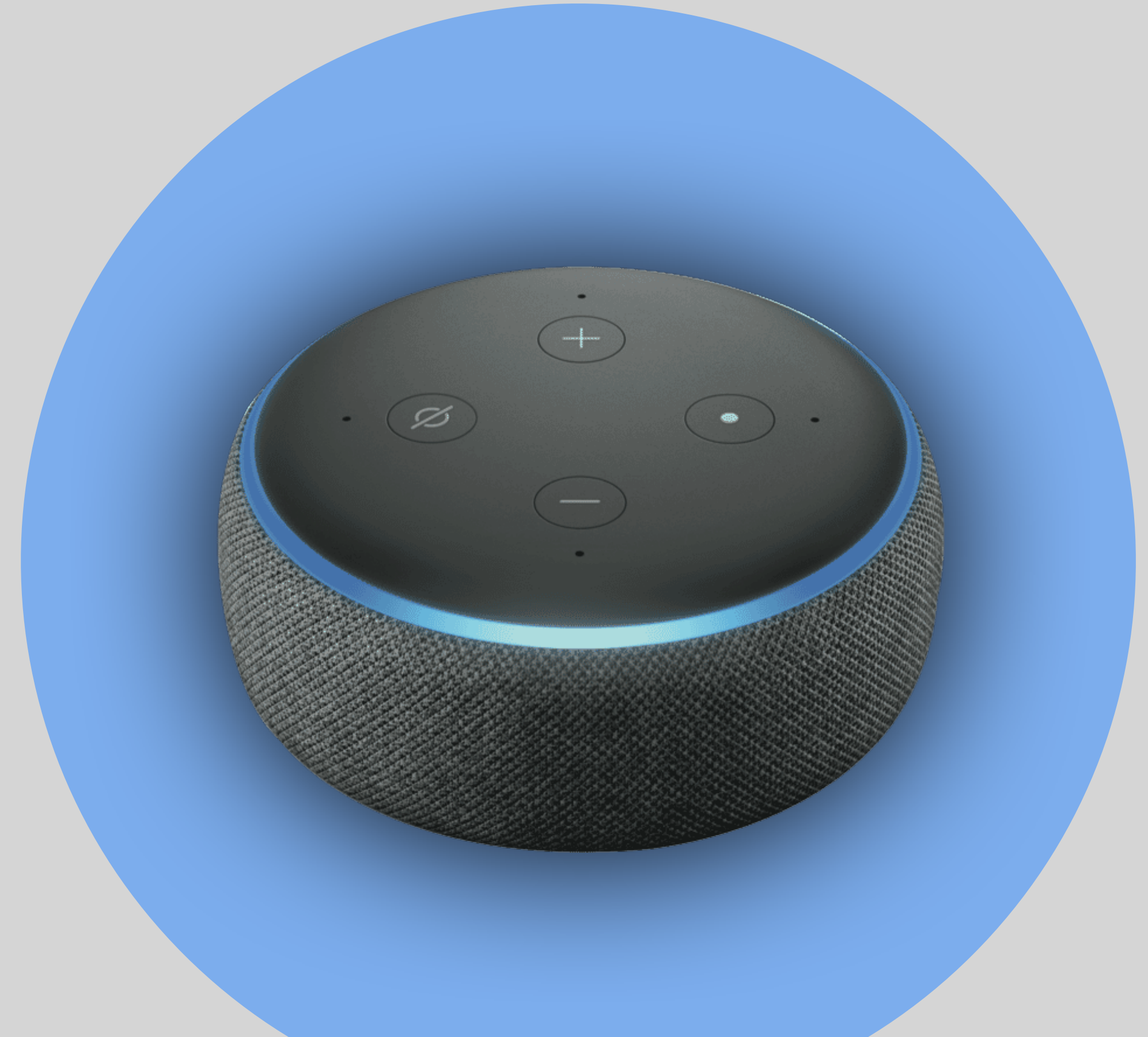
Trust Issues

- Privacy
- Intimacy
- Consent

Findings

Trust Issues

- Privacy
- Intimacy
- Consent




“Yeah, just some creepy little alien in the shadows, lurking, waiting to be used. It's a bit of a poor slave actually.”

- Participant j5mwdx



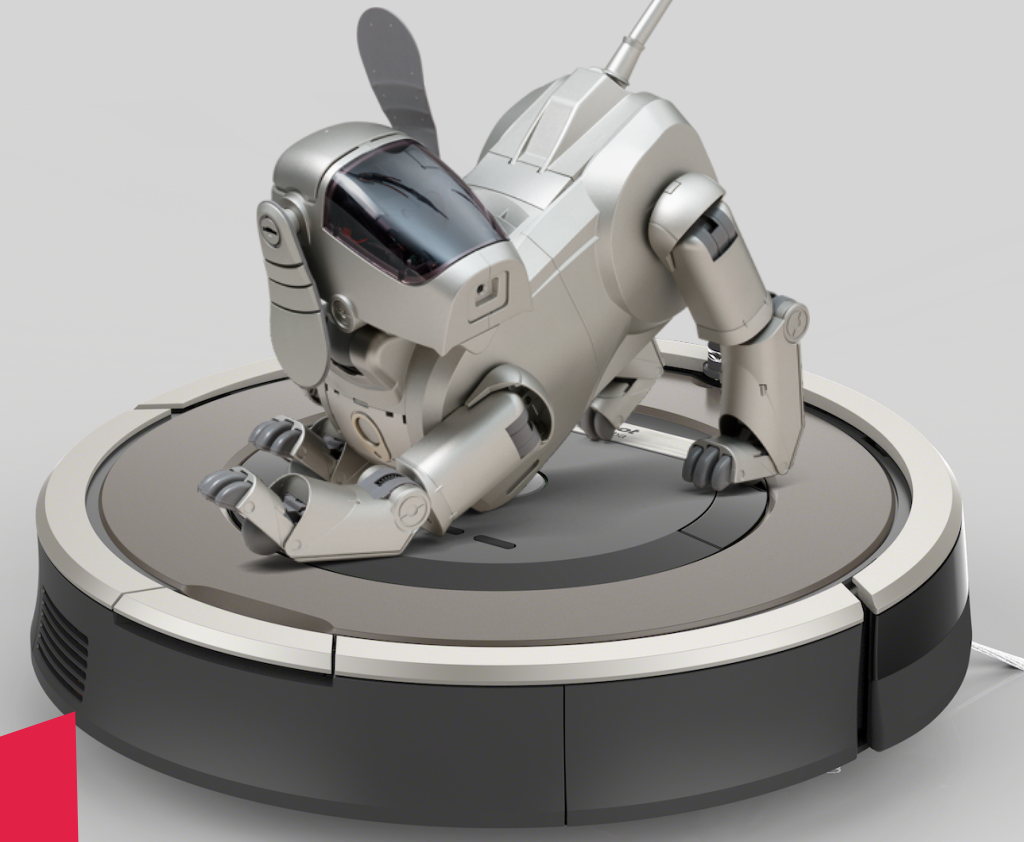
Implications

- Animism 
- Narrow down Hypothesis
- Precision in Research-Questions

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Prototyping

How can we negotiate trust,
respectively privacy, intimacy and consent
with internet of things devices
like voice assistants?

Prototyping



The Future?



The Future...



Thank you 🎉

<https://thgie.ch>

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