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Subject: Letter of Motivation – PhD Position in Co-Design Methods with Diverse Disabled Communities

Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing this letter to express my motivation for the position of **PhD Position in Co-Design Methods with Diverse Disabled Communities** in the Informatics Institute, University of Amsterdam. The fundamental drive to pursue research in Co-Design stems from how deeply the vision of research resonates with me. As a dyslexic, I have first-hand experience of how educational and social infrastructures exclude people when they are not co-developed with diverse human experiences. As a researcher, this personal history serves as my source of empathy and the reason I want to turn unspoken, hidden pain into useful research.

My further motivation is based on how this human-centric research can take advantage of my interdisciplinary exposure. I am both technical and human-centered as my training sits in engineering and product development, but the section of work that holds my attention is about people and how they live within the system. I have worked on projects with Semcon, Volvo Cars, and GKN Aerospace, where collaboration across technical and human domains was essential. I have run field studies, stakeholder analysis, and iterated prototypes in real contexts. My technical background enables me to translate between technical teams and communities, and I know how to turn messy qualitative insights into actionable design moves.

Earlier in my career, I worked with the visionary institution of the Indian Space Research Organization, and alongside that, I pursued long-standing fascinations in psychology, philosophy, astrophysics, and human-centred design. Even though the immediate practical values of those domains in my engineering career are not apparent, they made me more and deeply human. I can listen closely and can dissect statements and situations in ways I hardly know how to articulate until they happen. I could see that this domain of co-design can have direct benefit from my interdisciplinary exposure, making the sensitivity a research strength. [Exp]

I also had passion projects regarding conceptual development of tactile learning frameworks for children (to develop intuition in chemistry) and digital inclusion of the elderly on an e-commerce platform. I believe these pursuits made me more insightful, shaping me into an interdisciplinary generalist, capable of analyzing situations from multiple perspectives. I find this temperament valuable for holistic collaboration.[Portfolio]

My academic journey revealed a strength in addressing open-ended questions in product development. Over time, I have come to realize that my impact can be greater if I direct this temperament toward developing a more human-centric methodology of product development itself, rather than confining it to a specific product.[LoR]

My research philosophy centers on three principles: (1) testing the robustness of methods by identifying where they may fail, (2) scrutinizing existing methodologies to uncover hidden assumptions, and (3) maintaining ethical sensitivity when engaging with communities. [Research Philosophy]

I find this PhD not merely as an academic pursuit but as a continuation of a personal journey. I aspire to work in an environment surrounded by people who share similar values and vision. I can be resilient and persistent in the gradual and hard work of co-creation. I have also grown in comfort with the kinds of conversations that leave you changed, not satisfied. If you want someone who will show up, listen, hold discomfort, and translate between worlds, I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to TACIT.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I have attached my full profile for your reference and would welcome the opportunity to discuss research insights with you further.

Sincerely,

Sandeep Santhosh
MSc Product Development (Chalmers University of Technology)