Kat Holmes, Mismatch: How Inclusion Shapes Design (2018)

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In the last forty years, a crucial challenge for designers, especially the ones focused in the world of the design of interfaces, was to bring together the "us" and the "them". The division between the people in front of the designed artifacts (them) and the ones behind that design (us) has been central in the design discourse among several fields as user-centered (e.g. Norman 1988), human-centered design (e.g. Norman 2010) and related participatory practices.

Kat Holmes, founder of *mismatch.design* and Director of UX Design at Google, created inclusive resources and guidelines (e.g. Holmes *et al.* 2016) while working at Microsoft until 2017. In 2018, she collected these experiences in "Mismatch: How inclusion shapes design". The book discusses inclusive design from a social perspective, focusing on the relations between artifacts and the people in front of them.

In the first two chapters, Holmes makes an introduction to the characteristics of inclusion and exclusion. She compares the feeling of being left out while playing among kids on a playground to the exclusion often encountered by people when interacting with products and urban spaces[1]. These artifacts in general do not adapt to the needs of the people. This lack of adaptation, compared to the ability of people to constantly renegotiate their stand during a dialogue, makes people feel "*misfits by design*" (Holmes, 2018 p. 4).

From a designer perspective, three fears lead the path to exclusion and the solutions are equally tripartite. The fears are avoidance (not mentioning a subject) to be remedied with recognition; generalization (assumptions and prejudgment over a subject) to be remedied with observing diversity; and scarcity (lack of time to explore a subject) to be mitigated with the formula "solve for one, extend to many" (p. 12). In all these cases the subject is a form of exclusion for a group of people, might that be through ability, gender, race, ethnicity, income, sexual orientation and age, but further might be found in language, education and more.

The framework proposed to approach the recognition of this exclusion is similarly simple. The five elements composing the framework are why we make, who makes it, how it is made, who uses it, and what we make. This cycle aims to act as a reminder for designers to keep their vision open at any stage of the design process in order to minimize exclusion. The subsequent five chapters explore further these five elements.

The third chapter starts with how often design ignores diversity and how bad habits are manifest in design decisions. Exclusion exists in a multiplicity of variations and is biased towards the context, culture and personal identification of the designers with the specific diversity topic. Furthermore, the feeling of exclusion can be felt as a rejection from the design and impersonally related to a rejection from the society overall.

Chapter 4 introduces the reader to developer John R. Porter who with his collection of video game controllers hanging on a pegboard and dubbed as "Wall of exclusion", makes a self-explanatory point[2]. Here, the mismatched interactions between people and built world broaden to the diversity in participation, and the adoption of interdependent complementary skills to achieve a task. This chapter is more concentrated, and includes a series of definitions starting with the definition of disability by the World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 2011) – known as Social Model of Disability with its roots in the work of Michael Oliver (1990). Susan Goltsman's definition of inclusive design as "Inclusive design doesn't mean you're designing one thing for all people. You're designing a diversity of ways to participate so that everyone has a sense of belonging" (p. 53) precede the definition of inclusive design as a methodology by the author and the Microsoft team (p. 54). Here, the discussion present the author's position on Inclusive Design towards Accessibility and in opposition to Universal Design.

Through the experience of Tiffany Brown, a black woman architect working on social housing in Detroit and co-founder of 400 forward[3], all the racial, gender and economical biases of politics in the city are exposed. Her experience shows how she intervenes for a careful impact through participatory practices against political decisions and built environments previously taken ignoring the population's needs if not explicitly against them. While this extreme case, poses all the problems and essential differences between "designing with" and "designing for", central to this chapter, a second example might have further explored the positive contribution of community and people diversity to the design process and outcome against prejudicial and patronizing decisions of designers and administrators in positions of leadership.

This distinction between the "us" and the "them" leads chapter 6. Here, the "superhero-victim mindset" (p. 89) of leaders is brought to light with gender-biased examples of "design for her" from cars to pens. These cases are results of the core issue of separation and categorization of human diversity. The presumptions of leaders and designers reflects negatively to the produced artifacts which end up being malicious and reiterate exclusion habits when they don't consider the contribution of

"exclusion experts". While the artifact might be approached as purely functional, in praising the consideration of the emotional tone, Holmes provides a short list of "don'ts", as follows: "This exclusion habit is often motivated by economic factors. Change for the sake of newness. Growth for the sake of progress. Delight for the sake of differentiation. Fixing perceived disorder into order. Along the way, design changes can disrupt human patterns and relationships." Consequently she lists do's for inclusive leaders: "Make promise that you can keep. [...] Set an expectation that inclusion is a long game. [...] Create a system of incentives and rewards that will motivate people to make inclusive designs. [...] Bring people along in the process." (pp. 81-88). These tips are enriched with notes at the end of the chapter to proceed on the shift toward inclusion, in this as in the other chapters.

The following chapter, on "who uses it", strikes a clear point against superficial analysis of ergonomics and behaviors data. Referring to Todd Rose's *The End of Average (2016)*, the common habit of adopting averages instead of spectra is criticized as leading toward a design-for-all and none approach. Since nobody is average but everybody is unique, designing for averages means to design for nobody real; inclusion in this perspective means collecting thicker data and building deeper models and methods. The "persona spectrum" method presented aims at working on a scale of personas, which include various degrees of exclusion for specific abilities in the range of permanent, temporary or situational mismatches. The shift in approach suggested, named exclusively in the title of the paragraph, is from human-centered toward a human-led design. Where by "centering" we focus on one average, universal individual, in opposition with the observations of variable spectra of people. A keyword that intervenes in this chapter is *empathy* with its mandarin meanings of "to reason with the heart" and "the total situation". These two meanings reflect the author's vision for designers to have a direct relationship with a people and a wide-scale effect on the world's population.

To demonstrate this effect and to close the five steps cycle framework, the author introduces a series of short examples on artifacts made with one exclusion expert in mind from typewriters to the highly debated straws. These examples lead to four new recommendations addressed specifically to the business world, which are customer engagement, customer base growth, innovation driven by inclusion and a final warning against retrofitting. However, after having discussed the role of participation during the design process and the inclusion of diverse communities in the previous chapters, these new recommendations do not add further insights.

In conclusion, Holmes gives a look to our future, in a partly literal and partly metaphorical way. A very literal approach is to take into account our personal individual future as aging humans with ever-changing abilities. In a world with a growing number of aging people, the problem scales up quickly. Therefore, the question arises about whether we are capable of adopting inclusive methods to teach the next generation of designers and leaders. Our collective future will be shaped by economic and social inequity and further affected by machines. However, when machines with the ability to learn acquire also our biases, what exclusion will they produce? This makes it a problem of today.

This book is a short and broad introduction to mismatches in design with a perspective on business and leadership. This makes it a clear fit in the series directed by John Maeda "Simplicity: Design, Technology, Business, Life". The language is accessible and light-hearted which counterbalance what would make people otherwise overburdened due to the delicacy of the subject. Maybe that is one of the strongest claims of the book, as we should not consider any subject of exclusion as delicate, inappropriate, specific or constraining but embrace the errors and limits of exclusion, reflecting and reducing them after their recognition. If we are still looking to the differences between "us" and "them", between "with" and "for" trying to decide on whom to focus our decisions probably we are missing the point and this book is what might makes us understand that the problem is the idea of that focus and that division in itself.

The reader looking for further exploration on methodologies and specific approaches to design as well as a more critical discourse should look elsewhere. What this book constitutes though, is an essential introduction that should enter at the earliest stage of education in the design disciplines, since "Inclusive design is simply good design for the digital age" (p. 140). The other segment of audience of the book should probably be the late bloomers, the ones who have not recognized inclusion and exclusion yet, which is - as the book points out - the most of "us" out there.

Notes

1. The reference here is the work on education and social relationships among children developed by Vivian Gussin Paley (1993).
2. Further exploration of the work of Porter on inclusive controllers for video games can be seen at the speech for Interaction19 (Bryce and Porter, 2019).
3. 400 Forward is an initiative that promote education and recognition for African American Women architects (tiffanybrowndetroit.com).

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