SDS

In breakout group 6 Nienke van der Straten, Linda Smit, Aurore Brard, Hendriks Porciks and Anniek Moll discussed the following statement: *The input from underrepresented groups should weigh more heavily in your research analysis*. Immediately this phrase already brought confusion as it turned out to be multi interpretable. Some thought it meant that underrepresented groups' opinions should be valued more in general, as an input for research projects to be done. While others had the inclination that the phrase indicated that input from underrepresented groups should be valued more than other represented groups in specific analyses. The confusion already brought the first touching points for a talk on the strengths of designers and when designers can truly work in an inclusive manner.

In the conversation it became apparent that a great strength of designers is to be a particular neutral judge, a facilitator of getting to the core meaning of a problem. Now the question remains: how neutral are we really ever? Yet, what was meant by this viewpoint was the understanding that as a designer you must try to understand all the different perspectives that are there. The strength of a designer is to know why people behave the way they do and question what can be done about this. Designers are then able to turn these insights into a focus. Here we identified a struggle for designers: if a core capability of designers is to focus, then there is always an emphasis on a particular target; but how does this interfere with our dream of creating inclusive solutions? If being exclusive is purely practical as a means to focus within a project, then we should identify at the start of a project where we can make space to have this conversation. Yet, we also understood that being inclusive means making choices, because when something fits everyone - it fits no one. We should change the narrative to: who are we excluding? Then the task of designers is to open up the existing structures and witness where people are not excluded, identifying who needs to be invited to the table. Realising that this can change within every phase of the design process and different groups of people might be needed to be invited at distinctive moments.

At last as a group we wondered what we can expect from designers that are also just human beings, not saints. We realised that we are always part of a cultural system and that sometimes it's so easy to judge another system that's not yours. When you're out of a system you can better sympathise with people that are also out of that system. Not always because you share the same point of view, but simply because you can relate to the outside perspective on a culture. This includes that within every project the personal frameworks of the design team members are implicitly ever intermingling. Coming back to a conclusion for the initial statement that if we weigh underrepresented groups more, it will be compensated by our own biases, making an equal influence in the end. Underlining that as designers we have a task to 1) actively identify when the perspective of others outside the team needs to be invited and 2) remind ourselves throughout the process that this is a dynamic structure and should not be a one-time event.