

11 February 2023 MAGCD Unit 1

In this interview, Evy Prentice engages in a conversation with ChatGPT, a large language model developed by OpenAI, to explore the complex issues surrounding homelessness and hostile architecture in public spaces.

Through this dialogue, Evy delves into the ways in which design can play a role in *creating more inclusive and equitable communities*, and the principles of universal design that can be applied to the field of graphic design to achieve this goal. The conversation also covers the relationship between hostile architecture and cultural context, and the role that graphic communication design can play in promoting inclusive spaces. By the end of the interview, Evy and ChatGPT have provided a comprehensive overview of the role of design in promoting a more equitable society.

Can you propose a solution to the problem of homelessness in London and the use of hostile architecture to deter certain people for certain locations?

> Homelessness is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted solution. It is important to address both the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness, as well as the root causes of homelessness such as poverty, mental illness, and lack of affordable housing. Here are some steps that could help address homelessness in London:

> Increase affordable housing – The lack of affordable housing is one of the main causes of homelessness. Governments can work to incentivise the building of more affordable housing units, provide subsidies for low-income renters, and increase the availability of public housing.

Supportive services – Homeless individuals often have complex needs, including mental health and substance abuse issues. Providing access to these services can help them stabilise their lives and transition into permanent housing.

Preventative measures – Preventative measures such as financial literacy programs, job training, and eviction prevention programs can help reduce the risk of homelessness for those at risk of losing their housing.

Collaboration – Collaboration between government agencies, non-profits, and private organisations can help streamline services and maximise resources.

Regarding the use of hostile architecture, it is not a solution to homelessness and can actually have negative consequences by criminalising homelessness and making it more difficult for those experiencing homelessness to access essential services. Instead of using hostile architecture, cities can work to provide public spaces that are inclusive and welcoming to all members of the community.

Overall, addressing homelessness requires a comprehensive and compassionate approach that addresses both the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness and the root causes of homelessness.

How can public spaces be welcoming of homeless people when people are actually paying a lot of money to live in those areas? Is in it fair for them to be able to have clean surroundings for their families?

It's understandable that people who have invested a lot of money in living in a certain area would want to maintain the cleanliness and safety of those public spaces. However, it's also important to remember that homelessness is a complex issue, and those experiencing homelessness are often facing challenges such as poverty, mental illness, and lack of affordable housing. Criminalising homelessness and using hostile architecture to deter them from public spaces can actually make the issue of homelessness worse by making it more difficult for homeless individuals to access essential services such as shelters, restrooms, and food.

There are alternative approaches that can help balance the needs of both the homeless community and the residents of a given area. For example, cities can work to provide public spaces that are well-maintained and well-lit, and can also provide services such as restrooms and waste disposal to help maintain cleanliness. Additionally, cities can work to provide outreach and support services to help connect homeless individuals with resources and services that can help them stabilise their lives and transition into permanent housing.

It's also important to engage in dialogue and work towards finding solutions that are equitable and respectful for all members of the community. This includes finding ways to address the root causes of homelessness, such as the lack of affordable housing and inadequate support for those with mental health and substance abuse issues. By working together, we can create public spaces that are inclusive and welcoming to everyone, regardless of their housing status.

How does urban architecture theory sets precedents on this issue?

Urban architecture theory can provide important perspectives and insights on the issue of homelessness and the role of architecture in shaping the urban environment. Some key themes from urban architecture theory that are relevant to the issue of homelessness include:

Inclusiveness and access – Urban architecture theorists emphasise the importance of creating public spaces that are accessible and inclusive for all members of the community, including those who are homeless. This includes designing public spaces that are safe, well-maintained, and welcoming to everyone, regardless of their housing status.

Social justice – Urban architecture theory often addresses issues of social justice, including the ways in which the built environment can perpetuate or challenge inequalities. With regards to homelessness, this could mean considering the ways in which the built environment can either support or hinder the ability of homeless individuals to access essential services and resources.

Place-making –Urban architecture theory also explores the role of architecture in creating places that are meaningful and memorable to the people who use them. This can include designing public spaces that are vibrant, engaging, and foster a sense of community for all users, including the homeless community.

Holistic approach – Urban architecture theory often advocates for a holistic approach to the design and development of the built environment. This could include considering the interrelated issues of poverty, housing, and access to services and resources when addressing homelessness, rather than just focusing on architecture in isolation.

By applying these and other perspectives from urban architecture theory, architects and urban designers can help create public spaces that are more inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all members of the community, including those who are homeless.

How does a more equitable and inclusive public space look like?

A more equitable and inclusive public space is one that is designed and maintained in a way that takes into account the needs and perspectives of all members of the community, including those who are marginalised or experiencing homelessness.

Some of the key characteristics of an equitable and inclusive public space are:

Accessibility – The public space is physically accessible to people of all ages, abilities, and mobility levels. This includes providing ramps, elevators, and other accessible features.

Safety – The public space is well-lit, well-maintained, and free from hazards that could pose a risk to anyone using it. This includes providing trash disposal, restrooms, and other facilities that help maintain cleanliness and hygiene.

Inclusiveness – The public space is designed in a way that is welcoming and inclusive to all members of the community, regardless of their housing status, race, ethnicity, gender, or other demographic factors. This can include providing seating, shade, and other amenities that make the space comfortable and appealing to all users.

Diversity – The public space reflects and celebrates the diversity of the community it serves. This can include incorporating public art, cultural elements, and other features that reflect the unique character of the neighbourhood and its residents.

Community engagement – The public space is designed and maintained through a collaborative process that involves input and feedback from the community it serves. This helps ensure that the space is responsive to the needs and perspectives of all users, and that it remains relevant and meaningful over time.

Overall, an equitable and inclusive public space is one that is designed to meet the needs of all members of the community, and that fosters a sense of community, connection, and belonging for everyone who uses it.

And how about the private places that sometimes homeless people choose to sleep in? How can this be navigated without causing more damage but dealing with the concept of ownership and the right over private property?

The issue of homeless individuals seeking shelter in private places, such as doorways, alcoves, and other sheltered areas, is a complex one that requires a nuanced approach. On the one hand, private property owners have a right to control access to their property, and to expect that their property is being used for its intended purpose. On the other hand, homeless individuals often have limited options for finding shelter, and may feel that they have no choice but to seek refuge in private places.

One approach to navigating this issue is to work towards finding solutions that are more humane and compassionate, while also respecting the rights of private property owners. This could involve working with property owners to find mutually acceptable solutions, such as providing temporary shelters or other resources that can help homeless individuals access the services and support they need.

Another approach is to work towards addressing the root causes of homelessness, such as the lack of affordable housing and inadequate support for those with mental health and substance abuse issues. This can help reduce the number of people who are experiencing homelessness, and minimise the need for them to seek refuge in private places.

Ultimately, the solution to this issue will depend on the specific circumstances of each case, and may involve a combination of legal, policy, and community-based solutions. However, by working together, it is possible to find solutions that are humane, compassionate, and respectful of both the rights of private property owners and the needs of homeless individuals.

Are there any architectural design features that could help tackle this issue and encourage positive behaviour?

Yes, there are several architectural design features that can help address the issue of homelessness and encourage positive behaviour in public spaces. Some examples include:

Biophilic design – Incorporating elements of nature, such as green spaces, trees, and water features, into public spaces can help create environments that are more calming, restorative, and welcoming. This can be especially beneficial for homeless individuals who may be experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety.

Lighting – Good lighting can help improve safety and security in public spaces, making them more welcoming and accessible to all users, including the homeless.

Seating – Providing a variety of seating options, such as benches, seats with backs, and armrests, can help make public spaces more comfortable and appealing to all users, including those who may be resting or seeking shelter.

Restroom facilities – Providing well-maintained, accessible restroom facilities can help maintain hygiene and dignity for all users of public spaces, including homeless individuals.

Trash disposal – Providing ample trash disposal facilities and maintaining them regularly can help keep public spaces clean and free from litter, making them more appealing and welcoming to all users.

Encouragement of positive behaviour – Design elements, such as signs, murals, and other forms of public art, can help encourage positive behaviour and discourage activities that are disruptive or harmful to others.

By incorporating these and other design features into public spaces, architects and urban designers can help create environments that are more welcoming, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all members of the community, including those who are homeless.

How about the intersection between safety and hostility? Some architecture comes through as inherently hostile because is designed to protect private property from disruption. Is there a relationship between this and Oscar Newman's theories?

Yes, there is a relationship between the intersection of safety and hostility in architecture and Oscar Newman's theories of "defensible space." According to Newman, the design of a physical environment can have a significant impact on how people use and behave in that space. He argued that well-designed, "defensible" spaces, which are characterised by clear boundaries, visible surveillance, and other physical elements that create a sense of territoriality, can help discourage criminal activity and promote a sense of community.

However, the concept of "defensible space" can also be taken too far, leading to the creation of environments that are perceived as hostile or exclusionary, particularly for marginalised groups such as the homeless. For example, the use of "hostile architecture," such as antihomeless spikes or benches with armrests, can create physical barriers that make public spaces less accessible and less inviting for homeless individuals and other marginalized groups.

Therefore, the relationship between safety and hostility in architecture is complex and requires a delicate balance. While it is important to design public spaces that are safe and secure, it is also important to consider the impact of these design elements on the users of the space, and to strive for a more equitable and inclusive approach to public space design. This might involve incorporating features that promote safety and security in a way that is also welcoming and inclusive, such as the use of biophilic design elements, accessible seating, and well-maintained public restrooms, as discussed earlier.

Can you give me examples of some urban designers and projects working on taking these issues successfully?

Yes, there are several urban designers and projects that are working to address the issue of homelessness and create more equitable and inclusive public spaces.

Here are a few examples:

Michael Maltzan Architecture – This architecture firm, based in Los Angeles, has been working on a range of projects aimed at addressing homelessness and creating more inclusive public spaces. One notable project is the Star Apartments, which provides supportive housing for formerly homeless individuals in Los Angeles. The design of the building incorporates green spaces, community spaces, and other features aimed at promoting well-being and a sense of community.

Publicolor – This New York-based non-profit organization works to transform underserved schools and public spaces through the use of vibrant, colorful design. Their projects aim to improve the learning environment for students, while also creating safe and inclusive public spaces that are welcoming to all members of the community.

Architecture for Humanity – This international non-profit organization works to design and build solutions to social, economic, and environmental challenges. They have worked on a range of projects aimed at addressing homelessness, including the design and construction of affordable housing, temporary shelters, and community centers.

Streetopia – This San Francisco-based project, created by artist and urban planner Christina Ulke, explores alternative visions for urban public spaces. The project involves the temporary transformation of public spaces into vibrant, inclusive, and livable spaces that encourage community building and positive social interactions.

These are just a few examples of the many urban designers and projects working to address the issue of homelessness and create more equitable and inclusive public spaces. By incorporating innovative design solutions and working in collaboration with communities, these designers are helping to create environments that are more welcoming, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all members of the community.

So what is the relationship between hostile architecture, cultural context and location? Are attitudes towards hostile architecture different in nonwestern cultures?

The relationship between hostile architecture, cultural context, and location is complex and can vary widely depending on the cultural, historical, and political context of a particular place. In some cultures, the use of hostile architecture may be seen as a necessary measure to protect private property or maintain order in public spaces, while in others it may be viewed as a form of exclusion and discrimination.

In Western cultures, the use of hostile architecture has been criticized for its negative impact on marginalized groups such as the homeless, who are often seen as a threat to the safety and security of public spaces. In these contexts, the design of public spaces is often seen as a tool for shaping behavior and creating a sense of order, even if that means creating physical barriers that make it more difficult for certain groups to access these spaces.

In contrast, attitudes towards hostile architecture may be different in non-Western cultures, where the use of physical barriers in public spaces may not have the same connotations of exclusion and discrimination. For example, in some Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, the use of walls and gates around private spaces is seen as a way of creating a sense of privacy and security, rather than as a form of exclusion.

It is important to note that these attitudes are highly context-specific and can vary widely depending on the particular cultural, historical, and political context of a place. The relationship between hostile architecture, cultural context, and location is complex and multi-faceted, and it is important to consider these factors when designing public spaces that are inclusive and equitable for all members of the community.

Taking that into account. How do you think the Architectural Spikes, part of the Rapid Response collection at the V&A, could be recontextualised in a different culture? The fact that the spikes are blunt and prevent from harm might be an important factor?

The re-contextualization of architectural spikes in a different cultural context would likely depend on a range of factors, including cultural attitudes towards public space, the use of physical barriers in public spaces, and the local political and historical context.

In some cultures, the use of architectural spikes as a form of hostile architecture may be seen as a necessary measure to protect private property or maintain order in public spaces. In these contexts, the design of the spikes as blunt and preventing harm may be seen as an important factor in reducing the potential for harm to both the property and the people using the space.

In other cultures, the use of architectural spikes may be seen as a symbol of exclusion and discrimination, particularly when used in public spaces to deter certain groups of people. In these contexts, the re-contextualization of the spikes would likely involve a reconsideration of the design and their purpose, to ensure that they are not being used in a way that creates barriers or excludes certain groups of people.

It is important to consider the cultural context in which the architectural spikes are being used, and to design and use them in a way that reflects local attitudes and values towards public spaces and the role of architecture in shaping behavior and creating a sense of community. By taking into account cultural context and local attitudes, it may be possible to re-contextualize the architectural spikes in a way that is more inclusive and equitable for all members of the community.

Why do you think these are housed at the V&A museum?

The inclusion of architectural spikes as part of the Rapid Response collection at the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum in London is likely due to the museum's mission to collect and preserve objects that are significant to the history and development of design and the decorative arts.

Architectural spikes are an example of a product of design that has a significant impact on the built environment, and they reflect a broader trend towards the use of hostile architecture in public spaces. As such, they are an important object to collect and display as part of the museum's efforts to understand the evolution of design and its impact on the built environment.

Additionally, by including architectural spikes in the museum's collection, the V&A is also drawing attention to important debates and discussions surrounding the role of design in shaping public spaces and creating a sense of community. The museum provides a space for visitors to consider the implications of these design choices, and to engage with the broader cultural and political issues that are at the heart of debates about hostile architecture.

In this sense, the inclusion of architectural spikes in the V&A's collection is not just an act of preservation, but also a means of encouraging discussion and reflection on the role of design in shaping public spaces and creating a more inclusive and equitable built environment

Now that you talk about community, in an evolving individualistic society, how do you think design can make a difference in breaking the barriers between the people that inhabit a common space. This could be in the city, or even in new housing developments.

Design can play an important role in breaking down barriers between people who inhabit a common space, by creating spaces that are inclusive, accessible, and encourage a sense of community. In an evolving individualistic society, where people are increasingly isolated and disconnected, design can help to bring people together and foster a sense of belonging. In cities, design can be used to create public spaces that are inviting and encourage social interaction. This can be achieved through the use of seating and gathering spaces, such as benches, parks, and plazas, that provide opportunities for people to come together and socialize. Design can also be used to create spaces that are accessible and welcoming to a diverse range of people, regardless of their age, ability, or background.

In new housing developments, design can play a similar role by creating spaces that encourage a sense of community and encourage residents to interact with each other. This can be achieved through the creation of communal spaces, such as shared courtyards, gardens, and parks, as well as through the design of buildings and streetscapes that encourage social interaction and promote a sense of community.

For example, the creation of community spaces can be supported by programming and activities that encourage social interaction, such as cultural events, workshops, and festivals.

In conclusion, design can play a critical role in breaking down barriers and fostering a sense of community in both urban and suburban settings. By creating spaces that are inclusive, accessible, and encourage social interaction, design can help to bring people together and build stronger, more connected communities.

How do you think Graphic Communication Design has a part to play in creating more inclusive communities and promoting inclusive spaces?

Graphic Communication Design can play a significant role in promoting inclusivity and creating more inclusive communities. As a discipline that encompasses visual communication, graphic design has the power to influence people's perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. By using design elements such as color, typography, imagery, and hierarchy, graphic designers can create messages that are not only aesthetically appealing, but also help to build a sense of community and promote inclusivity.

For example, graphic designers can use design elements such as accessible typography, color contrast, and clear hierarchy to make public spaces more accessible to people with disabilities. They can also create wayfinding systems that are intuitive and easy to use, helping to ensure that everyone is able to navigate public spaces with ease.

In addition, graphic communication design can be used to create visual messages that promote diversity, equality, and inclusivity. For example, designers can create posters, signs, and billboards that promote the idea of diversity and encourage people to embrace differences. They can also create visual identities for organizations and communities that promote inclusiveness, such as logos and symbols that are representative of diverse communities.

Graphic communication design can also be used to create community-building initiatives, such as community murals, public art installations, and interactive exhibits. These projects can help to build a sense of community and promote social interaction, bringing people together and fostering a sense of belonging.

In conclusion, graphic communication design has a critical role to play in promoting inclusivity and creating more inclusive communities. By using design elements to create messages that promote diversity and inclusivity, and by creating spaces that are accessible and encourage social interaction, graphic designers can help to build stronger, more connected communities.

Can you tell us of some relevant Graphic Designers doing great work in this area?

Sure, here are a few examples of designers and firms that have a focus on inclusivity and accessibility in their work: Universal Design Studio: This London-based architecture firm has a focus on creating accessible and inclusive spaces. They have worked on a variety of projects, including museums, public spaces, and residential developments, all with a focus on universal design principles.

Sonder & Sonder – This Danish architecture firm has a focus on creating sustainable and inclusive housing solutions. They have worked on a variety of affordable housing projects that prioritize the needs of families and communities.

Design Museum Holon – This museum in Israel is dedicated to promoting universal design and accessibility. It showcases design solutions that make the built environment more accessible and usable for people with disabilities.

Michael Brewer – This graphic designer has a focus on creating accessible and inclusive design solutions. He has worked on a variety of projects, including designing logos and branding for organizations that promote accessibility and inclusion.

Accessible Design Group – This architecture firm has a focus on designing accessible and inclusive spaces. They have worked on a variety of projects, including museums, public spaces, and residential developments, all with a focus on making these spaces accessible and usable for people with disabilities.

These are just a few examples of designers and firms that are working to create a more inclusive built environment and society. There are many other designers and firms that are working on similar projects, and the focus on inclusivity and accessibility is becoming increasingly important in the fields of architecture and design.

What do you mean with universal design principles?

Universal design is an approach to design that seeks to create products, environments, and buildings that are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptations or special accommodations. This approach is based on the principle of inclusive design, which aims to create design solutions that are accessible and usable by people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and ages.

The goal of universal design is to create spaces, products, and environments that are inclusive, accommodating, and equitable for everyone, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. This is achieved through the use of design principles that consider the needs of the widest possible range of users, and that prioritize accessibility, usability, and safety.

Universal design principles include, but are not limited to:

Flexibility in use – designs that can be used in different ways by different people, without the need for modifications or special accommodations.

Simple and intuitive use – designs that are easy to understand, use, and navigate, without the need for specialized knowledge or training.

Perceptible information – designs that provide information that is easily visible, audible, and/or touchable, regardless of the user's abilities or disabilities.

Tolerance for error – designs that minimize the potential for harm or injury, and that allow for safe recovery from mistakes.

Low physical effort – designs that require minimal physical effort or strain to use. Size and space for approach and use: designs that provide adequate space and reach for people to approach, enter, and use a product, environment, or building.

These principles serve as guidelines for designers, architects, and engineers as they create spaces, products, and environments that are inclusive, accessible, and usable for everyone.

How do the Architectural Spikes at the V&A juxtapose with universal design principles?

Architectural spikes, such as those that are part of the Rapid Response collection at the V&A museum, directly contradict the principles of universal design. These spikes are designed to deter certain groups of people, such as homeless individuals, from using specific spaces or areas, and they do so by creating an environment that is physically uncomfortable and unwelcoming.

In contrast, universal design principles aim to create environments that are inclusive, accessible, and usable by all people, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Universal design prioritizes accessibility, usability, and safety, and seeks to minimize barriers to entry and use for everyone.

The use of architectural spikes goes against these principles, as they create physical barriers that prevent certain groups of people from using a space, and they do so in a manner that is hostile and unwelcoming. This type of design creates a divide between different groups of people and reinforces exclusion, rather than promoting inclusivity and accessibility.

In conclusion, architectural spikes and universal design principles are in direct opposition to one another, and the use of spikes runs counter to the goals of inclusive design and the creation of equitable and accessible public spaces.

Can you quote some graphic designers using universal design principles?

Here are a few examples of graphic designers who incorporate universal design principles in their work:

Sarah Hertz – Sarah Hertz is a graphic designer who specializes in accessible and inclusive design. Her work focuses on creating designs that are usable by everyone, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

Deborah Adler – Deborah Adler is a graphic designer who is known for her work in the field of universal design. She has designed numerous products, including packaging, signage, and wayfinding systems, that prioritize accessibility and usability for all people.

Kyle Read – Kyle Read is a graphic designer and accessibility expert who focuses on creating inclusive and accessible designs for people with disabilities. He works to promote universal design principles in the design community and has created numerous resources to help designers create more inclusive designs.

Elana Weinreb – Elana Weinreb is a graphic designer who specializes in accessible and inclusive design. She has extensive experience working with clients in the healthcare, education, and government sectors, and has designed numerous products, including websites, apps, and marketing materials, that prioritize accessibility and usability for all people.

These designers are just a few examples of the many graphic designers who are using universal design principles to create more inclusive and accessible designs.

By incorporating these principles into their work, they are helping to break down barriers and promote a more equitable and inclusive society.

On the other hand, doesn't making something 'too universal' make it shallow and predictable?

Yes, it is possible for a design to become too universal and thus, predictable and shallow. Universal design aims to be inclusive and accessible to a wide range of users, but this can sometimes come at the expense of creativity and innovation. To avoid this, it's important to strike a balance between universality and originality.

One way to achieve this balance is to use universal design principles as a starting point, but then to build upon them with unique and creative solutions that still meet the needs of all users. For example, a graphic designer might use a clear and legible typeface that is easily readable for people with low vision, but then add a creative twist by using a non-traditional color palette or a unique layout.

Ultimately, the key to successful universal design is to strike a balance between inclusivity and originality, and to never sacrifice one for the other. By combining the principles of universal design with creative and innovative solutions, designers can create designs that are both inclusive and engaging.

Can you tell me more about the principles of universal design applied to the field of graphic design?

Universal design principles can be applied to the field of graphic design in several ways. Some of the key principles include:

Flexibility – Designs should be flexible enough to accommodate different users and their varying needs, such as those with visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive impairments.

Simplicity – Designs should be simple and easy to understand, with clear and legible text and graphics that can be easily read by people with a wide range of abilities.

Perceptibility – Designs should be visually accessible, using contrasting colors, clear typography, and other visual cues to help people with visual impairments understand and engage with the design.

Tolerance for error – Designs should be forgiving and allow for mistakes, with clear feedback and easy-to-use error-correction mechanisms.

Low physical effort – Designs should be easy to use and require minimal physical effort, such as buttons that can be easily pressed by people with mobility impairments.

Size and space for approach and use – Designs should provide ample space for approach and use, such as larger text and buttons that are easy to reach and press.

Simple and intuitive use – Designs should be easy to understand and use, without the need for extensive training or prior experience.

By applying these and other universal design principles, graphic designers can create designs that are inclusive and accessible to a wide range of users, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. This not only helps to make designs more usable and effective, but also helps to promote a more inclusive and equitable society.

Thank you so much for all your input. Is there anything else you wold like to share as a summary of all which we have spoken?

Sure! To summarize, we have discussed the issues surrounding homelessness and hostile architecture in public spaces, and how design can play a role in creating more inclusive and equitable communities. We talked about the principles of universal design, which emphasize flexibility, simplicity, perceptibility, tolerance for error, low physical effort, size and space for approach and use, and simple and intuitive use, and how these principles can be applied to the field of graphic design. We also touched on the relationship between hostile architecture and cultural context, and the role that graphic communication design can play in promoting inclusive spaces. Overall, the aim is to create designs that are usable and accessible for all people, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, and to promote a more inclusive and equitable society through design.