Crippling educational spaces

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

Inclusive space, disability, higher education,

**SPEAKERS**

Professor Dr Jos Boys, Maragaret Price, Poppy Levison

**Jos Boys:**Hi everyone, welcome to this inclusive spaces session. I’m going to start by saying that my cat has decided, as they always do that now is the time to join in with us so she may be turning up in short, but I’m sure we can manage… oh, there she is.

So, welcome to the inclusive spaces seminar series at the Bartlett faculty of the built environment here at UCL.

Today you've joined the October edition of inclusive spaces and I'm Jos Boys, I'm director of the learning environment equality, diversity and inclusion centre lead IQ at the Bartlett and I'll be hosting today. This session will be recorded, it will be added to the Faculty YouTube Channel and the Bartlett EDU website and forwarded to all you registered attendees.

As Steve’s already put in the chat you're welcome to add a question or comment for speakers at any point during this talk, by clicking on the Q&A function at the bottom of the screen and you can also, as well as submit your own questions you can upvote others so.

This inclusive space in session is called creeping educational spaces and it's part of UCL events connected to the International Day of disabled people held every third of December. Creeping is still a word that makes many non disabled people quite uncomfortable. But in this context, its aim, like the idea of queering spaces, is to start from understanding disability in all its variations, as both a critical and creative generated for the built environment, not just a problem, so a means to rethink what counts as normal in university spaces. So we're asking, and we are really interested in your responses to this issue in the university setting, what are the unspoken norms that frame what constitutes competency or achievement. How do conceptual, social, material spaces value some kinds of body mind and not others, and how can both non disabled people and academic institutions begin to take responsibility for their own unnoticed ableist attitude and problematic teaching and learning practices. You would think that university should be at the forefront of more equitable practices related to disability, but in reality as disability studies scholars and activists have repeatedly shown over many years, this is not the case.

My own experience as a non disabled person with a background in architecture is that there remains an underlying assumption that there are no, or hardly any, disabled people in architecture. In fact, through my work with this ordinary architecture project which brings disabled artists into built around education and practice. I’m meeting disabled people within the discipline all the time, yet if you have a visible disability is still very hard to progress within our disciplines. With many barriers to achievement and for people with invisible impairments architecture is still seen as a very unsafe space to disclose to other students tutors or professionals. And to me that's a real indictment of current practices as something that really urgently needs change and it's something that we should be angry about. So I’m particularly interested in unraveling both ableist privilege and exploring how non disabled people such as myself can act in solidarity with disabled people in terms of these particular issues. So, most immediately that's about taking notice of listening to and acting from the knowledge and experiences of disabled diversity is able voices scholarship activism and creativity.

So I’m really pleased today, I feel completely honoured to have these two guests here I’ll introduce them briefly. And then Margaret will give a 30 minute presentation about her work, and that will be followed by a 10 minute chat between Poppy and myself. And that will include responses to any Q&A from you, the audience in the room, and then some final thoughts on the three of us so that we can end at 2pm.

So welcome and many, many thanks to Margaret Price for coming it's much earlier, where she is, she is an associate professor and director of the disability studies program at Ohio State University, she's currently working on a mixed methods investigation, called the disability disabled faculty study, which combines survey and interview data to learn more about the experiences of disabled faculty in higher education. Forthcoming book will draw on findings from this study and it will be produced by Duke university press.

Price’s first book Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life, which was produced published by University of Michigan press was an incredibly influential book for me it's just a fantastic read, I recommend it to everybody.

Welcome Poppy Levison, who is a third year undergraduate student studying architecture at Central Saint Martins UL. As a blind person she speaks about architecture that has a tendency to fixate on the visual rather than the experiential, as well as working around the politics of inclusive design.

I met her as one of the founder participants in our architecture be on site intensive study course, which is an ongoing disability lead collaboration between the Bartlett and the disciplinary architecture project. It aims to be run annually it's only stopped because the pandemic should be starting again, we should be able to run it in the spring, or the summer next year. And it's led by blind and visually impaired architects, makers and artist tutors. Poppy is also Vice President of SCSM the schools architecture society and disability students right and political coordinator at disabled intersectional voices in the arts at UL so … over to you.

**Margaret Price:** Thank you so much, this is Margaret speaking. In the background of my zoom frame there's a large black dog's tail wagging. He’s very excited to be included this morning, this is Otis I’ll just introduce him since he's so insistent on being part of it.

So Otis is two years old and learning how to do some tasks for me, I have post traumatic stress disorder and an autoimmune disease, so I have both mental and physical challenges and Otis is still in training, off learning how to help me navigate the world with all those things going on. Oh, I’m also really grateful to the organisers and to Jos and Poppy for having me here today… it's just these are, this is my favourite part of my job is getting to have conversations about access and especially access as it operates in the built environment and in design, which is an interest that Jos has really fostered for me over the years.

And in the interest of time I’m going to jump right into my short presentation this presentation will be interspersed with a couple of warm up questions that Jos and Poppy will help me talk about just so we don't have me droning on non stop for 20 minutes and then we'll go to the dialogue and q&a portions so I’m now going to share my screen, that means that I can't see very well what's going on in the chat so if anything is going on, where someone's having an access issue or otherwise just needs to get my attention, please just break in. With an out loud comment like hey Margaret hold up wait something's happening, I always rather have that happen then just continue to speak while something disastrous is happening unbeknownst to me and so I’m now sharing my screen. With my PowerPoint about to come up and now, as I maximise my screen, this is the point at which I will be very grateful to all of you, if you could just speak out if there's anything that you'd like to address with regard to access.

As just mentioned, the title of what we're presenting today is Creeping educational spaces and the image on the slide is a picture I took several years ago at Vassar college it's a close up of the universal icon of accessibility, which is a person in a wheelchair on a green sign. And the word entrance and an arrow below the icon also mentioned that the icon is an updated version meant to show the wheelchair user as more dynamic and in motion, and this updated icon was designed by Brian Glenny and Sarah Hendren. Something that I like to say at the beginning of presentations is while I’m talking, please do whatever you would like to do. That helps make this workshop more accessible for you, so that might mean moving around leaving the space as needed fidgeting knitting I’ve actually got my own knitting with me today I’ve just started something, and as soon as we start chatting I will probably start knitting.

You may observe me standing up and sitting down pausing to get a breath drinking my tea interacting with my dog. Things like that, so, in the spirit of creeping access right from the start, I want us all to consider what it might mean to make this space that we're sharing right now accessible for each one of us, not only in terms of really important things like are the images described is the audio adequate, but also in terms of things like how is each person interacting with the space and what might that person need.

And in interest of time again I’m going to just skip right on to talking about the first aspect of access that I want to focus on which is access planning and time and time has been an extremely important facet of the research that I’m doing right now, which focuses on accessibility for workers in higher education. And this particular image which was also on the cover slide is one that really caught my attention because it shows me that a great deal of time and planning went into this particular access move, but then in the interactive nature of the built environment, it may not have actually done with the designer intended so as I mentioned when describing the image this sign shows the updated international icon of access, which is the more active looking schematic of the person the wheelchair there's also the word entrance and an arrow underneath the icon and the sign is quite obviously new.

It looks as though someone really thought about this before putting it in I’m now going to show a couple more images that show where the sign is located in context. So, the second image is a slightly more pulled back version it's still a focus on the sign, but we can see that the sign seems to be sticking up from the middle of a bush. It's surrounded by shrubbery so already we're getting a sense of the scale and the context of where the sign appears, and perhaps we might be thinking to ourselves what's going on with the sign of the bush. So, then, the most pulledback version is the next image. This image shows the sign in much broader context, this is the building a picture here is the library of Vassar college. It's a very imposing you know Gothic building it has turrets and stained glass windows and lots and lots of fancy detailing. It has a set of stone steps going up to the elegant wouldn't front door. There's a person wearing a backpack ascending the steps, I tried to make sure I got a person in there for scale, the person is really tiny in comparison to the building. And circled in white on the right hand side of the photo is the sign showing where the accessible insurances now we can imagine that when this sign went in there were probably a lot of conversations about it. It's pretty obvious from the look of this building that it's one of those buildings in the United States that does not need to be made accessible in a contemporary sense, historic structures in the United States are exempted from certain kinds of access moves so as long as there's some way for people to get in this building, who might be using wheelchairs or using canes or having fatigue, you know, in some way not able to navigate those stone steps, or those big wooden doors, as long as there's some way to get into this building that needs the letter of the law.

Unfortunately, as we might infer from the placement of this sign someone who was approaching this library, with a thought wow I can't wait to get into the library and start doing my work. Not only might they not actually perceive the sign off to the side there. Even for a fully sighted person that that sign is pretty tucked away and they certainly wouldn't feel very encouraged about the the nature of the access, they were being offered the sign is hard to find in the context of the building. The sign is not Braille, for example, so the assumption is that whoever is interacting with this sign will see it. And the sign also is pretty telegraphic it just says entrance with event arrows so there's no indication about exactly where that influences how much time or effort it might take to get there or whether, once you get around the proverbial back of the building that entrance might be navigable at all. So this is a phenomenon that Canadian philosopher Tanya Titchkosky calls barely in that is the letter of the law in this case is being met, but the actual interactive nature of access being provided still presents a lot of barriers and these barriers can sometimes be quite hard to explain to a non disabled audience. I myself often find myself in conversations, where the gist of what's being said is well there is a way in so what's the problem and it can be very hard to explain the issue of frustration taking extra time, taking extra effort, and perhaps above all the uncertainty that's involved in trying to navigate these barely-in spaces. So some questions that I want to propose, especially for designers and architects, is how might co-design have changed the decision making around this sign’s appearance and placement, that is if people who were disabled in various ways, might have been part of the design, of this access move, would it be different? But then also very importantly, and, as you probably know, co design can mean a lot of things, so we also need to think about questions like when does co design take place and what forms, does it take.

And I don't want to go on and on forever about those questions but I’m happy to take them up more in Q&A. Okay, so this is the first brief discussion with Poppy and Jos and the question that I’d like to ask you Poppy and Jos is: Think of an event you've attended, a class, a meeting and informal gathering that felt especially accessible for you. Not accessible in general, but for you personally, what was the event and what specific features did it have that sparks that sense of inclusivity for you and I’ll go ahead and drop that question in the chat as well, as Poppy and Jos talk a little bit about that.

**Jos:** You first Poppy.

**Poppy:** Okay, yeah I was thinking about this one and it's  kind of sad but it's hard to think of that many examples of times that have been like truly accessible, particularly if you think of like in an academic sense I’m so used to compromising my access needs and stuff in spaces, particularly in those academic spaces, and I think the majority of the times that I have felt my access needs listened to and they have been accessible spaces, have been when I’ve been with other disabled people. I know that at my university it's been when I’ve been talking to other disabled students through our disabled students organisation and there is this understanding of time there's this understanding that you might have had a bad day, and so you don't have the energy to put your camera on. Or that someone else needs to have their camera on and that's really helpful for them and I found there's a particular kind of kindness and generosity about what you might need and it's just a given that what you say you need is believed when you're with other disabled people that I think is the truly accessible element it's being believed in whatever you say you need in that moment whether that's like a traditional access requirement, or whether that's something that just you felt like would really help you today.

**Jos:** yeah and I do, I mean I it's really interesting that we already have comments in the Q&A a lot of people with impairments say you know they they can't think of a single example. I mean, I really like the work that’s talking, we talked a lot, you know you both know about kind of notion of access into intimacy, how access is actually about how we help each other out and support each other, kind of an ongoing process and we may not get it right - non disabled people like myself may not get it right, but you know there's a kind of form of collective care, and I think, for me, the one example, I have of that is actually when I was a single parent with a small child and teaching in an architecture school in Polytechnic and the group that I was in, where I was the tutor, I would take my daughter when she was a baby with me and she would just be passed around people, particularly actually young men from families, you know non British people, so she got passed around, but not in a way like oh it's your turn to take the baby, this is a problem, it was just part of the space it's just part of the way that is a studio space. that's something you can do quite easily you’re gathered around together and and so that was that's kind of the closest I’ve been in, it helped me understand what that notion of access intimacy might be that it was a completely non judgmental and just thoughtful and caring and was all I was always asked it wasn't like people just take her off me. And it made it possible for me to do my job.

**Margaret Price:** Thank you, this is Margaret speaking again my head is just teeming with examples of times that I've been in spaces, where that kind of automatic believing and given take was part of The water we swim in, so to speak, and then I’ve also been in spaces or situations where it almost seemed as though my access needs were something to be examined like, why do you need that, how long will you need that. Can you give me the documentation to prove you need that. You know well, what are the best practices around that so we can prepare ahead of time and never have to change again, and I should mention that my spouse is an architect specialising in the intersection of sustainability and accessibility I’ve just dropped here name in the chat in case anyone wants to Google here. And it's really striking to me. When I work with architects and designers how hard it is to navigate that tension between you have to have standards of practice and you also have to be responsive. And that might be something else that we can talk about more during Q&A I’m going to jump back to the rest of the presentation and then we'll go to the dialogue portion.

Oh I’m in completely the wrong place, oh no I’m not okay. So I’m in the next slide, it’s a screenshot of the website where I capture information about the study I’m doing right now it's just titled the disabled faculty study, it's been going on for quite a few years now, so it's actually evolved into something more like the disabled workers study, since there are also staff and graduate students in the participant group, it was launched in 2012 as a collaborative effort across several universities and Again i'm happy to talk more about the methodology and the incredibly slow unfolding of analysis and findings for this study, but just to quickly summarize some of the most important findings. Three of the key themes that have emerged from this study in terms of how access actually unfolds in the spaces of higher education, our space time and cost. And by space. The participants who talked about this theme were not only talking about the build features of the space, but also the ways the space is used in evolves over time. So, for example, one participant who doesn't use stairs talked about the fact that his building has an elevator but it's shut off on the weekends. And he actually goes into his office to work quite often on weekends, because he also has another disability that makes it difficult to focus, so he needs that very quiet time and he had to go through an extraordinary sort of rigmarole with his university to explain. Yes, I realised the building is accessible, but if you turn off the elevator on weekends it's no longer accessible and then he was also required to officially register as a person with a disability. In order to quote unquote prove that he actually did need to use the elevator… now an interesting postscript to that particular story is that this particular faculty member, going back to the issue of time and fatigue and he wasn't against registering as a person with a disability at his university, but he was against having to face the month long delay that that would have entailed. So he contacted the building manager, for his office building and said look, is there any way that you can do something about the fact that the elevators shut off on weekends and the building manager said oh yeah I can just stop. I can just turn it back on there's no law that says, I have to shut it off it's just a general university recommendation about saving energy, so done, and done.

And that I think is a great example not only of how burdensome the conventional path toward access can be when we think of it as an individual problem that must be adjudicated individually. But also sometimes how radically, we can change environments when we simply believe what someone says, instead of getting into but why but does that match with best practice, but what about this, and just believe what someone says and see what happens. In terms of time I talked about this a bit when I looked at the the access sign outside the library, but it's really critical to recognise that. Access that requires a lot of time and effort effort is not the same as access that is more seamless excuse me that's my that's my reminder to myself that I’m wrapping up in four minutes.

So something that the participants in the study talked about a lot were waiting uncertainty planning ahead, these were all sub themes that were coated within the larger theme of time and finally cost emerged in all kinds of ways, over the course of this study and cost wasn't only the ever fresh topic of budgets and what kind of access, we can afford but also issues like emotional cost effort expended, repetitious effort, as we have to advocate in the exact same way for our access needs, often to the exact same people and frustration and a lot of disabled workers in higher education and students as well, simply drop out and until recently we haven't had very good numbers on that, but the research on that is getting significantly better I’ve put the URL for the kind of clearinghouse for this study on the slide. it's Margaret price all one word dot wordpress COM forward slash disabled hyphen faculty hyphen study.

Now the next thing I want to talk about and I’m going to kind of jump ahead to the end of this talkie part, so we have more time for dialogue.

The last thing I want to talk about is what kinds of activities could we do to foster a more nuanced sense of access, and this is especially important when you don't have a lot of disabled participants just ready and available to consult with you. So, two things that I’ve tried our accessibility audience audits in my classes and experiments with audio description and I’m now going to just quickly show some examples of this, instead of talking about each one at length.

So, I have borrowed the phrase mapping access from the scholar Aimi Haraime. Aimi is one of the leaders of the critical design lab at Vanderbilt university and they have developed a way of doing accessibility audits, that is dialogic critical and interactive. So. I often asked the students in my classes to try out accessibility audits, for various reasons. And when they do these audits we don't just do things like measure doorways or note if sidewalks are broken. We do that too, because those physical and measurable features are a very important part of access, but we also note things like is this alternative pathway long, is it well marked and will the person trying to take the alternative pathway have a sense of where they're going, or is it just kind of like go this way, and you might have access at some point, or they're subtle access barriers, like a ramp that's actually too steep or has no handrails. And I really encourage everyone to check out the wonderful access guide that one of my classes made for the Society for disability studies conference and the access guide is available from the website of the transformative access project, this is a project I’m involved in in Ohio State. And the URL for this guide is u.osu.edu forward slash transformative access all one word and from there, you can go to the tab that says mapping access.

I’ve also asked students to create video presentations about the spaces that they inhabit and ways that they do and don't find them accessible, this is another way that I really like to work with non disabled students about what access really means not just if you have a documented disability, but if you're a human moving through the world, so the screenshot on the slide right now is from a student presentation and in which the student was looking at an analysing classrooms that he inhabits, to think about how they are more and less accessible for people with panic disorder now, in this case the student does have sort of official disability. But other presentations that students have designed for this assignment include questions like the volume of commercials when you're watching TV or whether they have remote access to their classes, regardless of disability status, so this kind of activity is kind of twofold I asked students to think about access critically, but I also asked them to learn basic access skills like captioning and describing. let's see that's time so I’m actually going to go ahead and pop out of the PowerPoint now I’m going to share these slides with everyone who's attended I’ll do that via Steve.

And that way people can look at the rest of the information, everything is linked by URL that spelled out on the slide, so that you can visit the sites and look at them in more detail, but I really think it's more important to talk to each other that's where the really good stuff happens so I’m going to wrap up my remarks here and pass it back to Jos.

**Jos:** Thank you, sorry delay in finding the mute button, as usual, even now, he is into doing this… Thank you so much, well, these are really just so helpful and there's been lots of questions in the Q&a which we’ll come back to but which really completely support this idea that Everything is kind of so big it's so much around bureaucracy that takes a lot of time, so there's a lot of comments from people who've with disabilities you've been experiencing exactly those sorts of frustrating time consuming and really unnecessary difficulties.

But before we get to that, I would just love to have a bit of a conversation with Poppy about her experiences and also about as with thinking about some of the things that do need to change and how we might make that happen so I’m probably… do you mind just talk a little bit about your experiences of being a blind student studying architecture?

**Poppy:** Yeah that's fine so I’ll just start by kind of explaining my disability experience, very quickly, I am have been visually impaired, since I was born. Until this year and then I lost a significant amount of sight and so I’m now registered as blind. So when I started my degree, I was visually impaired and now I’m registered as blind so I've kind of had a similar experience, all the way through my degree. But obviously things have become a bit more tricky now because I found that the way that the university dealt with it was kind of like you can just about manage. With these things, and the whole way through I’d be saying just about managing isn't good enough and also, like as a lot of disabled people know your condition can change, even if it's not supposed to change, and it can change from day to day, whether that's like a big change or just like you're particularly tired at one point, and so things that you could do you can't do today.

And so I think it's kind of in some ways, proved this point and then last more site that was this attitude of just try and do what a sighted student does but struggle to do doesn't work, we need to kind of take a more radical approach when it comes to disability, which is actually looking at what works for you for what your needs are.

And I think that's something that was such a massive takeaway from the architecture be on site cause for me was I was surrounded by other visually impaired and blind people, and at no point did we go I want to do this thing like a sighted person we all started from the point of being blind and being visually impaired and embracing that as the starting point and It was a time for me where i'd  gone to a mainstream school I’d always been surrounded by side with people I’ve never even spent that much time with other vision impaired and blind people. So for me it was such a sort of awakening of that just trying and struggling to be what is normal quote unquote normal is not the right way of being it's we should be starting and we should be embracing our differences.

And I think I’m to give the university some credit and most of my tutors really embrace my attitude towards it and they're completely supportive of that, it's when you come up against. The very fixed like mark schemes and the RIBA guidelines of what you have to do to be an architect. That you come up against the biggest barriers, where you can try and be radical as much as you like, but as soon as there's bureaucracy in place then that's when the challenges start. um and then I think the other thing that's worth mentioning is the light Margaret’s been saying, so much of my time as a student is just spent sorting out my access needs like this year I say a times I’m spending a day a week trying to sort out my access needs and not doing my degree. And anyone that's done architecture knows that it's really full on you need to be able to give your whole life to it in the current situation, which I don't necessarily agree with, but that's the way, that's the world we're in at the moment, and so, if you're having to spend a fifth of your time working on how you're actually going to do the work and not working, it just automatically puts you at a disadvantage.

So, I think yeah and it comes with like self advocacy is the emotional load as well, of having to sort of come out as disabled to everyone, you meet and tell them and not have them believe you immediately or people say I’m not really blind, even if they don't mean it, even if they don't mean it in a malicious way there's just so much like wading through other people's attitudes towards disability that again take time and energy to get through which as an architecture student you just don't have.

**Jos:**Yeah, we talked before a little bit I don't know if you want to say a little bit more about you know this In a way, it's also a critique of that kind of quite toxic kind of way of being taught the way that architecture is taught, and the idea that it should take up every hour of your day so that it's problematic like for everyone, but obviously if you're also negotiating all these extra burdens, unnecessary burdens that are put on you as a disabled person then it's kind of really pushing you back with a you know kind of… crazy.

**Poppy:** Yeah I think there's a culture of overwork is inherently evil. And that's something that a lot of people are finding during the pandemic that when disabled on disabled and they're going yeah this is really toxic. But it's something that disabled people have been saying for years, and because of my increased sight loss I’ve decided to take my third year over two years or do half this year next year. And what I found quite upsetting really was that, when I was talking to my fellow students they're all going I’m so jealous. I wish I didn't have the stress I wish I had the time to enjoy the work that I’m doing and actually be creative and all of these different things, and have work life balance and be able to sleep. And then he realised like how bad the problem is that people are jealous of me for needing an accident requirement that means I can do the course because it's going to make my experience of the course so much better.

**Jos:** Yeah no it's… I know you've been involved, I think a bit in the future architecture front and some other other groups that have also been thinking about that. And it's sort of very difficult isn't it here, I am a non disabled person I’ve been asked you disable person about what you think should change, you know, like it's all your responsibility and nothing to do with those in the audience, who are non disabled actually taking some responsibility for this and not just kind of leaving it to disable people to sort out but in terms of your course there's the question the chat actually about the design studio, but I wanted you know just anything really that you wanted to say about you know how feel your courses could change?

**Poppy:** I am I think like one of the things that I really think is important that's not directly to do with architecture education but it's that I didn't think I’d get on to the degree. When I was doing my a levels, I ended up getting an a star and a and e because one of my courses just didn't make anything accessible they gave me a textbook that I couldn't read. And they send me powerpoints that had work examples, and that was it my math syllabus.

And I thought I’m never going to get into St I’m never gonna be able to do the group degree, I want, and we really need to start thinking about how architecture schools sort of show off like all you need three stars to get in here, or we need this and that in itself is blocking people that would be really good from getting in and from being able to have those opportunities and particularly when we're talking about disability attainment is much lower through the education system that we have, and so there needs to be allowances made in order to get disabled people in to the industry in the first place, and then within the industry, I think one thing that will be really helpful is having more people because I’m finding that there's a lot of these issues that I’m one of the first people having to deal with I’m one of the only people I know that's going oh adobe doesn't have any accessibility features, or how do I do CAD or use the graphics that they have so. We need people to like be campaigning within it, but then we also need The Non disabled people around us to be supporting us through that like I’ve been asking my university to back me up when I’m talking to Adobe, Because the way to be university, the second best arts University in the world has so much more weight than just one undergrad student. And we need this collective force and action and anger in order to be able to actually make any substantial change and that goes through everything from software to the entry requirements like I’ve said to the like how we run courses.

**Jos:** Yeah I do I’m aware that time is going on, but I would like to ask you one more question because it also relates to a question in the chat so… I know we talked before a little bit about you know the cannon you know the curriculum and how disabled people just don't exist in that there's also a question in the chat from Jordan about What have you found on the main boundaries in the design studio in terms of both culture and practice, so the particular kind of key things in the design studio that you think could be changed dealt with differently.

**Poppy:** Yeah I think I personally find like the concept of This is slightly different from a studio but like the concept of a crit oh I’ll be there, standing there presenting work that when it's all pinned up on a wall I can't see myself. And I’m presenting it to people and then I sit there and I look at everyone else's presentations that I can't see and I think that's like such a big thing there's so much pressure on the visual and even when I am in a space saying this constantly talking to people saying I can't see, this I can't do that or and like Oh, maybe you could have a written piece or talk about it in a particular way that even when you have disabled people in the room it's still nothing was changing access wise because of the way architecture is so set in its ways of how things have been done, yeah and the same with whenever I’m talking to a tutor they always want to like sketch things down because they think in such a visual way and so it's like trying to like call the words of them to describe things, so I think like Margaret saying about like just getting more people talking about access and like you were saying about getting students to do the audio description of things, these are skills that architects would benefit from having that would also make things a lot more accessible yeah.

**Jos:** No, no, I mean Margaret gave some really great examples of you know, some of the things that she does to kind of get into this area in a much richer way than it's often dealt with, and I think that for me being introduced to kind of audio description, which is one of the first projects disordinary did, which was working with Architecture students is audio describe us to blind and partially sighted people, Doing an architectural tour, but what they were learning was how to describe things really, really beautifully and poetically and what they were also learning was how blind people already know lots and lots about space that is complimentary to, additional to, different from a kind of visual way of engaging for the built environment, so it was like a really powerful foundation project and and we've certainly access to be on site, one of the things it was thinking about this, could you design a building entirely through audio description. And how would it be different, and I do think, I think the power of the potential of audio description in its richest most powerful poetic ways is fantastic and it's just completely missing from architecture and I think that yeah that Your tutors could actually do a project where everybody has to do it as an audio description and not drawn would just be really, it'd be really interesting to see how the projects changed what changed about them, I think.

**Margaret:** Can I jump in on this actually. This is a very quick thing about audio description or image description which I think is especially interesting for designers and architects because Poppy, as you say, often designers and architects are people who think visually and explain things visually and that act of translation can seem very daunting at first, so one thing I always try to teach my students is that image description is actually something they do all the time or they hear it all the time, for example, if they listen to podcasts routinely, if there's an image or an outfit or just an event that the hosts need to describe they'll quickly describe it. And anytime we don't have visual access in a way that we think of as quote unquote normal we describe things to each other.

But when we think of it as something we're doing quote unquote for disabled people, it can seem difficult and esoteric. So I definitely encourage people once the PowerPoint is shared actually I'll put the link in the chat to to look at the video that I made with students about image description, but I also want to share a very quick thing that I asked students to do as they're learning to do this, one of the very first things I asked students to do every semester is Put an image in their Avatar on our course management system it doesn't have to be an image of their face it can be an image of anything and as one of their first assignments I just say, please make sure your Avatar has some image and write a one sentence description of the image, so your classmates know what it is. And I don't say this is a disability exercise or this is us learning image description I just say write one sentence describing it. And I find that can be a nice easy on ramp to the concept that everyone can and should describe there are professional practices to know about, I mean There is a rhetoric to it there's a politics and it's useful to know those things, but you don't have to assume that you're fantastic at it before you start doing it.

**Jos:** Thank you know I think that's really that's brilliant and I we've got just a few more minutes left so I hope that nobody feels that I’ve missed them out from the Q&A there's been quite a lot of comments, there's been some stuff about UCL East which I don't think it's our role to talk about. And what I really would like to do, and I hope everybody's happy with this is just conclude By asking our two speakers to think of and tell us one or two things they'd recommend that people should do - Particularly non disabled people, university leaders, non disabled students, teachers and practitioners what one additional thing we've been given some suggestions, but what one additional thing Margaret do you think what would be a great thing for people to do.

**Margaret:** This is something that I often suggest when I’m doing workshops, with people at schools. I think it's very fair for people to say to me, I need some solutions like I need some best practices. Especially because my work is quite theoretical and it can be hard to think of somewhere to put your feet, so to speak.

So one thought experiment that I offer people is go through the next week, doing the following thing every single time someone tells you they need something believe them that's the whole thing, that's it, that's the whole exercise, the person might be disabled they might be non disabled you might be looking at a building standard, you might be talking to your toddler. You might be thinking about whether you'll take the elevator, the stairs, you might be thinking about whether your student is going to get an extension, just try as a thought experiment, believing every single thing someone tells you about what they need.

Now that doesn't mean you have to do it for them if it's your toddler saying I need to hit you with this broom you don't have to act on it. But it can be extraordinarily transformative to begin from the place of instead of saying well why do you need that or well what is my best practices checklist saying about it just believe what someone tells you.

**Jos:** That's really good and Poppy? What about you, one one thing that you'd like people, non disabled people, in particular, to do?

**Poppy:** I think this is very similar to Margaret, is kind of like think about what the impact would be if you don't do something, you know if you if you build it if you design a building and you haven't made it accessible like that says to me that you don't care or you haven't thought about it, and I think that's something that so often left out of the discussion is that it's not just all that's annoying I can't get into that building it's the emotional impact of that happening every day Everywhere you go. And that you are bit you're not valuable you're not important, they haven't thought about you all of these things, it's not just what it is, it's the impact that it has, and I think if you think about that, view it from someone's access needs in a classroom or the access of a building. You suddenly have this sort of generosity to you, you remember why that person might need a bit more time to do something you you just are. A lot kinder about things is much more generous approach to access, instead of just going, this is what the building REG say you kind of go well what impact will that have if I go above the building regs.

**Jos:** Fantastic! Thank you, thank you both and I just want to end by mentioning a small project that we've been planning to do with the DisOrdinary architecture Group for some time, which is to amplify the voices of disabled people within the built environment education and practice, so we thought we'd produced some sort of pamphlet type publication That both describes the experiences of barriers to equal participation and offers examples of how to start from non conforming ways of being in the world, as a way of offering up both critical and creative perspectives on the limitations of our current architectural educational and professional practices so. This is a call out to anybody here or that you might want to pass on to others who would be willing to answer some brief questions, this will be done anonymously that we can then collate and share in a in a well produced form as widely as possible, because those things are just. I mean, I know these things are said again and again, but they don't somehow penetrate through to the non disabled world, so if you're interested in being involved, then please email DisOrdinary architecture@gmail.com. With the title non conforming in architecture in the title bar that would be really great or you can always email me on my UCL email, if you want to. Thank you so much to Margaret and Poppy. Thank you to everybody for joining us today. I’ve really enjoyed it, I hope you have to. inclusive spaces is back on January the 19th with a discussion on decentralizing the solar economy, so you can sign up for details of that in the chat and we hope to see you then.

And I would just like a to thank Our two speakers and everybody who's commented and To say goodbye.

**Margaret:**Thank you so much.

**Poppy:** Thank you for having me