From Fixed Boundaries to Strict ones

A study on the process of adjustments on ''Workable Space''

A square, A building, or seven. Wearing the same uniform every day for the past century and a half.
A familiar face walks in, takes a pause,
realizing they have forgotten the interior
but a familiar fireplace.

For centuries, one's essential needs from their immediate space was simple, manageable and responded to by nature for the most part. Due to the rapid shift in prioritized needs from the space and the era which came hand in hand, the designs were compelled to update themselves according to said needs of the individuals inhabiting the space. The nature of a 'response' to these updates points a finger at the design of the structures forcing them to adjust to the present and it's needs. Undoubtably, Replacement, demolishment and extensions can be of the time associated responses however instances can be viewed in which the facade of a structure remains, and the programs and circulation routs alter juxtaposing the familiar and the recognizable foreign.

'The familiar' can be introduced as a reoccurring space, a recognizable picture, one that imputes ease and comfort. The familiar is familiar and is known. The familiar in familiar to me. The familiar starts from Bedford square and settles in the Architectural Association's buildings.

The AA building has and will become a recognizable foreign to its inhibitors introducing them to an unfamiliar fashion almost every year. Constantly adjusting to the needs of an association that are individually worlds apart from one another. The perpetual change in not only the inhabitants' needs but fundamental elements in the association such as number of students, number of units, placements of new programs demands a rapid 'response' which is almost always managed within the boundary of the AA. With the constant change of this academic space, one may find relevance in making an emphasis on 'The space of work', it's timeline and it's driving components over the years.

This essay aims to understand the rapid switch between 'the familiar' and 'the recognizable foreign' and overview it's process, it's fundamental components and it's future while taking into account its relationship with the inhibitors and their effect on one another.

Starting from the closest community of individuals and an educational institution, The Architectural Association has been one of the biggest architectural institutions for decades and has been the focus of many over its 171 years for its incredible influence. The architectural Association was built in 1847 and later moved to their current location in 36 Bedford square. [1]

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[1] "Architectural Association School of Architecture." AA Lectures Online. Accessed December 06, 2018. https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/AASCHOOL/LIBRARY/aahistory.php.

''A few weeks after the signing of the armistice, in November 1918, the new home to the AA, in Bedford Square, was bursting with activity.''[2]

The building is one of the preserved Georgian pieces. Due to the era in which they were built in and therefore the lack of interior response to the inhibitors' needs, such as heating or electricity, the structural design for Georgian buildings were broadly directed towards introducing a sense of home using exterior elements. From the exterior of these historically valuable buildings, they can be identifiable for their, symmetrical, uniform proportions with high ceilings elongated regularly with a window positioned above the main entrance.[3] Using their high ceilings and distinguished interior fire places, they put an emphasis on introducing a ***workable*** space.

'*What is workable space*' *and what components distinguish how* '*workable*' *is that space?*

In an attempt to respond to this question, one finds themselves viewing the relationship between the space and their inhibitors' needs through time perhaps dating back to before the Georgian times. This relationship can be observed in three eras, The mechanical era, the early digital era and the digital era. The Mechanical era can be introduced as the ancestors of the advanced technology we use today, dating back to 1450 to 1760. Contrary to the current relationship between the user and the space, in the mechanical era and for a long period of time after that, the spaces within a building were critically judged by users due to more natural elements, light and ventilation are to be named of the most fundamental. Wilhelm Schickard, A professor at Tubingen University in 1623 was the individual to be able to introduce a creation of adding machinery which had the capacity of carrying numbers between columns starting the early digital era. Schools, offices and stations had machinery which required space and funds only they could afford. This was the era which the individuals still had very restricted access to the machinery.[4] The space remains somewhat the same with advances in machinery helping the architecture, but the interior components were still not in a place to respond. To define 'the information age' and to pin point a timeline for technological information, is to understand the character of the rapid shift from pre-electrical (industrial) era to a technological one during which the 'Industrial Revolution (1760 to 1820/1840) played a vital role. During this era the society is majorly characterized by its digital and high-tech information-based system and allows the individuals to respond as well as explore their sole needs using said system in a more time, space and economically efficient way. This was with no doubt encouraged by the users which has pushed this era with overwhelming speed making it difficult to define technology due to the constant upgrades.[5]

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[2] Summerson, John Newenham. *The Architectural Association: 1847-1947*. London: Architectural Association, 1947.

  – [3] *"What Is The Difference Between Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian Architecture?"* Janine Stone. March 26, 2018. Accessed December 05, 2018. http://www.janinestone.com/luxury-lifestyle/georgian-victorian-and-edwardian-homes/.

[4] "History Of Information Technology¶." History Of Information Technology - Introduction to Information and Communication Technology. Accessed December 06, 2018. http://openbookproject.net/courses/intro2ict/history/history.html.

[5] Castells, Manuel. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. Malden, MA: Oxford,Blackwell, 1996.

''In the late 1980s, less than 1% of the world's technologically stored information was in digital format, while it was 94% in 2007, with more than 99% by 2014.'' [6]

Avinash K.H

Digital Revolution: A transformation in technology

As a student of architecture, a space which responds to me and my primary needs as a student is one of my biggest priorities while critically separating 'the space of work' from the rest of the building. Difference in character is one of the most evident qualities within the AA which leads to a diverse definition of the word 'Workable space' that introduces a challenge for creating a space where all feel a part of the conversation and all feel associated enough to increase their efficiency and lose any boundary in order to create. With this extending beyond the realm of time, the academic space and the workable space are forced to a constant upgrade due to the rapid and annual changes brought to the association by different components namely those of, change in number of students, change in number of units, advised upgrades from the community to better the spaces etc. Hence forming the 'Unrecognizable familiar' to its returning inhibitors every year.

Write and Write Architects- Architectural Association

Despite the perpetual reformation of the interior programs and keeping a uniform facade, the architectural Association which currently extends from 32-39 Bedford square, has managed to preserve some of the interior structure for many years.

Observations from the drawing as well as personal experience of the space, allows me to form an argument with an emphasis on 36 Bedford square first floor. Prior to the AA opening its doors to the public, the space had its share of residential, non-residential and offices taking part inhabiting 36 Bedford
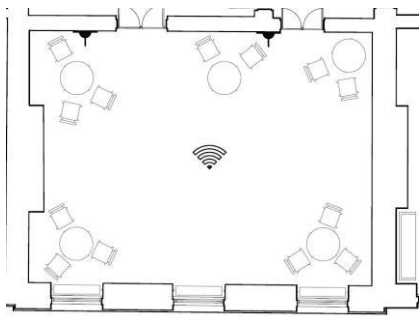
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[6] K.H, Avinash. "Digital Revolution: A Transformation in Use of Technology." *Research in Digital Revolution and New India*: 52. http://www.adarshjournals.in/index.php/ajmr/article/viewFile/122270/84065.

square.[7] The area of 36 First floor has proven to have been treated as a space of conversation and affirmation over the years of its existence.

Front members' room-36 Bedford Square-Byrne, Andrew. *Bedford Square: An Architectural Study*. London: Athlone Press, 1990.

   The focused floor is of importance and interest due to its three main rooms and their responses to the inhabitants needs over time. With an aim to pin point a relationship between the era and how each room has updated it's 'Workable space' and taking into consideration of how broad the argued subject can be, one may find it helpful to focus on a smaller site. One might even suggest how parts have been frozen in time while others have arrived in 2018 fully prepared for the advanced needs of the current generation. The Front member's room, the back Members' room and the Library have each expressed their programs and their social relationship to their inhabitants in fundamentally contrasting forms.
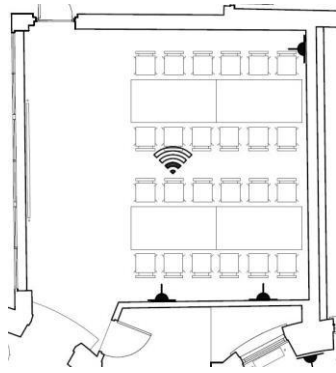

Front members' room- Architectural Association, Inter 12

–   [7] Byrne, Andrew. *Bedford Square: An Architectural Study*. London: Athlone Press, 1990. Chapter Georgian Society and Bedford Square, Page 46

On 22 June 1901, Mary Hodgkinson wrote to the Bedford Office complaining of a notice that had appeared on the railings announcing 'The Physical Therapeutic institute'. By 1909 the Associated Board of the royal Academy of Music were also within the area.

Back members' room- Architectural Association, Inter 12

By the passing of years, it became evident that, the bridge between these three rooms (the Bar) also played a vital rule on connecting these programs together while serving as a space for debate and events. The library was condemned to a specific role which decreased the chances of a huge change however, the library did manage to respond to the current needs of the students by adding a web database for the purpose of researching books as well as a adding a medium number of power plugs to create a more suitable workplace for the students. The control over the general atmosphere of the library and its level of technological ease keeps the space analog to a certain extent while understanding the need for a power plug and good connection to create an efficient workspace.

The contrast between the front members' room and the back members' room is that of interest due to their similar locations but severely different responses to the students' needs. Until three years ago, the back members' room was characterized through open juries and small events where due to its location in the building the inhibitors were unknowingly invited to view what was happening as it was quite hard to miss. Over the past three years the space has been transformed into one of the most efficient workspaces within the AA. Long tables with several plugs on every side were added to the space and because of the mutual understanding between the students, the space became relatively quiet. The full glass windows on both sides allow for a more welcoming space. The space became a space to sit and work for hours with no distractions. The front members' room however, managed to preserve its open nature for conversations and events through a control over the level and design of the components added to the space. There is a very specific (four) number of **round** tables in the space on the four corners occupying twenty percent of the space. There are two power plugs on two of the walls. Two of said plus are normally used by installations leaving two plus for 16 inhibitors with no extensions. This can almost be seen as a hidden language letting the students know this is a space of conversations and not a space of long working hours.

''Continuity was thus preserved and as mobilization developed, the member's rooms became a valued center to which men and women on leave from the forces resorted to exchange news, hearsay and hopes.''[8]

Andrew Byrne
Bedford Square: An Architectural Study

–   [8] Byrne, Andrew. *Bedford Square: An Architectural Study*. London: Athlone Press, 1990.

The above observations and research suggest the leading role of technology in dictation on circulation and how we use a space. 'The workable Space' which was once prioritized by natural elements and the sense of efficiency has been redefined through enough power plugs and the speed of the WIFI connection. In order to prove the suggested argument, a survey was conducted by myself and several AA students which statically defines the connection between technological ese and prioritizing a workable place by the inhibitors.

''There is a wide variety of Wi-Fi speed in the parameter of the Library. The main space has a decent enough strength to support casual browsing and research. However, the Gallery room has 0.2 Mbps which is basically unusable for any online related activity. The back members' Room and bar has a strong internet speed of 62.1 Mbps, which does not correspond to the speed in the front members' room"[9]

During the past twenty years, Libraries have become less crowded and yet empty rooms with only a power plug and good internet connection seem to have been taking people's attention. The structure of essential needs from one's immediate space has been rebuilt and upgraded drastically with people walking away from their windows to their Windows 10 and forming warm discussions around the Wi-Fi router Small hand held objects have been able to be used as a fluid boundary to keep or keep away one in or out of a space, questioning what have those essential needs formed into and how can we use this said elements in the favor of the design and the programme.

First there was only natural light and candles, electricity and radiators were introduced just as solar lighting and floor heating arrived and finally there was no sign of heating or lighting, yet all was well-lit and heated defining a sense of home with invisible boundaries

Overtime the mentioned needs from our immediate spaces stopped to impact the architecture and to form the familiar foreign and started to impact our behavior as a group. In a way our needs impacted us directly and isolated us by pushing us to a corner with our laptop chargers and our headphone designed not let any sound in. We are (mis)fortunate enough to live in an age where the speed of technology advancing is higher than the speed of our router which leads me to argue due to recent developments that we have in fact made a full circle and are now going back to our past. With new wireless connections and strong signals, in the next few years our need to be connected to a plug or even near any sort of router will completely disappear allowing us to move back to the windows and bring our laptops with us because they simply don't need to be physically connected anymore.[10] The impact was sudden and drastic to our architecture and our communities up on foundation of technology, now that those elements are no longer fundamental, one may find themselves wondering, what will I need from my architecture next?

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[9] Research and test done by the students of The Architectural Association
[10] Pocket-lint. "Future Batteries, Coming Soon: Charge in Seconds, Last Months and Power over the Air." Pocket-lint. October 02, 2018. Accessed December 06, 2018. https://www.pocket-lint.com/gadgets/news/130380-future-batteries-coming-soon-charge-in-seconds-last-months-and-power-over-the-air.

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- Front members' room- Architectural Association, Inter 12
- Back members' room- Architectural Association, Inter 12
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