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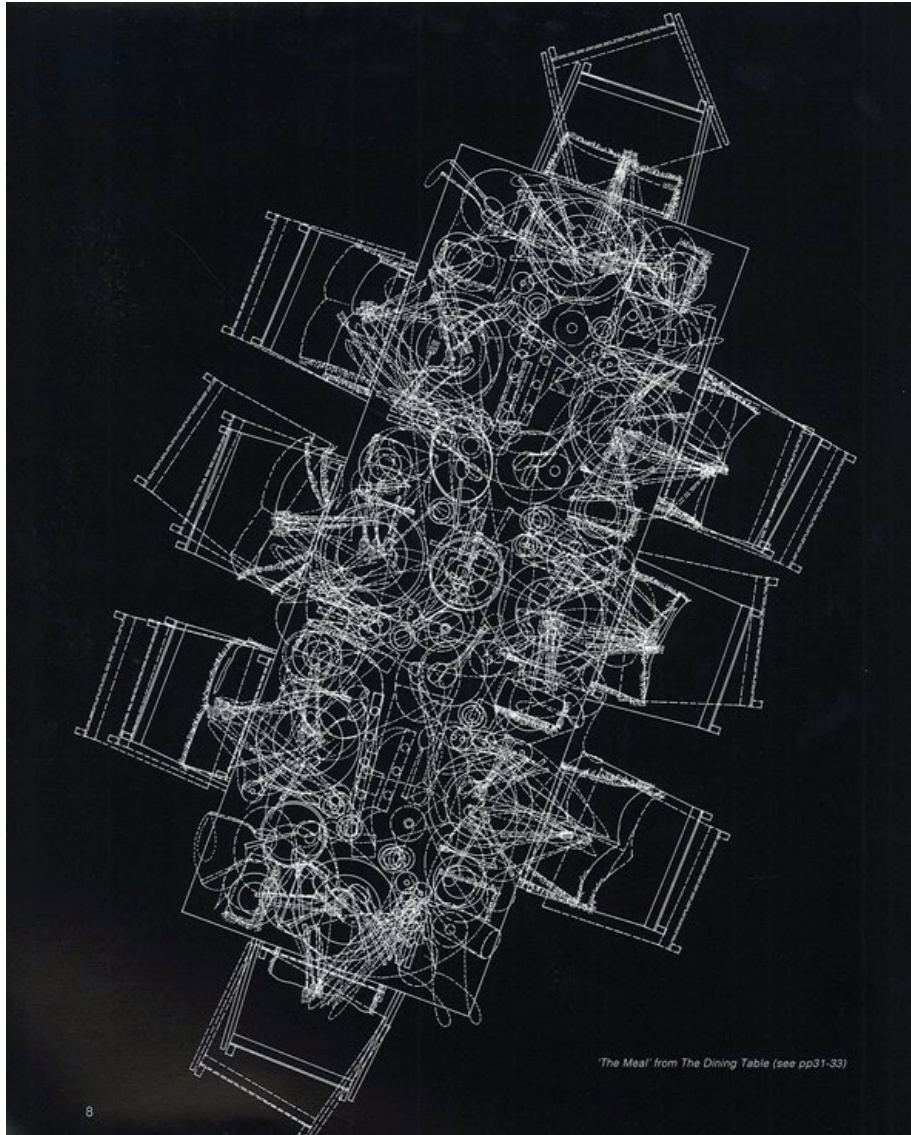
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HOUSING



Dining Table Offices

How has the advent of working from home influenced what home means to the occupant, and how might homes of the future be designed to accommodate the change?

William Holm-Mercer

UCA Canterbury
School of Architecture
2024/25

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BA (Hons) Architecture (ARB/RIBA Part 1)
Stage 3 Research Thesis
Supervisor: Daniel Stilwell

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Introduction

The advent of working from home has been of interest in the media post COVID-19, which created a boom in working from home that has lingered, evident in statistics such as those published by Barratt Development PLC, who claim that 47% of workers have worked from home since 2020, compared to the 4.7% pre-COVID 19 (Barratt Development PLC, 2021). The function of the home environment has also changed, and the idea of home is shifting away from the nuclear family home that most people have come to experience. With working from home, or hybrid work becoming more common, people are having to adapt their living spaces into workspaces, which creates a tension. How people are creating strategies to overcome the inherent difficulties, and how they feel the positives weigh up against the negatives is the core subject for this thesis. And the way in which designers approach this is also a point of interest, as the methods in how homes are designed might help balance the factors involved in home working for the future occupants.

To explore this, I am looking at academic papers such as "Beyond Live-Work" by Frances Holliss, which looks at the historical context of working from home, why it changed and how it has made a resurgence, as well as books like "Why Working From Home Will Stick" by Jose Maria Barrero, Nicholas Bloom and Steven J. Davis which discusses the impact of COVID-19. In addition to academic papers, I will also be conducting a series of interviews to understand on a more individual level how working from home has influenced their lives and home experiences. Each participant is employed in a different career and so their experiences will differ, which should provide an interesting set of data to compare and see if there are any trends or inertias. My research will also be backed up by statistical data collected by Barratt Developments PLC, who took a sample of seven hundred and sixty-three potential home buyers. This statistical data will be an important tool in reviewing the responses by the interviewees, I have strategically chosen the three people because of their differing backgrounds, so the data will likely not align with their views. This disparity might prove useful in the comparison of the two methods, and question the relevancy of each, where interviews offer qualitative data and emotive responses, but statistical data provides set answers over a larger scale, functioning as quantitative data.

I will be exploring 5 concepts and periods of time; the historical context, the acceleration of working from home due to COVID-19, the current perspective on the subject matter, the individual experience, and how homes might be designed in the future to accommodate this change. The aim is to understand the broader context in comparison to individual experiences, and how these experiences can influence design to solve issues that have arisen. The historical context is important to this topic, as we have made a partial reversal to how people lived in the past, however not all professions have experienced this reversal due to modern safety standards, such as the medical sector which requires sterile conditions, meaning they cannot fully work from home, but might adopt hybrid work. Whilst we can learn from historical examples, the individual experiences seem most relevant, especially as home working is now typically digital, and homes are no longer always fit for their new purpose, with most people having to create or combine living spaces with work spaces.

Literature Analysis

One of the primary sources I will be using is interviews with three individuals from different career paths. Whilst this only provides a small batch of data, it will be of good use in comparison to mass data examples. The interviews provide qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter, the responses will be much more open ended, rather than collecting data via multiple choice answers. I will not be able to collect a large sample of responses this way, so I will also need to compare my results to mass data collected through surveys, such as *Working From Home: Planning For The New Normal?* By Barratt Development PLC (2021). I do not think either of these forms of information are suitable to be looked at alone and should be looked at in conjunction with each other to determine if the mass trends align with the more emotive responses given in an interview. The three interviewees for my research come from different careers and have different experiences with working from home. To ensure I have a reliable set of responses, the questions for each person follow the same base structure, however, the questions will be slightly tailored to each person so that they can discuss their experiences in more detail and with more confidence.

The first is an artist and university lecturer who was previously on campus, but after COVID-19 they decided to take up a new job as an online lecturer, this has given them some more freedoms but also has had some negative effects which I will be discussing with them.

The second person is an acupuncturist based in Spain, unlike the other two people I am interviewing, they have moved away from working at home due to it creating a bad home experience, they now have an office in a separate space, allowing their home space to be purely for home activities. I will be asking them about their decision to change and whether or not they feel the choice has created a more positive environment for them.

The final interviewee is a blacksmith based in Kent, they previously taught English in Japan, then moved back to England to pursue their interest in blacksmithing, I have chosen to include this person in the interview process as I believe they have a unique relationship and perspective on working from home, one that dates back through history.

Another key source I will be using is *Beyond Live Work* by Frances Hollis (2015), in chapter 1, 'A Tradition', Hollis (2015) talks about the historical context of the live/work environment and why it has been important to the development of modern cities. I think it is important to discuss how people have used their homes throughout history so that I have a good basis of comparison between then and now, this will allow me to understand how the idea of home has changed, and what might need to be done to adapt to the digital age of working at home, where modern houses are not designed as live/work spaces as they would have been before the industrial revolution. Hollis also goes into detail about the dynamics of working from home in the modern age, looking at the difficulties and benefits using various case studies to support her writing. This will be helpful in the later chapters of my thesis where I will look further into what home means to the inhabitants and how working from home might influence this, the writing will be a useful tool to tie into my interview process.

In the chapter 'Everyday Realities', Hollis discusses how houses can be designed to mitigate issues associated with combining home and work spaces, arguing that simple partition walls can create an improved relationship, acting separately as pseudo spaces for work and living within the same area. This chapter might prove useful for my second interviewee, who had troubles with invaded privacy as part of his work, they might feel that a simple partition could have improved their situation, as an alternative to their decision to set up an office elsewhere, which will have been a financial investment.

Whilst Hollis provides a good basis of information on the practical, social and economic impacts of working from home, they do not greatly discuss the psychological impacts which is an important factor in my research, stress related factors on occupants and relationships are something that I can assess to an extent in my interviews, but finding another research paper that delves further into these psychological elements will be important for my research. The long-term effects of working at home are also not discussed in detail, so finding research on how home satisfaction is affected over a longer period will be useful, however, given the relatively short period associated with working at home, it may be a challenge to find examples that cover a significant amount of data.

With the increasing trend of working from home, future houses are likely to be designed with this in mind, Will the work from home era impact residential design by Brooks Howell (2020) discusses how homes are being adapted to accommodate the work-live environment. They look at current trends and how these can be carried forward in the long term to create more positive experiences. Some of the trends they look at are the refurbishment of spare bedrooms into offices to create a separate work space from the living spaces, this trend of separation is something that I have also observed in the cases of my interviewees, in particular, P H previously worked on their dining table, but due to the poor relationship created between work and home, they turned a spare room into an isolated office where all of their work related belongings are kept, doing this allowed a more relaxed feel in the house, as they could move around it without being reminded of their work out of hours.

However, for multifamily housing, or families in smaller living areas, the limited space creates challenges when it comes to the separation of personal and professional life. Howell addresses these issues by suggesting multifunctional and adaptable spaces or moveable walls.

Howell primarily focuses on the physical design aspect surrounding the issues of working at home, and how houses can be designed to improve these relationships, however, they do not address the issues related to mental health when looking at these adaptable spaces, whilst in theory a space where walls can move and furniture has multiple purposes can work, in practice, it is quite likely that these things will become extra chores that tie into a poor live work experience. Having to move things multiple times in a day to switch between personal and professional life could become tedious, and these adaptable elements may be abandoned by the users, who might return to just working in their personal areas.

Issues also still arise when these adaptable spaces meet multi-generational families, the spaces could work if the whole family's needs are met, but if the parents have adapted the living room for work, then the children may find that they have no personal space during the day, causing strain on the family dynamics. The individual needs of people within a family are not met with adaptable design, but rather, the whole family must adapt to the needs of one or two members.

A Brief History

The concept of working from home is not a modern creation, but something that throughout history has been the norm. "Examples can be found worldwide, from the Japanese Machiya to the Malaysian shop-house, the Iranian courtyard house to the Vietnamese tube house, the Lyons silk-weaver's atelier to the Dutch merchant's house." (Holliss, 2015). Prior to the Industrial Revolution, work and home were almost always located within the same building, and work was often a family matter where everyone was involved in some part of the business. Even in the simplest ways, working from home can date back to the hunter gatherers, who would collect food and supplies and bring them back to their homes to prepare them (Reynolds, 2024). In instances such as this, the idea of home and work are a bit blurred, it is unlikely that they viewed gathering food as work, but rather as just a fact of life, but from our modern perspective that is how we would see it. To look at a more recent example, where work and home were two defined activities and spaces, we can look at the craft-based work of the medieval period, where a workshop would be attached to the bottom or side of the living areas, "a combination of kitchen and spinning/ weaving/ dressmaking workshop, bedroom and dairy, dining room, butchery, tannery, and byre." (Reynolds, 2024).

In medieval times, the longhouse was a typical mode of living (see Fig.2) where work and home were joined, and there was not always a separation between the two. In the image we can see cattle sharing the same roof as the workers whilst they cook their meal around the hearth. Whilst there is no apparent physical divide, we can still observe that all the human spaces are towards the back of the long house, whereas the cattle are all in the foreground, suggesting that there were still sub-physical divides present. This mode of living would have differed from a medieval townhouse, where they had ground floor shops, workshops or bakeries and living spaces above (Holliss, 2015). Historical examples of working from home are also seen in wealthier areas of society, where servants lived within the house of their lord, in these cases, the buildings were designed such that the servants had their own corridors to navigate to not disturb the other residents (Evans, 1978).



Fig.2 Reconstruction Of Medieval Longhouse (2015)

"The advent of industrial development revamped patterns of human settlement, labor, and family life" (National Geographic Society, 2023). The Industrial Revolution was a turning point when it came to work and home, as products began to be mass produced, larger spaces were needed to house the machines and produce the quantity required, because of this, people were having to begin working away from home, in the factories that produced the products. This set up a new model of living that most people still follow today (Reynolds, 2024) which involved a rigid work schedule and employment under a larger company. Up until the twentieth century, the term house referenced any building where work or life took place, but after the industrial revolution, house came to mean "a building in which unpaid domestic, rather than paid productive, work took place and which provided a base from which people could 'go out to work' to earn their living." (Hollis, 2015).

The idea of an office building brought further changes, people no longer had to commute to work in factories, they could now also work in a clean environment, and commuting became easier with increased public transport (Reynolds, 2024). These advances in technology made it cheaper and easier to work away from home, and so homes were no longer designed with work in mind, which allowed them to be either smaller, or have spare rooms. The family dynamic also changed dramatically, previously whole families worked together to run businesses, but now children could go to school whilst the father went off to work, and the mother kept the house (National Geographic Society, 2023), whilst this model of living has changed slightly, we broadly follow it still, where children are not expected to work until their late teens, and home has become a place of family reuniting at the end of the day for dinner, before leaving in the morning for their respective day activities.

Whilst there are apparent benefits to working in offices or away from home, there are also negative side effects, the familial bonds could be considered weaker than examples from pre-industrial history (National Geographic Society, 2023), where "Trading and family life, public and private, were integrated in this workhome" (Hollis, 2015). Families used to work collaboratively for their collective benefit (National Geographic Society, 2023), which will have created a strong bond between them, and the time spent with each other will have been greater than the amount of time a modern family spends together. This effect has been amplified by technological advances, where children now often spend most of their time in their private rooms rather than the communal rooms, so for the modern family, home is a place to return to after work to eat and sleep, whereas in history home was everything to do with their day to day lives.

The Victorians perceived home as “a feminine space of domesticity” (Holliss,2015), which differs from the typical weavers home of the pre-industrial period, where “Work must have dominated the space and the weavers’ lives” (Holliss,2015). The home became a feminine concept as the “need for income motivated men to leave their families behind for jobs in the city” (National Geographic Society, 2023). Men would spend large amounts of time away from the home, leaving women to care for the children and the house “For women, that work may have included doing laundry” (Reynolds,2024). Ideas of gender begin to merge with ideas of home post-industrialisation, and stereotypes formed that have largely stuck around despite efforts to counter them. There was a brief respite from these stereotypes during World War II (Reynolds,2024), however, society mostly reverted to housewives and working husbands, and home remained largely the women’s domain.

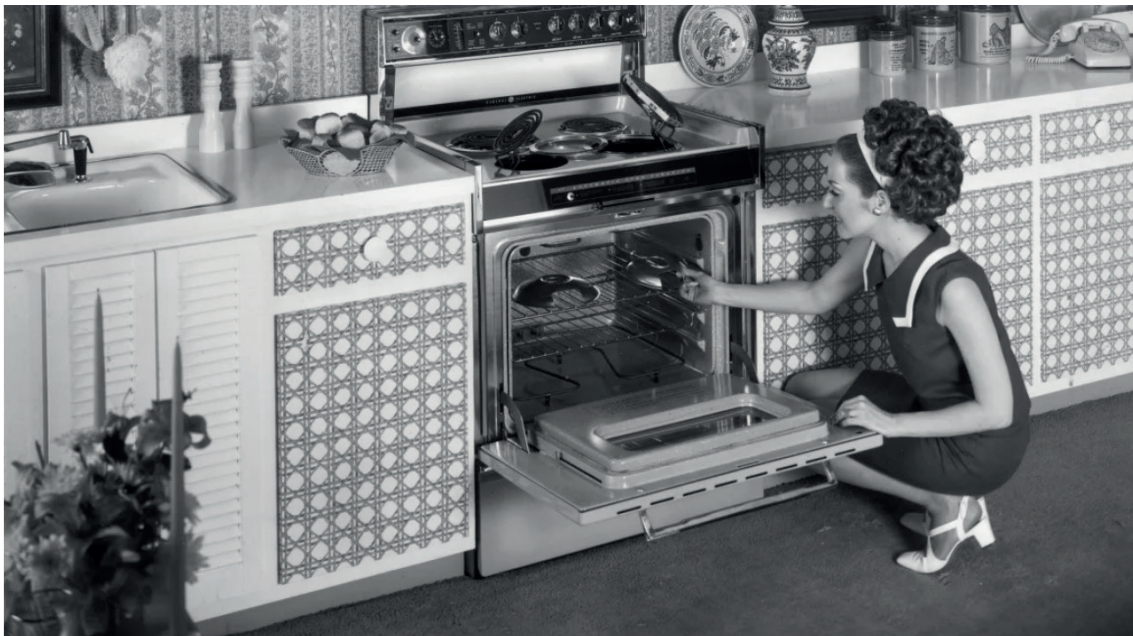


Fig.3 The 1960's Housewife (1960's)

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an abundance of challenges for everyone, from receiving proper healthcare, to being able to take part in social activities, but another big change that was brought around was the requirement to work at home. At the time, working from home wasn't a wholly new idea, as shown by statistics gathered by Barratt Development PLC, which shows that working from home has been on the rise since the early 2010's (Barratt Development PLC, 2021), however, it was not widely spoken about or researched, so when the time came where we had no choice but to work at home, issues began to arise. The pandemic drove an impromptu "mass social experiment in working from home" (Barrero, 2020). Looking at Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we can see that people began to pay more attention to the basic needs of safety, and social needs lessened for a short period, (Tower, 2021) where work became an important part of life, and this had to now be accommodated within the home. Pretty soon social needs became increasingly important, as people became trapped within their homes, there was an influx in spirituality, and home became more clearly defined for many people, it became a place where you socialised with family, and took part in group activities (Tower, 2021), this model of living opposed the nuclear model that has been in place for a long time, where home was just a place to eat and sleep, home now became the center of peoples life, and all activities revolved around the spaces within.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, and the increase of home working as shown by Barratt Development PLC, there have been many proposed guides to mitigate stress and poor mental health within the home. The NHS has published a guide on their website, and to ensure home does not become a negative space, they have suggested that a rigid routine can be helpful, "Without a steady schedule, the line between work and personal time can get blurred and it can be stressful if the balance isn't right." (NHS, n.d.). The idea of a routine was pretty much all anyone could come up with during the pandemic, we were still linked to the nuclear model of living, and so we had to find ways to separate work and home even when we couldn't leave home. Articles such as Separating Work-life from Home-life during COVID-19 by Nina Bartmann (n.d.) put an emphasis on the routine for mental clarity, as the routine and physical separation of leaving home for work was lost, we felt the need to find a new routine and separation (Bartmann, n.d.).

If we look at images produced around the topic of working at home during the COVID-19 period, we are mostly presented with images such as Fig.4, where we are shown an ideal environment, where working from home is combined with family. To an extent I would say this goes against the trend of creating separation from home and work, specifically when looking at the nuclear model. Usually, familial interaction would not come into work life, but these images suggest the opposite. The images are also mostly staged and don't reflect the true nature of working at home, the interviews I am conducting have revealed that working from home might not be as positive as the images try to show. Whilst talking to P H, they said "it was not ideal as it affected other people who lived there" (P H, 2024).

Post COVID-19, "hybrid arrangements in which part of the week is spent at the office, and part at home, are likely to become the norm" (Marcus,2022). This can be backed up by the data collected by Barratt Development PLC, where we can see that "72% of workers want a mix between office and home working in future" (Barratt Development PLC, 2021). Whilst this data was taken at the peak of the work from home movement, there has still been a larger percentage of hybrid workers than home workers in 2024, with 28% of workers using the hybrid model, compared to the roughly 14% of home workers in Autumn 2024 (ONS, 2024).



Fig.4 The Idealised Home-Work (2022)

Current Perspective

"We tentatively conclude that work at home will not become a widespread trend" (Olson, 1984). This quote from a paper published in 1984 shows that work from home has been under discussion for decades, however, opinions have certainly changed. Before working from home became a requirement, it still existed in small numbers, but it was not expected to make a large appearance in the workplace. Post COVID-19 this has obviously changed, along with the technical advances that have made it easier to do so. "The technology is here. The missing upgrade is for the human mind." (Fried, 2020), whilst we are technologically capable of working at home, there is a fundamental issue which is that it is not the experience people hoped for, many people returned to office work as working at home produced too many problems. People such as Kevin Harper have posted online saying "Even the interruptions that an office environment can bring are not as distracting as the distractions of being at home." (Harper, 2023), this suggests that the honeymoon period could be coming to an end, as people are beginning to resent the work from home experience.

Home is a complex construct, it is not simply the space you live, Douglas argues that home is not fixed in space, but it is located within space (Douglas, 1991), my understanding of this is that a home does not have to be a house, where a house is the physical building most people call home, but rather home is where you reside, so it could be a caravan, or a boat, and home can change location throughout your life. When looking at the psychology of home, it can be seen as a space for "displaying their home as an extension of themselves" (Beck, 2011), and as a result, when our personal identity begins to be invaded by work many people start to face challenges with balancing the two.

To address the issues, architects have begun to investigate psychology that "focuses on the impact of design to amplify positive or minimize negative impact." (Tower, 2021). As work from home has increased, designers must approach these home spaces with psychology in mind. With a housing crisis regularly occurring across the UK, working from home could provide more space for affordable development, if office buildings are no longer used, they could be refurbished into housing, it could also make home more comfortable in some ways, as people can choose where to live regardless of their work location, "If you only have to go into your office three days a week, it's tolerable to live further away" (Wiseman, 2022).

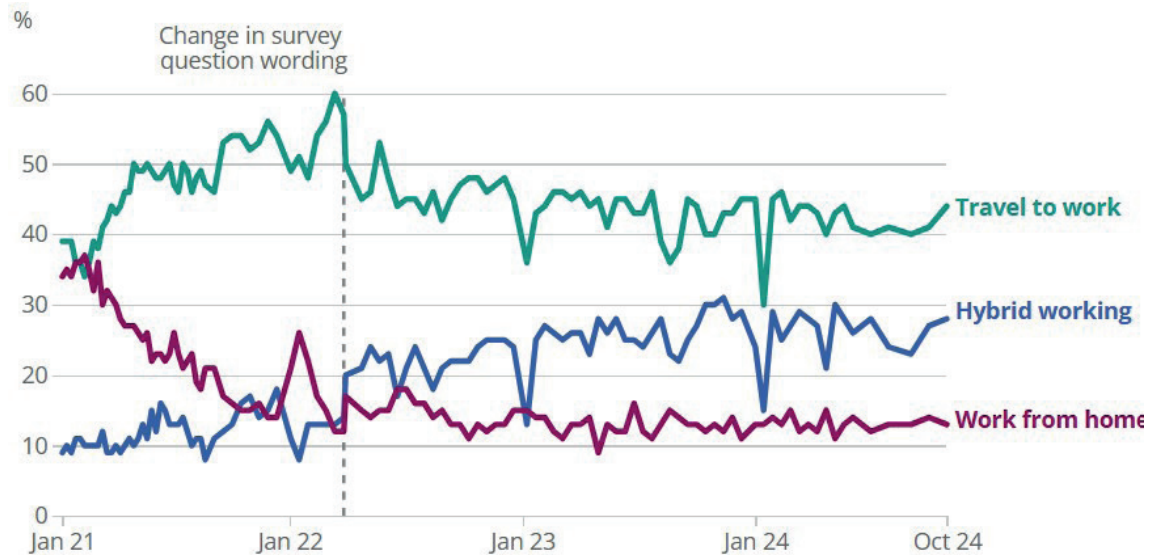


Fig.5 Work From Home Trend (2021)

The statistics shown in Fig.5 show that the work from home movement is in a constant state of fluctuation, however, we can see that hybrid work is on a steady increase across the data. If hybrid work becomes the normal, the issues surrounding home working such as mental health and familial relationships might be eased, if people are able to have the clear separation of work and home then there might not be a need for the adapted architecture of homes, at least not to an extreme level. The hybrid work allows the benefits of home working, such as childcare “Workers who are parents are more likely to hybrid work” (ONS, 2024), as well as the benefits of commuter work, where the separation is clear, and you can socialise more easily (Bartmann, n.d.). The hybrid model will also help to fix issues of loneliness, in combination with the more relaxed work mode, mental health might see a general improvement. Looking back at Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the hybrid model meets the social layer, which is the third need, whilst also allowing the self-actualisation to be predominant, which is the final need, this way people could feel more self-fulfilled (Tower, 2021).

Some experts say that the trend of working at home will see a decline in the near future as people find the negatives of home working overcome the positives. To better see this, I have conducted three interviews across different professions to see on a smaller scale whether people still want to work from home and also look at how career paths might influence this decision.

Interviews

Across the interviews I have conducted, I received varied responses to the same base set of questions, there were some clear similarities, but I can also see how the career choice has influenced their decisions. When asked about comparing their experiences in both home-working and in-person work, P H and A L both found positives in the home-working experience, which is what they currently do. "There is one big advantage to zoom over in-person, and that is convenience" (P H, 2024) This positive was also reflected in the response from A L, who said; "getting to work is much more convenient as it is in my back yard" (A L, 2024). However, P H did also list a range of negatives within their line of work, as an art lecturer, seeing students face to face provides a lot of benefits, such as more organic conversations surrounding the students work, and how artwork is much less tactile on a screen, where you can't get a sense of the finer details (P H, 2024). In contrast to these two, A R B took the reverse approach by moving their work out of their home and into a separate space, as they felt that "seeing patients within my home made it feel less like home, and it felt quite invasive into my private space" (A R B, 2024). This idea of invasion was not mentioned by the other two interviewees, but I think it is quite an important factor in the decision process for many people. In the case of A L, they are unlikely to feel the effects of home invasion as they don't have to attend meetings like P H and A R B do. P H seemed more concerned by the idea of isolation, saying "But I have to be careful it does not become too isolating" (P H, 2024) and "I miss face-to-face teaching" (P H, 2024). This idea of isolation is a common theme with some of the other sources I have looked at and is often mentioned in relation to home working.

When asked about how working from home has, or did, influence their attitude towards home, A R B says they have found a significant improvement after moving away from the home working experience, saying "I now feel much more comfortable within my home" (A R B, 2024), they go on to explain that having patients come into his house felt intrusive and stressful, as they had to worry "about making it presentable for patients" (A R B, 2024). From the interview with them, it feels clear to me that their career is a major factor in their experience of working at home, perhaps if they did not have to see people in person for their job then they might have had an experience more similar to P H, who has a generally positive view on home working despite its drawbacks, as they have seen that it has "enabled me to focus more on my own creative work as an artist" (P H, 2024). On the topic of attitude towards home, A L talks about how his experience "is quite special" (A L, 2024) due to it being a historic relationship. A L also mentions how, as a blacksmith, he can easily relieve stress by going out to their workshop to "whack some metal for a while" (A L, 2024) which relatively improves their lifestyle at home, and thus their attitude towards it. Again, this is a very career specific relationship that is not as present in the careers of the other two interviewees, but it offers some insight into why some professions are better suited to home working in ways that have not previously been looked at in great depth, with issues around home working associated with mental health, an appropriate method of stress relief has proven useful to A L, and maybe that can be learnt from on a larger scale.



Fig.6 Marechal Ferrant (1929)

Something that both P H and A L mentioned was the idea of self-discipline, P H is employed by a university, but they are able to be flexible with how they work due to the nature of home working, however they still have a requirement to produce results, whether that is having tutorials with students or creating lesson plans, "taking breaks when it suits me, working late if it suits me. It requires self-discipline" (P H, 2024). In this sense, P H gets to choose when to work, but they understand that at some point they must no matter how much they do not want to. On the other hand, A L is self-employed, and so self-discipline becomes more of a challenge, as there is no pressure to complete their work, except for the pressure they put on themselves to achieve results they are happy with, "if I keep giving myself days off then nothing will get done, so I have to set my own 'soft goals'".

A L again introduces quite an interesting method of managing home-working that can be applied to other aspects to improve the attitude towards home. If we follow their example and set soft goals to achieve each day or week within the home, such as going out each day for a walk, then the experience can improve. P H also mentioned this indirectly when they talk about making “an effort to go out every day, even if it is just for a lunchtime walk” (P H, 2024), it is clear they have set their own soft goal to go out each day so that they feel less isolated when working from home. From my understanding, A R B is also self-employed, however to them, the comfort of home and issues around intrusion were of greater focus in their responses than self-discipline, this could be because they are naturally good at self-discipline, or maybe the other issues simply outweighed it. In response to the last question I asked, which discussed if there were any changes they would like to make to their current situation, A R B said that they are quite comfortable in their current situation, however the changes they would make were “more to do with my own habits, like trying harder to switch of from the work mode when at home so that I can relax easier.” (A R B, 2024), from this I gather that they have achieved their core needs from Maslow’s hierarchy, and that they can now spend time focusing on self-actualisation, which is the final need. Being at this point on the hierarchy suggests that working away from home is a more successful experience for them. That is not to say that A L and P H are not also at this stage, in my own understanding of the two I can comfortably determine that they are also at the stage of self-actualisation, P H also confirms this in the interview when they say they can “focus more on my own creative work as an artist.” (P H, 2024). And so we can see that home working can also be successful, but that the nature of the career is a large factor in the discussion.

Designing Work Homes

“As working from home gains acceptance and more roles are fulfilled in remote settings, the fundamental principles of workplace design will still apply — just in a residential context” (Howell, 2020)

Whilst working from home is under scrutiny as to whether it will stick in the coming years, some developers are starting to look into a new form of residential design that accommodates both work and home in the same space, suggesting that “35% are intending to include either a dedicated home office room or space” (Thomas, 2021). The idea of designing around home working has been investigated in the past on a more exclusive level, Sarah Wigglesworth’s Strawbale House is a good example of this, she looked at how the dining table was used in every day life and how it is not just used for eating, in the design she “positions the table ambiguously between the house and the office” (Wigglesworth, 1998) in this way she designs the house with both work and the everyday in mind.

The Strawbale House is a good example of how work and home can be combined, but it is a very individual case that is not applicable on a larger scale and the current trends suggest that people would rather have a separate space for work. Howell puts forth the concept of “lock-off units” (Howell, 2020), where there is a space for work that is separated from the rest of the house, in Fig.7 we can see how the lock-off space is accessed by a separate door next to the front entrance of the main house, acting as a sort of extension in place of a garage, this way, residents would get the benefits of the work at home trend whilst having a clear separation of the two.

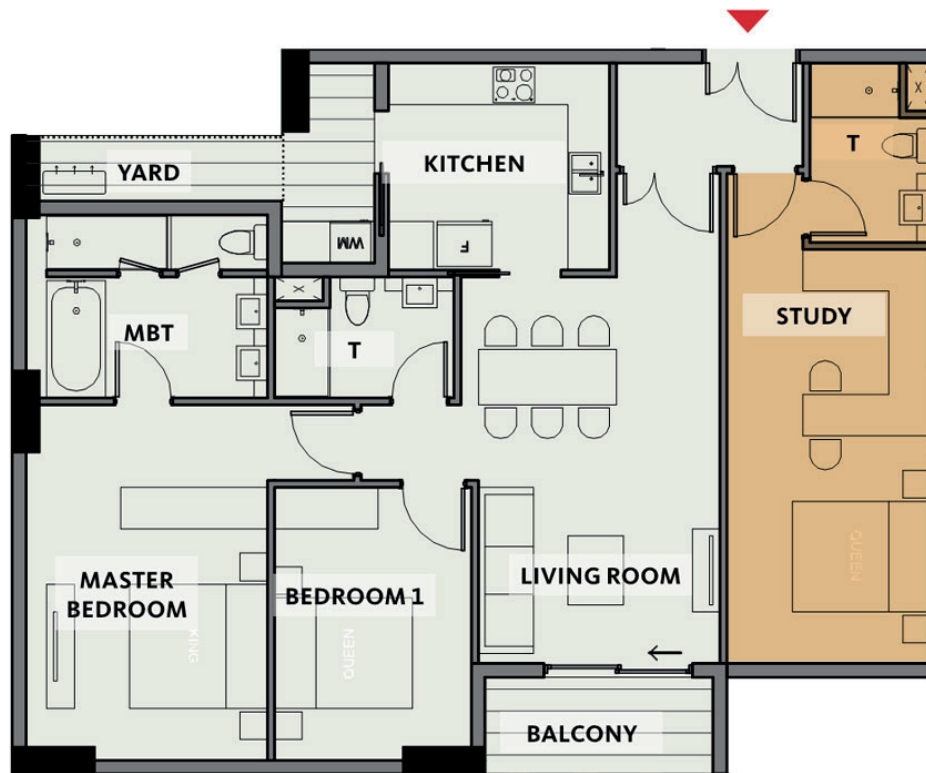


Fig.7 Lock-off Unit (2020)

“As working from home gains acceptance and more roles are fulfilled in remote settings, the fundamental principles of workplace design will still apply — just in a residential context” (Howell, 2020)

Whilst working from home is under scrutiny as to whether it will stick in the coming years, some developers are starting to look into a new form of residential design that accommodates both work and home in the same space, suggesting that “35% are intending to include either a dedicated home office room or space” (Thomas, 2021). The idea of designing around home working has been investigated in the past on a more exclusive level, Sarah Wigglesworth’s Strawbale House is a good example of this, she looked at how the dining table was used in every day life and how it is not just used for eating, in the design she “positions the table ambiguously between the house and the office” (Wigglesworth, 1998) in this way she designs the house with both work and the everyday in mind.

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This solution might work well for a short time, but with the uncertainty of home-working and issues around housing in general, such as the housing crisis, a question arises as to if it is a feasible move for developers, in the long term we may return to in-person work leaving these spaces unused for their original function, they will find new use but the separation of spaces may not be suitable for them, most in house activities should be easily accessed for convenience. Other solutions put forward include making adaptable spaces, where the movement of temporary walls creates isolated work spaces, however, in my opinion I think these would create a broader range of issues, having to move furniture and walls every time you want to work could create familial tension, and I think it would also become an extra chore like activity for most people which would create a negative attitude towards it and thus the home.

Appendix

APPENDIX A

Interview with Holm-Mercer, W

Throughout your career, you have worked both in person and from home via digital media. Could you describe these experiences and how they might be similar or different. How have you had to adapt your routine and spaces?

I have worked as a lecturer in art and design, leading on both practical and academic modules, both in person and from home via digital media. For creative practical subjects, in person-teaching is most definitely an advantage as you can have a more direct experiential relationship with the students and their artwork. Artwork on a screen is (literally) flattened, and reduced to the same homogenous scale, which is not ideal. Also, in-person dialogue (e.g. in 1:1 tutorials) is organic; you can take natural pauses in conversations, e.g., whilst looking at sketchbooks or other work. This can be difficult on a zoom call where silent pauses can feel awkward. Also, students often feel self-conscious on zoom calls, not wanting to put their cameras on, which makes the human interaction seem strangely unequal and distant. Perhaps for that reason, written feedback often takes precedence over live dialogue on the delivery of online modules. But there is one big advantage to zoom over in-person, and that is convenience: you can reach students from further away and from more varied and diverse social and geographical locations, which can be enriching.

In terms of adapting routine and space, I used the dining table in my lounge as my work space whilst working from home for many years. I was comfortable there, but it was not ideal as it affected other people who lived there, and the line between being 'at work' and being 'off work at home' could easily become blurred. But at the time, I did not have a choice. Had I had an extra room, I would have used it as a designated office.

Why did you make the change? At the time did you see particular benefits that appealed to you, and have these benefits proven true?

I decided to work from home full time because I wanted to work at HE level, yet did not want to commute (or move) to London (or other big cities) where most of such job opportunities are. The HE (and Foundation) courses I worked on in my local college were sadly closed, and as I had already had built a relationship with the online university I work for now, it made sense to shift all my work over to them.

Not having to commute is a huge advantage as it has given me more free time and more energy (as not feeling drained by commuting and having to handle live classrooms every day). This has enabled me to focus more on my own creative work as an artist. These benefits have proven true. Still, I miss face-to-face teaching - for the reasons stated in answer to the first question.

How do you feel that the change has influenced your attitude towards home? You have recently started to use a separate room for your work, but this was not always the case, did that change within your work-home environment create a noticeable difference in your attitude?

Spending so much time at home sometimes makes me feel like a hermit. Home becomes a (comfortable) cave. It is a good thing that I like my own company! But I have to be careful it does not become too isolating, so I make an effort to go out every day, even if it is just for a lunchtime walk.

Having a designated work space is definitely an advantage, as it helps separate 'work' from 'off-work' at home. Also, I don't have to clear my work-stuff away every evening - I can leave things out for the next day without worrying about affecting other people.

In terms of my attitude to work, I guess I feel more 'professional' having an office (even if it doubles up as a spare bedroom).

Could you describe some pros and cons that you have experienced since moving to digital work? How have you adapted to these?

Other than what I have already mentioned in my answers to previous questions, I would say that the move to digital work has kept things very focused with everything I need at my fingertips. No need for stuff - not even paper. This is a pro - also from the point of view of sustainability. But it is also a con as you are less likely to make those chance encounters with people and things out there in the 'real' world that might help you understand and see things in new and surprising ways. I try to make up for this by making a conscious effort to go out, and by keeping my own art practice very tactile and hands-on.

Another point to mention is that I can keep my schedule fairly flexible - taking breaks when it suits me, working late if it suits me. It requires self-discipline, but mostly I see this is a pro. It is only a con when other people book in back-to-back meetings and put on meetings at my scheduled lunchtime!

You have quite a typical style of working from home, you work mostly using a PC, attending meetings and giving tutorials via zoom or other related software. Do you think that your experience differs in any way to other people who work from home, perhaps people from other fields of work?

I suspect my style of working is not so different from other people who work from home. Perhaps I spend more time on writing tasks (e.g., feedback to students) than others, and maybe less time in zoom meetings than others.

Finally, if there is anything about your current situation related to work that you would change, what would it be and how would you go about it?

I would like to have more opportunities to meet with my colleagues in person - and with my students (although the latter is not likely to be possible due to them being in such different locations, even different countries). For that to happen, management needs to be persuaded to fund collegial meet-ups!

APPENDIX B

Interview with Holm-Mercer, W

Unlike the majority, you have made the choice to move away from working at home, to working in a separate workspace. In both instances you have needed to see patients in person, how do the two experiences differ, and how has your routine adapted to suit each situation?

At first, I saw my patients within my house, I had a separate room for the appointments. This made it very easy as a work environment, I could wake up later, and I did not have to commute. However, seeing patients within my home made it feel less like home, and it felt quite invasive into my private space, which no longer felt private other than the rooms they did not see. Now my office is located outside of my home, it is still within the same building, so I don't have to commute far which is nice. This also allows me to keep my house a private place. As for routine, I do not think it has changed too much, as I have said, even now I do not have to commute very far to get to work, and most of my patients come to me so I don't have to travel much.

Why did you make the change? Was there a singular reason or was it a collection of benefits or negatives that prompted the change?

I made the change mainly because of the privacy issue, I felt that I had no space of my own even within my home. Also I feel that the separation of home and work is good, it allows me to fully relax and not be reminded of work in the evenings or weekends.

How do you feel the change has influenced your attitude towards home? Your workplace is now separate from home, but they are close together. Has the change been significant enough to create a noticeable change in your attitude?

I do think the change has been significant, I now feel much more comfortable within my home, as I do not have to worry so much about making it presentable for patients, so I can spend more time relaxing. The new office is also close enough that the commute to work is not a limiting factor, I can still wake up at a reasonable time and get home without having to travel for long in the dark.

Could you describe some pros and cons related to the change, has it created a wholly better experience for you, or are there still some things that could be improved?

I think things can always be improved, but I am quite comfortable as I am now, definitely more so than my previous situation.

Your work-home experience involved having patients come into your house, do you think that this environment was different to the standard work-home relationship? Do you think it was better or worse?

The environment was definitely different I think, from my understanding most home workers use computers and zoom calls, so whilst there might be a small sense of intrusion into their personal spaces, I do not think it is the same as having people come physically into your home. I do still have to do computer work, but it is not the core part of my profession as it is with others.

Finally, are there any changes that you still wish to make in order to improve your home attitude? How might you go about them?

I am quite comfortable in my current situation, if I had to change anything to improve my attitude towards home it would be more to do with my own habits, like trying harder to switch of from the work mode when at home so that I can relax easier.

APPENDIX C

Interview with Holm-Mercer, W

In your profile, you say you used to teach English in Japan, you have since moved to England to pursue blacksmithing, how do the two experiences of home and work compare? Has the change allowed you to adjust your routine and lifestyle?

The two experiences are quite different, in Japan the culture is different in of itself, but also the fact that I worked in a school is very different to working at home in a workshop. In Japan I had to be at school by 8AM to meet the students, whereas now I can be much more flexible as I am self-employed. I occasionally still teach, but now I teach blacksmithing to the local Steiner school where I live. But mainly I spend my time forging chef knives and other items within my own space that I can self-govern, I am not under a pressure to achieve a certain result, and getting to work is much more convenient as it is in my back yard.

Why did you make the change? At the time did you see particular benefits that appealed to you, and have these benefits proven true?

I think I made the change because blacksmithing is what I wanted to do, and the opportunity presented itself which is quite special, most blacksmiths have a hard time making a living off of their craft because there is very little demand. But I am a bit older now, and so there is less pressure for me to earn as much money, and I have a good audience for my work that allows me to manage off of the blacksmith wage.

I was apprehensive at first, but I knew it was what I wanted to do, I was not confident it would be a lasting venture. Luckily it has been good for me, and I think there are many positives to pursuing your dream job.

How do you think the change has influenced your attitude towards home and what it means to you? If your workshop was not located at home, would this create a different attitude?

Home is a cosy place for me, yes my forge and anvil are just outside, which make a lot of noise and mess, but it is a very fulfilling way of living. To me it helps me happier, if something needs to be fixed I can just walk out to my workshop and make the thing I need, or if I am stressed I can go out and whack some metal for a while. If my workshop was elsewhere some of this would be different, so I am glad to have it close by, and I think many blacksmiths or craftspeople would wish for the same.

Can you describe any pros and cons of your current work-home dynamic?

The major positive is that I am not tied to anything, I can work on what I want, when I want, without worrying about getting a set number of tasks done in a set time. I can also take days off whenever I want, making holidays easier, as well as any appointments I need to attend.

This can also be a con though, it requires me to have some self-management skill, if I keep giving myself days off then nothing will get done, so I have to set my own 'soft goals' to complete each week which can be a challenge sometimes.

You have a traditional relationship with the work-home environment, it is one that dates back through thousands of years, do you feel that this creates a different experience for you in comparison to people who have moved into the digital world?

It is quite special I think, to be able to preserve a historic practice, and there is a sense of responsibility in it. In terms of how I think it compares to people who work digitally I feel that my experience is more fulfilling, I would much rather spend 8 hours working in the dirt and noise than an hour on the computer reading emails and attending zoom meetings. But that is just my opinion, it is not the same for everyone.

Finally, are there any aspects of your work-home dynamic that you would change? Do you feel that your current situation meets your needs, or would the digital world offer further benefits than it already has?

I don't feel the need for much change, maybe just more space in my workshop for new tools, which is the bane of all craftspeople. I do some digital work, particularly on social media to promote my business, I would rather not have to do it but I understand its importance, especially for such an exclusive craft.

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