GENDER NORMS AND TABOOS AS MANIFESTED IN DICHOTOMIES OF SPACE

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Often, people describe buildings or certain characteristics of a building as being male or female. I want to understand in my thesis whether or not it’s possible for architectural patterns to be identified as male or female in historical precedents. I am not discussing what it means to be male or female in the architecture profession, but how buildings reflect gender. By gender, I mean the stereotypical characteristics designated to be both male and female by a culture.

It’s important to understand that the word gender is interpreted in two different ways. Sherry Ortner, Harriet Whitehead, Sherry Ahrentzen, and Daphne Spain explain gender as not biological sex but as the various implications attached to the characteristics of biological sex. By various implications I mean gender hierarchy which determines and influences privileges, status, class, race, ethnicity and freedom in society. On the other hand, Mona Damosh, Joni Seager and Aron Betsky assert that gender is an artificial construct which cannot be separated from biological sex. The difference in the two theories is the acceptance of biological sex as a part of gender; while the first theory denies it, the second one makes it an integral part. I see biological sex as something that a person identifies with and therefore demonstrates. By demonstrate, I mean that a male or female could reflect his or her biological sexual identity in their work or personal lives.

People express gender stereotypes in various ways. A simple selection of the color pink for a girl and blue for a boy is evidence of this gender stereotype. I believe these stereotypes are an indication of gender patterns related to male and female. These gender patterns are determined by the worldviews of people. Samuel Corrigan defines worldview as the “study of the order of universe, a perception of the world in

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which one lives.” By worldview, I mean the way people perceive and understand their world and that in turn determines gender patterns.

A building, besides fulfilling its functional requirements is an expression of a team of people. What they choose to portray could be consciously or subconsciously related to gender patterns also. I believe that gender is a social construction which expects conformity from us on several levels and biological characteristics highlight this conception.

Several studies of gender try to explore gender constructions mainly by assigning dichotomous attributes to male or female. Scholars like Ortner argue that there is a worldwide tendency in cultural thought to align male with culture and to see female as closer to nature. Daphne Spain, Dora Crouch and June Johnson have also pointed out similar dichotomous patterns. I came across reoccurring dichotomous patterns in many gender theories. I began to question why gender and dichotomy were so deeply ingrained in our culture.

Leslie Weisman explains that “classifying people into opposing groups of rich/poor, white/black, young/old, straight/gay and male/female create a social system that justifies and supports human exploitation and white male supremacy.” She further elaborates that these dichotomies are based on one group being powerful or superior and the other being powerless or inferior. She adds that “dichotomies in addition to defining social space, define the way we conceptualize metaphysical space (heaven and hell) and physical space (for example, workplace and dwelling).” Her conclusion was that “these dichotomies are the basis of a spatial caste system that reinforces social inequality.”

She also explains that “in virtually every society the categorization of ambient body space into complementary and unequally valued coordinates is used to symbolize

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6 Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, Making Gender: the Politics and Erotics of Culture, 21-42.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
and reinforce the basic social distinctions between male and female. The superior coordinates--top, right, and front--are associated with male; the inferior coordinates--bottom, left, and back--with female.”

By ambient body space she is referring to the human body. She is relating the dichotomies in the human body to cultural dichotomies between male and female. She elaborates that the works of countless ethnographers show that “this dual classification is universal.”

Here she is trying to compare dualities on all scales, from house to village and city.

In my case studies, I have shown that these dichotomies arise from a series of complex layers. I have classified gender patterns into male and female as the primary dichotomy. This classification is not based on the assumption of superior and inferior characteristics but on a study of individual society structure. My argument is that dichotomies create cyclical patterns that reinforce the spatial caste system and social injustice in most societies. These cycles comprise of cultural, built and activity patterns. A cyclical pattern is a system that feeds into itself and it has no known beginning or end. I believe all these patterns reinforce each other and are not linear in process. They don’t have a specific root pattern but together they form a cyclical structure as illustrated in (fig.1) below.

![Figure 1. My conceptual reinforcement loop](image)

I define **Cultural patterns** as the values and ideas of the society. It includes political, religious and civil ideologies and concepts. Dichotomous relations like hot/cold, nature/culture, social order/chaos, public/private related to male and female by social norms or taboos in various societies are included in cultural
patterns. **Activity patterns** are repetitive organized behavior defined by culture in the society. They refer to activities like decoration/construction, chiefs/witch doctors, and herding/learning occupational hierarchy among men and women. **Built patterns** are the physical manifestation of the cultural and activity patterns. Dichotomous patterns in built form like front/back, high/low and center/periphery are attributes of this pattern.

In my thesis, I will study these cultural, built and activity patterns in the societies that I list below. I will also give examples of utopian solutions suggested by many authors to reform segregation of space. I believe built space and our occupations are a representation of our culture. Architecture of any period is related to cultural dynamics. What I am trying to do here is not judge or criticize these societies and their values; rather I am evaluating them comparatively with other societies based on the status of women. I have found these cultural, built and activity patterns by documenting examples that exist cross culturally and across time. In order to do this I had to set up some criteria for selecting my case studies. I have divided the examples into four categories:

1. Egalitarian subsistence societies having equal status for women with respect to men and other women in similar cultures.
2. Hierarchical societies having lower status of women with respect to men and other women in a similar culture.
3. 19th and 20th century case studies in urban societies having lower status of women with respect to men.
4. 19th and 20th century case studies in reforms and utopian proposals that aimed at making egalitarian societies with equal status among men and women.

I selected these specific case studies because I found different patterns of dichotomies between male and female. I realized dichotomies existed as dualities, they existed as superior and inferior dichotomies and that it was different when a comparison was made between hierarchical subsistence societies and 19th and 20th century urban societies.
I also wanted to know if there were any solutions suggested to eliminate this kind of segregation brought on by the dichotomies of various worldviews. It seemed necessary to me that these solutions should be explored for a better understanding of not only how dichotomies exist cross culturally and across time but how people have suggested solutions to reform them in our society. It is this complexity of gender patterns in dichotomies that made me select the following four chapters for my thesis. I want to compare the egalitarian subsistence societies, hierarchical subsistence societies and 19th and 20th century case studies in reforms and utopian proposals. I believe cross cultural comparison could lead to a better understanding of the structure of gender patterns.
CHAPTER 1 - HISTORICAL CASE STUDIES OF GENDER SEGREGATED PATTERNS IN EGALITARIAN SUBSISTENCE SOCIETIES

This chapter explores gender patterns in egalitarian subsistence societies. I will discuss societies like the Navajo Indians, Northern Plain Indians, Acoma-Pueblo Indians and the Tuaregs of Sub Saharan Africa in this chapter. I have selected these case studies because one or more scholars have concluded that they are egalitarian. The following case studies emphasize a strong presence of dichotomies and dualities. They define activities, spaces and thereby the lives of these people. Here simple words like day/night, east/west, domestic/political, gives an insight about a society and the enormous influence they had on people.

Here gender patterns are based on worldviews. By worldviews, I mean the way people perceive and understand their world. Their worldviews are based on duality, protection of women, segregation as a balance and separate but equal and sometimes unequal divisions of labor. In the following examples of egalitarian societies, it will be evident that there is a cyclical loop of cultural, built and activity patterns.

**Hogan, Navajo Indians, North America** (Pre-Columbian-Present)

A Hogan is a one-room dwelling that the Navajo Indians built with an entrance facing east (fig.1). It is divided into a symbolic representation of the cosmos in male and female spheres of equal importance. It represents duality in nature. The female side is the northern half related to the night, the floor represents the female earth while the men’s side is the southern half related to the day and the roof represents male sky. Here the cultural patterns of duality among male and female are day/night and sky/earth. These cultural patterns are manifested in built patterns like north/south.

Dora P. Crouch and June P. Johnson point out that Navajo society was matrilineal and relatively egalitarian. By matrilineal, I mean a social system that is based on one’s mother’s lineage. They practiced social equality because there is no physical evidence of a ruling class that controlled religion, economics and the military.¹ From

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the social structure one might expect it to be a space with no segregation but it is divided by symbolic dualities. Some scholars consider this segregation an effort to translate their belief in duality in nature into built structure. “The women in Navajo society could become the medicine men, witches, and had access to magical lore but they could not be a chief.” Daphne Spain explains that this gender segregation in the Hogan is because the Navajo women when compared to the Navajo men were not able to hold all the prestigious positions. One of the conclusions she draws is that although, “the Navajo women had a higher status compared to other women in highly segregated societies; these women could not participate in the public life and therefore had a lower status compared to Navajo men.” The cultural and built patterns of duality in nature in a Navajo society are translated into activity patterns of unequal division of work. The activity pattern does not symbolize equality among the Navajo men and women.

Figure 1. Navajo Hogan. Putting Women in Place, (2001). The diagram shows division of space into male and female spheres of equal importance.

3 Ibid.
Tepee, Northern Plain Indians, North America (Pre-Columbian-Present)

A Tepee is a structure similar to a tent used for residential and ceremonial purposes among the Northern Plains Indians. The women’s side of the family gives it as a wedding gift. The younger women acquire the construction knowledge from the older women. Women would exchange food among relatives and neighbors as payment for construction activities like making structural frames and preparing buffalo hide for covering tepees. Among the Northern Plain Indians, a woman is responsible for setting up and dismantling the family tent.

Crouch and Johnson explain that the division of labor was based on gender. “Hunting was a male occupation; women cured the hides and were the owners and builders of tepees.” Crouch and Johnson also mention that it was the man who was responsible for ornamentation on the tepee. E.Guidoni mentions that the “portable dwelling projected an image of the family and their collective accomplishment. Among the Plains Indians, a womanly woman physically created and erected her family’s tipi; a manly man commemorated his dreams and most important hunts or battles in the paintings on his home for his lineage and tribe to treasure.” This he believes is because a certain gender role is attached by culture to a specific sex.

Their cultural pattern of belief in harmony and balance are translated into a separate but relatively egalitarian division of activities between men and women. Among the Northern Plain Indians, the cultural pattern did not directly translate to a built pattern but to an activity pattern, related to the construction and decoration of a tepee. This society was egalitarian, matrilineal and the status of women was comparatively higher than women in hierarchical societies.

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4 Ibid., 325.
5 Ibid.
Acoma Pueblo Indians, New Mexico (Pre-Columbian-Present)

Crouch and Johnson cite similar examples from the Acoma Pueblo Indians in New Mexico. “The Acoma village embodied equality, both externally and internally. The village consisted of rows of town houses, parallel streets and was not centralized on a plaza or court. The houses were flat roofed, rectangular units similar in size, materials and form. Each house unit was separated by partition walls from other units.” The author’s point out that the equality in the settlement is likely due to their worldview of equal balance, their daily activities and the fact that they had the difficult task of constructing the settlement on top of a mesa.

“Descent was matrilineal and an extended family structure. The principle of giving a dwelling as a gift to the daughter in marriage was followed. Families lived with the grand mothers and daughters in attached or adjacent units. The maternal lineage controls the land and its resources while the men’s ceremonial and political life

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6 Dora P. Crouch and June G. Johnson, Traditions in Architecture: Africa, America, Asia and Oceania (USA: Oxford University Press, 2001), 319-322.
balances women’s domestic life and ownership of houses and fields. Only the men participate in religious and political kiva activities.” It is evident here that women had a higher status in some realms but could not participate in activities that men could.

Figure 3. View of Acoma Indian settlement. Traditions in Architecture (2001).

The cultural patterns based on equality among the Acoma Indians are translated into built patterns of equal units of houses but unequal activity patterns. I see that there were common patterns between these egalitarian and hierarchical societies. The segregation of activities and space based on gender seemed to be present in both these societies.

**Tuareg Tents, Sahara desert, Africa** (1200 A.D–Present)

Ethnographer Johannes Nicolaisen documented the Tuaregs, a nomadic tribe of the Sahara, Africa and their traditional dwellings. They are matrilineal and often matrilocal. By matrilineal I mean a social system that is based on one’s mother’s lineage. Matrilocal means when a married couple lives close to the wife’s parents or in their house. There was no evidence found of gender segregation in their dwellings and among the tribes. Hanson and Pratt also note that there was no separation between men and women but only a minimal one between the visitors and inhabitants. The women are literate and can even read fourth century Libyan alphabets. In most Islamic cultures the women wear veils but amongst the Tuaregs the men wear veils. Women are involved with music, poetry and leather work. Men
herd and raid other caravans. Women own livestock and portable dwellings. All the property is inherited by children regardless of gender. The Tuareg women have a very high status compared to other Arab societies and even to Tuareg men. It almost seems to be in reverse of the typical order with women having a higher status than men.

Although in this society women have a higher status compared to men, the men and women do different activities and they are not interchangeable. The men do the herding and the women are involved in activities of learning and poetry. The cultural pattern based on gender is present here too. It seems that men do the public work like herding, which can be considered, a comparatively low status job than the Tuareg women who are engaged in private work of learning. It can be inferred that the Tuareg women have a higher status occupation.

![Figure 4. Traditional Tuareg dwelling.](Image)

**Summary of gender patterns in egalitarian subsistence societies**

Although the dichotomies in cultural, built and activity patterns presented above do show clear divisions, they cannot be separated as superior and inferior in the manner that Weisman and Spain had described. These dichotomies cannot be categorized as superior and inferior because they are based on the belief in duality in nature that emphasizes equality. The Native Americans believed that dichotomies complement each other and are necessary for balance in nature, unlike the hierarchical societies where dichotomies are understood as opposites.
We have seen that the division of work among men and women of the Navajo Indians and the Acoma Pueblo Indians is unequal in spite of their belief in equality. In a Navajo society, the women could become the medicine men, witches, and had access to magical lore. However, they could not become a chief and lead the tribe. Among the Acoma Pueblo Indians only the men could participate in the religious and political activities and not the women. Their cultural pattern of duality and harmony does not translate into equal activity patterns. This complicates the simple assumptions that their worldview was based on harmony, duality and equality in nature. I think, at times these dichotomies are misunderstood by feminist authors due to conflicts like unequal division of work even though the overall society structure points outs in a different direction. Dichotomies and dualities, in gender are complex phenomena and should be given a lot more consideration.

The only exceptions here are the Tuaregs where the status of the women is higher than the men but even in this case there exists a similar division where the men play the public role and the women play the private role. These subsistence egalitarian societies clearly show that dichotomies can be seen as parallels, equals and even exist the other way around with women in a superior position.

In the next chapter I will explain how space is segregated based on gender in hierarchical societies. Egalitarian societies separated activities and space based on the belief in gender and cosmic harmony. The highly segregated societies did it in order to maintain the social order where men belonged in public life while women were restricted to the private life. The idea of balance is present in both societies and while it’s interpreted in different ways, often it results in similar patterns in built space and activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Egalitarian Subsistence Societies</strong></th>
<th><strong>Cultural Patterns</strong></th>
<th><strong>Built Patterns</strong></th>
<th><strong>Activity Patterns</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Navajo Hogans</strong></td>
<td>Masculine pattern</td>
<td>Feminine pattern</td>
<td>Masculine pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belief in duality in nature, gender specific areas to live, gender specific roles, matrilineal descent</td>
<td>day sky</td>
<td>night earth</td>
<td>south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hunters, tribe chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>medicine men, witches, and had access to magical lore but they could not be a chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Plain Indians</strong></td>
<td>provider</td>
<td>builder owner</td>
<td>decoration of tepee, hunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matrilineal descent, belief in duality in nature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>construction of tepee, woman owns the tepee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acoma Indians</strong></td>
<td>public</td>
<td>private</td>
<td>political and religious activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flat roofed settlements with equal sized units, matrilineal descent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>owned land, houses, domestic sphere, women could not participate in political and religious activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuaregs, nomads of Sahara desert, Africa</strong></td>
<td>public- low status</td>
<td>private-high status</td>
<td>herding cattle’s, illiterate, men wear veils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matrilineal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>poetry and learning Libyan script, live stocks and portable dwellings are owned by women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Cultural, built and activity patterns in an egalitarian subsistence society.
CHAPTER 2: CASE STUDIES OF GENDER SEGREGATED PATTERNS IN HIERARCHICAL SUBSISTENCE SOCIETIES

This chapter explores gender patterns in hierarchical subsistence societies. In this chapter, I will discuss the Barsana Maloca, New Guinea Rain Forest, Berber House, Mongolian Ger and the Bedouin Tent. I have selected these case studies because one or more scholars have concluded that they are hierarchical. The following case studies emphasize a strong presence of dichotomies as superior and inferior. It was initially from these case studies that I noticed the strong presence of dichotomies. They define activities, spaces and thereby the lives of these people. Here simple words like public/private, sacred/profane, front/rear, consumption/production, gives an insight about a society and the enormous influence they had on people.

Here gender patterns are based on worldviews. Spain explains “that gender divisions within the dwelling typically reflect religious beliefs about the proper order of the world. The vision of the external world is thus recreated within the internal world as a means of maintaining social order. These divisions are a lot of times controlled by taboos.”¹ I explained in the first chapter that the worldview of the Native Americans is based on harmony. To them male and female are separate parts of the universe that are required for a harmonious balance. Similarly in hierarchical subsistence societies their worldview is based on separation as a balance too. However, here segregation among the male and female is understood in a negative context, where the male is superior and female is considered inferior in most case studies. Dichotomous words like public/private, front/back, social life/domestic life are examples of this segregation as balance concept. In the following examples of hierarchical subsistence societies, it will be evident that there is a cyclical loop of cultural, built and activity patterns.

Barsana Maloca, Columbia, South America (Pre-Columbian–Present)

The Barsana families live in malocas, a long house inhabited by several families of patrilineal descent. The largest malocas are about forty to eighty feet long. These malocas are several hours away from their neighbors. A maloca has two doors; the front door is used by the men and one at the back is used by women and children. Hugh Jones points out that the "front is the men’s domain where they sit, work and talk during the daytime and it is here that all the ritual activities take place. The men visitors don’t go beyond post 1 and 2 (as shown in fig. 5). The back of the house is the women’s section, is the center of domestic life. It is here that the family compartments are located, where the processing and cooking takes place. The preparation of coca, tobacco and snuff which is considered non-food is done by men towards the front of the house."²

This gender segregation in space is also reflected in the daily life of the Barsana people. Men and women do different activities and use different areas inside the malocas; they eat at separate times and don’t intermingle. Jones also explains how the "center of the house is associated with sacred, ritual activities, dancing and extra-longhouse social life. The edge of the house is the area of domestic, family life and of women and it is here that cooking and other profane activities are carried out. The men sleep towards the edge of the house if accompanied by women and children and in the center if alone.” Jones provides a clear table of “oppositions”. ³

³ Ibid.
Oppositions between male and female in a Barasana Maloca:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center of house - Men</th>
<th>Periphery of house - Women and children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sacred</td>
<td>profane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social life</td>
<td>domestic life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ritual activities</td>
<td>non-ritual activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consumption of food (day time)</td>
<td>production of food (day time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooked food</td>
<td>raw food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Front of house - Men** | **Back of house – Women and Children**
---|---
| sacred                | profane                                |
| social life           | domestic life                           |
| visitors (guests)     | residents (hosts)                       |
| ritual activity       | non-ritual activity                     |
| consumption of food   | production of food                      |
| cooked food           | raw food                                |

Table 2. Built patterns in a Barsana Maloca from *The Palm and the Pleiades* (2007).

The “fruit house” ritual in which the men play the “He flutes” also reinforces this gender segregation. The women, children and pets have to stand behind the screened door during the ceremony. One of the myths described by Jones tells how one time, “the women stole the he flutes and completely reversed the social order, the men becoming like women and the women achieving political dominance over the men”; “normal” relations were restored only after men retrieved the sacred flutes. Jones identified the “He house ritual and the He flutes as a central form of control over women.” Jones mentions that “women would not see the flutes even when they were exposed by the missionaries and that the women believed if the men found out that they could see the He flutes social chaos would arise. Another belief was that a woman could have a miscarriage and die if she disobeyed and stayed in the house during the He flutes festival while the third belief is that if a woman is found stealing the flutes she can be gang-raped by the men. Here only the males are chiefs, women do not participate in the political organization of the tribe nor have other social roles like dancers or chanters.”

Even during the fruit festival the females are given a specific place towards the back of the house and they have

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4 Ibid.
to stand behind the screen, while men are playing the flutes and dancing in an enclosed space around the columns.

This case study of the Barsana Maloca people shows a rather forceful enforcement of social order. Their spatial caste system of segregating men and women not only includes space and activities as in the previous examples but also includes time. Figure 5 clearly indicates the demarcated male and female areas. I also noticed that the space allocated to the women looks proportionately smaller in size compared to men’s space inside the Maloca. This is a clear example of the impact of social order and spatial caste system. Here the cultural patterns get translated into built and activity patterns in the Maloca.

![Figure 1. Barsana Maloca's long house showing female and male demarked areas with F and M.](image)

*Palm and the Pleiades* (1988).
New Guinea Rain Forest (1522 A.D. Magellan’s expedition discovered New Guinea–present)

In New Guinea Rain Forest, the houses are determined not by the number of residents but the activities required by the village. At times the men sleep separately from their families or villages have a collective women’s house depending on the work they have to do. In some villages, the house called the “men’s house” is the biggest and most elaborately decorated. These houses can be 300 feet long, 59 to 72 feet tall by 33 to 39 feet wide. Figure 5, 6 and 7 show the scale of the native men with respect to the men’s house. Women’s houses are small in size compared to the men’s house.

Crouch and Johnson explain that this has been done in order to impress outsiders. “This emphasis on size and ornamentation parallels a social arrangement that relies on prestige and influence for leadership, rather than the formal hierarchy more commonly found in other societies.” They also point out that the leaders are known as “big men” who dominate the local groups. Here even the height of the wooden piles and how high a person’s house is determines social prestige. The higher the house the more prestigious the person is.

Art historian R. Bowden explains how gender determines women’s access to ceremonies among the Kwomos, a Sepik River group. “Yam is the basic food for these people and the bush spirits personify the yams. It is taboo for women to enter into the traditional yam festival which is held in the men’s house. During the festival the men wear masks, costumes and interact with the bush spirits. The men’s house during the festival becomes a connection between the men and supernatural bush spirits.”

The women are excluded from this festival on three occasions. Bowden explains that “in the first celebration, ‘yena,’ the women are not allowed near the men’s house. During the second, ‘mija,’ women dance in front of the men’s house, but a screen of leaves placed across the front allows them to see only the tops of the ritual sculptures inside, not the men performing the ritual. In the third ceremony, ‘mowki,’

5 Dora P. Crouch and June G. Johnson, Traditions in Architecture: Africa, America, Asia and Oceania (USA: Oxford University Press, 2001), 103-105.
the women also dance outside, but a taller screen completely surrounds the building. The reason for this is that they believe that men are ‘hot like the spirits’ and they help to make the yam crop mature. The women on the other hand pollute the spirits because they are ‘cold’. Crouch and Johnson also emphasize the contrast between the hidden ceremonial arts, representing the men’s ideology and the public display of the paintings and sculptures which are accessible by all. They draw the conclusion that, architecture, access and usage of space among the New Guinea people are determined by gender. I think the built patterns of big/small, ornate/simple related to cultural patterns symbolizes the status of a leader or the person in the society by how big or tall his house is versus the small and simple house of the women. The cultural pattern of hot/cold reinforces this segregation by not allowing women access to the yam crop which is their basic source of food.

6 Ibid.
Figure 2. Note the scale of the native resident men compared to the men’s ceremonial house, Great Kan Ravi, New Guinea; (the size of the house is 59-72 feet tall by 33-39 feet wide). Traditions in Architecture, (2001).

Figure 3. The difference in scale and ornamentation between the men’s ceremonial house and a woman’s dwelling in a Kalava village. Traditions in Architecture, (2001).
Berber houses of Kabylia, Algeria (3000 B.C.–present)

The traditional Berber houses of Kabylia, Algeria are "organized according to a set of dichotomies: fire-water, cooked-raw, high-low, light-dark, day-night, and male-female." Anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu interprets these as representing the public and private spheres of male and female. "The male entrance is through the east door and the female entrance is through the west door. The Berber house is separated in physical as well as symbolic divisions. The lower, less lit, northern part of the house where animals are also kept is related to nature and the feminine. It is associated with sexual relationship, birth, sleep and death. The higher, better lit, southern side is related to culture and the masculine."  

Pierre mentions that Berber women play no role in the public sphere and are subordinate within the private sphere. This gender division is also reflected in their relationship to the house. Men leave the house at daybreak and women almost never leave the house. The male guest has to give the women of the house a sum of money called a “view” to compensate for invading her privacy. Proverbs like “woman has only two dwellings, the house and the tomb” and “man is the lamp of the outside and woman the lamp of the inside” reinforce these dichotomous attributes found in the house.  

The proverbs here quite clearly explain how their worldview is translated inside the house too. They support the view that a man belongs to the public life and the women to the private sphere and even in the private sphere of the house, she is secluded. Berber women have a lower status compared to Berber men and other women in similar societies. The cultural patterns of public/private, culture/nature gets translated to built patterns of south/north, higher/lower, light/dark and activity patterns where men work outside the home, women are housewives and stay inside the house.

Figure 9. Berber house showing the gender segregated spaces of male and female. Paul Oliver, Dwellings, (1992).

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Mongolian Ger, Mongolia (400 B.C.–Present)

A Ger or yurt is a tent in Mongolia. It has a circular frame covered with woolen felt mats. “It’s symbolically divided into male and female spheres. The male side which is considered ritually pure is toward the left of the door or western half and the female or impure side is to the right of the door or eastern half. When guests come they sit in the ‘xoimor,’ the male side away from the cold. The servants and the animals sit close to the door, and towards the cold. The female side consists of cooking utensils and children’s stuff while the men’s side consists of saddles, guns and ropes.”

As explained by Daphne Spain earlier, here the gender segregation is maintained by the usage of taboos; moving an object from the male side to the female side or vice versa is a sin that requires ceremonial purification. Spain points out that such division often removes women from knowledge; the books are kept on the male ‘xoimor’ side, and the Mongolian women are forbidden to read them. Symbolic and real spatial separation reinforces Mongolian men’s control of written knowledge and reduces women’s access to positions of religious authority. One proverb -- “for a woman to look at a book is like a wolf looking at a settlement” -- expresses this fear of disturbing the prevalent social order.

It’s interesting to see the fear these social taboos create and how it affects spatial organization. The Navajo Hogan and the Mongolian Ger seemed similar as far as separation of space based on gender was concerned but they were different in beliefs. This leads me to conclude that different cultural patterns could lead to similar looking built patterns. However, I think it is important to understand that it’s not so much the fact these built patterns seem similar but what it symbolizes that is of the utmost importance. We can understand these built patterns only by studying them in the context of their cultural patterns and vice versa. This case study is a good example of how complex dichotomies can be.

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Bedouin Tent, North Africa (10,000 Y.B.P – Present)

Bedouins are nomadic tribes in North Africa and Arabia. Among the Bedouin’s the women are in charge of erecting and dismantling the tent but the men own these tents. “The men’s side is towards the east or right and the women’s side is towards the west or left in the Bedouins. The tent is divided by a curtain into two separate spaces. The guests are treated in the male, smaller but higher status space. Guests are considered auspicious and it’s a status symbol to treat them in a male space. Slaves and women work together in the same space. The women’s space is never seen by any other man other than the owner of the tent.”11 In some African and Asian cultures the guests are respected and considered to bring good luck. Here the built pattern of east/west, right/left is related to the cultural pattern of high status/low status.

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**Summary of gender patterns in hierarchical subsistence societies**

In all of the above case studies there is a prominent existence of taboos. Their worldview of segregation as balance, separate and unequal division of labor is preserved because of the fear of these taboos. The Barsana Maloca people of Columbia believe that a woman could have a miscarriage and die if she disobeyed and stayed in the house during the He flutes festival. They also believe that if a woman is found stealing the flutes she will be punished by being gang raped by several men in the community. This describes the horrific extent of belief these people have on taboos. It seems as if people built their homes because they were fearful of disturbing the prevalent social order. The construction of the home and activities were based on the established cultural norms of the society.

The question is why is this social order so important? Why are these social orders protected by the fear of taboos? By having social order in the society, men and women are assigned public and private roles that create a balance in the society.
This unfair division of superior and inferior creates a kind of spatial caste system in the society as described by Weismen. The matrix below shows a brief description of how these cultural, built and activity patterns interplay in preserving this segregation as balance, worldview among the male and female.

It’s also important to notice that there are some common patterns between egalitarian subsistence societies and hierarchical subsistence societies. **Cultural patterns** like public/private exists among the Northern Plain Indians, Acoma Indians, Tuaregs and also in Barsana Maloca, New Guinea’s mens ceremonial festivals, Mongolian Ger and the Berber house. **Built patterns** like south-male/north-female is a common pattern among the Navojo Hogan and the Berber house. **Activity patterns** where men become chiefs and participate in political organizations and women do not is seen in Acoma Pueblo Indians and the Barsana Malocas (table 2 and table 3). This could be the reason why several feminist authors interpret these common patterns in egalitarian societies as representing segregation of genders and not harmony.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchical Subsistence Societies</th>
<th>Cultural Patterns</th>
<th>Built Patterns</th>
<th>Activity Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculine pattern</td>
<td>Feminine pattern</td>
<td>Masculine pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barasana Maloca, South America</strong> – Separate eating areas, times, patrilineal</td>
<td>Sacred Public</td>
<td>Profane Private</td>
<td>Front, Center, Front larger in area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Guinea</strong> men’s ceremonial festival is hidden, women are not allowed in the traditional “yam festival”, , patrilineal,</td>
<td>public hot spirit</td>
<td>private cold spirit</td>
<td>Ornament, immense size of men house, men’s house is for public display higher in height</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mongolian Ger</strong> The symbolic division of space is done by the hearth in the center. patrilineal</td>
<td>pure public</td>
<td>impure private</td>
<td>left, guests sit in the male side, books are kept in the male side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Berber house, Algeria</strong></td>
<td>public</td>
<td>private</td>
<td>higher, lighter, southern east door</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Cultural, built and activity patterns in a hierarchical subsistence society.
CHAPTER 3 - 19th AND 20th CENTURY CASE STUDIES FOR GENDER SEGREGATED PATTERNS IN URBAN SOCIETIES

This chapter explores gender patterns in 19th and 20th century urban societies. In this chapter, I will discuss the Victorian Country House and the American Country House. I have selected these case studies because one or more scholars have concluded that they can be classified as 19th and 20th century urban societies. Here simple dichotomies like serious/cheerful, massive/light, library/parlor, study/boudoir, gives an insight about a society and the enormous influence this oppositional dichotomy had on the people of that society.

Here gender patterns are based on worldviews. In 19th and 20th century urban societies their worldview is based on segregation as a balance and separate and unequal divisions of labor. The Victorian home played an important social role in assigning men, women and servants their designated place in the house and in the society. The Victorian worldviews are based on separating activities, rooms and thereby the people. To them segregation was an important element in order to maintain balance and harmony in their world. The country house had separate rooms for the husband, wife, guests, children and servants. Jill Franklin explains that "The essence of Victorian planning was segregation and specialization.....The image of the great household was....of a giant, well-oiled machine running on so many cogs and the highest possible praise was to say 'It all ran like clock work.' These people were assigned separate rooms at separate times of the day in order to maintain this synchronization in the house.” ¹ In the following case studies of the Victorian Country House and the American Country Houses of 19th and 20th century urban societies, it will be evident that there is a cyclical loop of cultural, built and activity patterns.

**Victorian Country House** (1874 A.D.)

Mark Girouard in *The Victorian Country House* explains that “such a house was a reflection of the qualities” ² of the gentleman, an owner. The physical qualities of the

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house reflect the moral and subjective attributes of its owner. He further explains that “a gentleman’s house should be substantial, serious and preferably in a style associated with the traditions of English country life. It should be dignified, as was suitable for the rank of its owner, but not ostentatious.” These attributes are the result of beliefs about how a gentleman should behave in that time. It’s also worth noticing that it’s called a gentleman’s country house, and not a lady’s. Girouard states that a Victorian house “should protect the womanliness of women and encourage the manliness of men.” So it seems like there is a specific code of conduct for a woman and one for a man and a house had to reinforce both. A similar idea was expressed by E. Guidoni who mentioned that “among the Plains Indians, a womanly woman physically created and erected her family’s tipi; a manly man commemorated his dreams and most important hunts or battles in the paintings on his home for his lineage and tribe to treasure.” It’s interesting how two very different societies assigned gender specific roles in the house. This code of conduct based on gender not only defined the rooms that were considered feminine and masculine but also the architecture. As seen above a gentleman’s house was supposed to be substantial, serious and in accordance with the traditions of English country life. The same could be inferred from oppositional dichotomies of massive/light used in the context of the house. It seems that the design of the house was influenced by social gender conducts.

Spain explains that the drawing room, boudoir and the morning room or breakfast rooms were the only rooms considered feminine. She elaborates the social scenario by adding that “The drawing room was a ‘Lady’s Apartment’ to which the women “withdrew” after dinner, while the men had cigars in the smoking room or played a game in the billiards room.” This view was also emphasized by Robert Kerr, the architect for Bearwood estate. His instructions for the drawing room were “The character to be always aimed at in a drawing-room is special cheerfulness, refinement of elegance, and what is called lightness as opposed to massiveness. Decoration and furniture ought therefore to be comparatively delicate; in short, the rule in everything is this...to be entirely ladylike.” The Boudoir was a private room

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
adjoining the bedroom that men never entered without permission. However the guests and families of both sexes could enter the morning room. ⁶

Spain draws the conclusion that the boudoir was the space that was solely intended for women. In contrast, according to Kerr, the library, billiard room, gentlemen’s room (business transactions), study, smoking room, and gentleman’s “odd room (where young gentlemen could ‘do as they liked’)” were specifically men’s rooms. Some of these rooms also had their own bathrooms and cloakrooms. These rooms were placed at the other end of the house far from the women’s rooms. This created a separate male area in the house. The billiard room was kept at a distance because of the noise; so was the smoking room because of the smell of smoke as ladies did not smoke. Women hesitated to enter these rooms in contrast to men for whom it was acceptable to enter women’s rooms. Franklin illustrated three floor plans of the Bearwood estate, Birmingham, UK (fig. 14-16) which clearly shows the segregation by class and gender. The “Men’s Stair” and “Women’s Stair” were used by the male and female servants separately. It even shows “Gentlemen’s stairs”, “Bachelor’s stairs” and “Young Ladies” stairs for separate family and guest usage. Bearwood Estate was “a showpiece of Victorian specialization and segregation.”⁷

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⁶ Ibid., 112-115.
Figure 12. The ground floor plan shows no rooms or staircase identified only for women other than those for the women servants. The rooms identified for men are connected with the "men’s corridor" and the "butler's corridor." The Gentleman's Country House (1981).

Key:
Blue color – rooms identified as men's rooms
Yellow – rooms identified as women's room although the men could enter the drawing room and morning room even though they were identified as feminine.

This segregation was not restricted to the main house but was seen even in the servant's quarters. They were separated from the main house, made to look ordinary and were lower than the main block. Franklin writes that “anyone could see at a glance, the one part of the edifice as superior and the other inferior.” Servant’s quarters were also segregated on the basis of gender. “The maids often slept in the attic and the butlers in the basement. The butler’s room was located to monitor supervision of the male servants while the housekeeper’s room was positioned to supervise female servants. The servant’s hall was the only place they could meet and spend time together with family.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) Ibid., 95-101.
Figure 13. The first floor had separate staircases for men and women. This floor consisted of boudoir, nurseries, and maid’s rooms and was considered feminine unlike the ground floor. The Gentleman’s Country House (1981).

**Key:**
Blue color – rooms identified as men’s rooms
Yellow - rooms identified as women’s room

It is interesting that the number of rooms identified as women’s room seems to be located more on the first floor and second floor compared to the ground floor. The ground floor plan includes male related rooms like billiards room, library, gentleman’s odd rooms and butler’s room. It appears that the idea of privacy and the family protection sentiments resulted in having the women related spaces on the floors above ground.
Girouard explains that the design of the country house reinforced gendered roles. The “increasingly large and sacrosanct male domain” in the country houses was the result of “victorian chivalry.” Women had to be protected from the scandalous talk of business or politics. “Male preserves were the natural results of this, remember-there-are-ladies-present-sir, attitude.” Historian Penny Sparke had also argued that “the Victorian home set the tone for the contemporary U.S. and British gendered relationships within the home. The feminine world of home was intended to be the seat of moral, aesthetic and cultural stability -- qualities not furthered in the male world of waged work.”

Spain compares the Mongolian and the Victorian societies. She explains that just as the traditional Mongols kept the books on the male side of the tent, the Victorian gentlemen kept the libraries, politics and business at the men’s end of the house. I do realize that cross cultural comparisons are often problematic because of different locations, time period, and social norms but I think Spain draws valid conclusions.

John Stuart Mill in his book *The Subjection of Women*, (1869) compared a married woman’s status to that of a slave. He chronicled the lack of women’s legal rights to children, earnings, or property. Divorce was an expensive option since the women

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did not have any financial standing. He explains that women had even fewer options without a divorce. "If she leaves her husband, she can take nothing with her, neither her children nor anything which is rightfully her own. If he chooses, he can compel her to return, by law, or by physical force; or he may content himself with seizing for his own use anything which she may earn, or which may be given to her by her relatives." This expresses the status of the women in Great Britain during the nineteenth century and confirms their lower status as compared to the men.\footnote{11 Daphne Spain, \textit{Gendered Spaces in Architecture} (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 115.}

**American Country Houses** (18\textsuperscript{th} Century A.D.)

In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century books like William Alcott’s, \textit{The Young Wife} (1838) and \textit{The Young Husband} (1839), “championed the cult of domesticity as a stabilizer of the social order. They glorified the wife’s role in making the house a retreat for the family.” Spain explains that because of industrialization and urbanization, the house no longer defined the same roles as in the Victorian era. The housewives were not restricted to the domestic spheres like their Victorian predecessors. She further adds that “the American’s felt that family life was threatened by the transfer of its traditional functions outside the home. The order within the household was expected to create order in society.”\footnote{12 Ibid.} Here by traditional functions, she means the role of women as a housewife was changing gradually. Women were becoming more educated and had started to join the work force. This fear she concludes led 19\textsuperscript{th} century Americans to build homes to preserve this social order. These homes were segregated based on gender but not to the extent seen in English country homes.

Preserving social order through domestic order is a theme in several case studies from the Barsana Maloca’s long house to the Victorian country house. The Barasana Maloca people believed that if the women took control of the ‘he flutes,’ it would reverse the social order. Similarly, the 19\textsuperscript{th} century Americans were scared of the changing role of women within the house, due to urbanization.

Clark Clifford Edward’s, \textit{The American Family Home} (1986), he stresses that each room of the house should have a clearly defined function and role. The placement of the library should be towards the back of the house with a separate entrance. This
would help the gentleman with a "professional occupation or literary taste" to enter and exit the house without disturbing the family. However the parlor was “accessible to visitors” and displayed the “elegance and the appearance of lady’s habitancy.” (figure 18). He further explains that the dining room was designed as a place where men and women could mingle. The rooms upstairs were designed as a private space for women and children that men could enter. This segregation of the library and office with separate entrances as a male zone separated the women from the source of knowledge and any exposure to information and business affairs. Again, the pattern of separating the books from the women’s area was prevalent among the Mongolians, too.

Figure 15. This house was considered appropriate for a male doctor because it had a separate entrance to the library which could also be converted into an office. Gendered Spaces (1992).

13 Ibid.
**Summary of gender segregation patterns in urban societies**

The worldviews of the 19th century Victorian era was of separation and segregation as balance. This transformed into specific qualities that were required of men and women. An ideal gentleman was supposed to have serious, dignified and chivalrous qualities along with a high rank in work. An ideal lady was supposed to be moral, aesthetic, cheerful, elegant and someone who would ensure the cultural stability of the family. I believe this differentiation of qualities in men and women clearly show how strong cultural patterns were in the Victorian era. “A lady’s room was to be light and delicate while a gentleman’s room was massive” wrote Robert Kerr, the architect of Bearwood Estate. It is evident here that the cultural patterns of personal qualities got transformed into built patterns like “massive” and “delicate.” The interior of a library was supposed to look massive compared to a boudoir that was to be cheerful.

Interactions within the Victorian social order follow this strictly linear pattern: the chivalrous gentleman protecting the woman from the outside world and the woman maintaining moral and cultural stability within the household. Also, the segregation of rooms and staircases based on gender and the arrangement of servant’s rooms in the corner of the house thereby reduces any intermingling that may harm this order.

As stated above, in the American country house, the bedrooms were on the first floor and the library, living room and parlor on the ground floor. The first floor was related more to family, women and privacy. The ground floor was for the men who would use the library and protect his family.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>19th and 20th century Victorian Society</th>
<th>Cultural Patterns</th>
<th>Built Patterns</th>
<th>Activity Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masculine pattern</strong></td>
<td><strong>Feminine patterns</strong></td>
<td><strong>Masculine pattern</strong></td>
<td><strong>Feminine patterns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Country House (Bearwood Estate)</td>
<td><strong>qualities of an ideal gentlemen</strong>- serious, dignified but not ostentatious, chivalrous.</td>
<td><strong>qualities of a lady</strong>- moral, aesthetic cultural cheerful, elegant, light</td>
<td>massive library, billiard room, gentlemen’s room study, smoking room, gentleman’s odd room Men’s Stair, Gentlemen’s stairs, Bachelor’s stairs butler slept in basement butler’s room was located to monitor supervision of the men servant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American country house (Typical male doctor’s residence)</td>
<td>Professional, literary taste</td>
<td>elegant</td>
<td>Library, office with separate entrance back of the house Ground floor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Cultural, built and activity patterns in 19th and 20th century Victorian Society.
CHAPTER 4: 19th AND 20th CENTURY CASE STUDIES IN REFORM MOVEMENTS AND UTOPIAN PROPOSALS

This chapter explores utopian proposals that aimed at eliminating gender patterns. In this chapter, I will discuss Catherine Beecher’s Proposal of the American Woman’s Home, From Bungalow to Levittown, Reform Movements and Utopian Proposals. I have selected these case studies because one or more scholars have concluded that they are 19th and 20th century reform movements and utopian proposals. The following case studies emphasize a strong initiative to remove gender patterns.

We saw in previous chapters how dichotomies in gender can define activities, spaces and thereby the lives of people. In this chapter we will see the reforms and utopian proposals proposed as a solution to gender patterns formed by built, activity and cultural patterns. Here utopian proposals are based on changing the worldviews about how people perceive gender. In the proposals below it will be evident as to how changing this perspective on gender is related to reformed proposals in housing and cities.

Catharine Beecher’s Proposal of the American Woman’s Home

In 1869 Catharine Beecher proposed the concept of the American Woman’s Home. This radical proposal was made seventy years before Frank Lloyd Wright’s proposal for the Usonian house. Her architectural analysis of the modern home was scientific but based on the concept of the “American woman as a self-sacrificing Christian wife and mother.” Her purpose was to design an ideal home which would enable a woman to run her house efficiently and fulfill her moral obligations. According to her “The woman was to be both minister to the family and a skilled professional worker-manager of the household.”

Beecher’s strategy of planning household activities reduced physical labor to a great extent in the house. It was a more efficient way to work and created a healthy environment for the family. This proposal laid the grounds for the open planning concept with a central service core comprised of kitchen and utilities. The central kitchen concept eliminated the labor and time consumed by having the kitchen in

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one corner of the house as seen before in the country houses. The ground floor plan is reserved for the living room and the central kitchen. With the help of a movable screen; the living area could be used as a bedroom (fig.16). The movable screen helped in separating one end of the living room from the other. The basement consisted of laundry and storage which could be accessed by a service staircase in the center of the house. If the family became larger two bedrooms could be planned on the second floor.

She believed that the main cause of housework not being valued "is the fact that the honor and duties of the family state are not duly appreciated, that women are not trained for these duties as men are trained for their trades and professions, and that, as a consequence, family labor is poorly done, poorly paid, and regarded as menial and disgraceful."  

2 She believed this was a woman’s true profession and the main aim of her book, American Woman’s Home was “to elevate both the honor and the remuneration of all the employments”  

3 and “to render each department of woman’s true profession as much desired and respected as are the most honored professions of men.”  

4

It is clearly evident here that she considers a woman’s role to be different than a man’s role and she is trying to improve women’s status, with a scientific approach. Although the paradox here is that she attaches an emotional even a religious obligation to the woman’s role. The point to notice here is that no such thing is mentioned about a man’s role. A woman, who had so meticulously analyzed each kind of work in the house, still thought of a Christian duty for a woman to perform household work.

Beecher believes that a woman’s profession consists of nursing the body, governing the servants and maintaining the house economically. These she believes are the “sacred duties” of a woman. She notes that in the Bible it is written that “The wise woman buildeth her house.” To be “wise” is “to choose the best means for accomplishing the best end.” For her this means a “Christian house.” She believes

2 Ibid.  
3 Ibid.  
4 Ibid.
that this wise woman would not only be the minister of the house but would create a healthy, industrious and economic environment.\(^5\)

She visualized a society of Christian people who would spread culture and enjoyment like this among “the poor, ignorant, and neglected ones in desolated sections where many now are perishing for want of such Christian example and influence.”\(^6\) Beecher assumed that the home’s internal arrangements were essentially a women’s responsibility. It’s remarkable that her belief in a moral Christian house translated into an effective solution for a modern house but with cultural patterns based on tradition.

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\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid.
By 1890, American society had become more urbanized and there were fewer children per house. The fertility rate had declined; labor saving devices, communication and transportation had increased consumerism. American women attended coeducational colleges, owned property and could vote by 1919. The important question at that time was how to design an ideal middle class home.

Victorian homes were criticized because of their size and appearance. Gustav Stickley’s proposal for the modern house was simple “a pleasant living room with a cozy fireplace, bookcases, and a cupboard or two would serve the combined functions of library, parlor, and sitting room.” These houses reduced gender segregation by “bringing books into shared women’s and men’s space, they were setting the stage for women’s changing status.” These houses minimized the single purpose gendered rooms like those of the Victorian houses and made more sexually integrated, multipurpose rooms. Most of these changes were made to make an economically efficient house.

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Figure 18. Bungalow plan by Gustav Stickley. It eliminated the parlor and separate library rooms. *Gendered Spaces in Architecture* (1992).

“The Usonian house was designed by Wright in 1936 and it represented his ideal American house. The Usonian house did away with certain room’s altogether, uniting more family activities in one place. The ‘living room’ in a Wright house was apt to be used for eating, relaxation, cooking, play, entertainment, cultural enrichment, and with patio appended, for virtually all other family functions. He designed it to minimize the use of interior walls and with maximum access to the exterior space.”

This reflects that the worldviews about gender were changing. There are no parlor, boudoir or billiards room in the Usonian House. We see no segregation in built space here. This could be attributed to the reformed cultural pattern of gender with women getting education and gaining empowerment. These two houses, the bungalow and the Usonian house remind us of Catherine Beecher’s plan for a Christian woman’s house with all the activities contained in the living room and kitchen. However, her proposal had the kitchen in the center of the house; it was more compact than these houses, reduced walking distance, made service easier and the house cheaper.

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8 Ibid.
Levitt sold 11,000 houses to returning veterans from 1946 to 1950. These houses were called ranch houses and had several multipurpose rooms like the study/guest room, living/dining room and kitchen/laundry room. The open plan in these houses was radically different from Victorian houses, where each function was meant to have its personal space in the house. The open plan was meant to foster family communication and “allowed a mother to watch the activities of her children even if she was in the kitchen cooking dinner.”

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9 Ibid.
In the above plans a different type of gender pattern emerges. We don’t see the parlors or the male/female staircase but authors Mona Domosh and Joni Seager explain that “by the 1970’s little had changed women’s identities. The women were still connected to home design and style, particularly the interiors of the homes, while men at least in the suburbs, aligned their manliness with the green lawn, the barbecue grill, the garage and the basement, the manly spaces.”  

Here the dichotomies are interior/exterior; the interior of the house was considered a feminine space; garage, basement and lawns were considered masculine spaces. The built pattern of interior/exterior is related to the cultural pattern of what’s considered feminine/masculine. These masculine spaces of the 1970’s appear similar to the billiard room, gun’s room and the library in the Victorian country houses.

**Reform Movements and Utopian Proposals**

Dolores Hayden points out that during the 1920’s; the slogan was “good homes make contented workers.“  

She explains that people believed that the male industrial worker should be able to return to a home that was secluded from the work intensive world of an industrial city. Home was supposed to be a place free from environmental pollution, social degradation, and personal alienation. It was a

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place of emotional and physical maintenance which was the wife’s responsibility. This made the private suburban house a stage for sexual division of labor. We see here a built pattern where the suburban house is related to the feminine and the factories are related to the masculine. The activity pattern of factory/house is also apparent here.

As Hayden explains the problem of women is paradoxical: “women cannot improve their status in the home unless their overall economic position in society is altered; women cannot improve their status in the paid labor force unless their domestic responsibilities are altered.” She believes that transforming the condition of labor within the household or removing some of that labor altogether is the key to women’s liberation; this is material feminism. She also gives the example of the Cuban Family Code of 1974 “which requires men to share housework and child care within the private home.” It aims at promoting the principle of men sharing what was formerly women’s work. This code does not remove household chores but is oriented towards a solution for women.

Charles Fourier, a utopian socialist argued “that the development of a society can best be judged by examining the position of women within it. He believed that the isolated single family dwelling was one of the greatest obstacles to improving the position of women; for his followers, the socialization of domestic work was essential to improving women’s status.” Hayden explains the proposals of Marie Stevens Howland and Alice Constance Austin. They proposed innovative architectural concepts for domestic reforms in the utopian socialist cities of Topolobampo, Mexico and Llano del Rio, California. Both of them worked with cooperative colonies which were underfinanced and dissolved before extensive construction could take place. They developed plans for housing to complement centralized housekeeping facilities, and designed entire cities to eliminate private domestic work. In this section, we will focus on the housing units and not the city plan to be consistent with the previous chapters.

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
Marie Stevens Howland proposed three types of dwellings for Pacific Colony in Topolobampo, Mexico, 1885. Residential hotels, row houses and separate cottages with co-operative housing facilities. The residential hotel was a twelve two storied structure with rooms overlooking the central garden, parlor, library, kitchen, dinning room and laundry. There were also suburban blocks comprising of four separate housing units with a common co-operative kitchen, laundry, bakery, and dormitories for men and women staff. However due to financial problems and administrative chaos this ideal housing was not constructed. They were published in a treatise Integral Co-operation in 1885 and discussed in numerous colony publications.

Figure 21. Residential hotel plan for block of Pacific Colony with twelve row houses sharing dining room, kitchen, laundry, parlor, and library. Hayden’s paper on Two Utopian Feminists and Their Campaigns for Kitchenless Houses (1978).

They have tried to change the built space and thereby the activity and cultural pattern here by having a central run kitchen and laundry that woman were not responsible for. This model eliminates the built, activity and cultural patterns of the kitchen, laundry being deemed as feminine.
"Austin’s housing designs emphasized economy of labor, materials and space. She criticized the waste of time, strength, and money which traditional houses with kitchens required and the hatefully monotonous drudgery of preparing 1,095 meals in the year and cleaning up after each one.”¹⁵ She suggested that meals could arrive in containers for dinners and the dishes could be returned to the central kitchen for cleaning, thus eliminating the need of preparing and cleaning after meals. “She also proposed built in furniture, roll away beds to get rid of cleaning, heated tile floor instead of carpets and windows with decorated frame to eliminate curtains or what she called ‘household scourge.'”¹⁶ Here we see an effective way of changing the activity pattern of kitchen and housekeeping that is considered feminine by altering the built pattern.

¹⁶ Ibid.
Dolores Hayden explains that many such social domestic attempts were made but were largely forgotten for various reasons. She explains this was due to lack of family privacy and the problem of integrating facilities like these in industrial cities. In contrast, these women helped to reorganize women’s work; they achieved a level of innovation which is still not present in the American residential construction today. The problems of isolated domestic work, waste of space, time, food, and fuel still persist and these proposals tried to address such modern problems. Hayden explains that “Howland and Austin were seeking something more than enclaves of feminist housing within capitalist society and that their work should be judged in the context of equality for women.” Charlotte Perkins Gilman also proposed the establishment of public laundries and kitchens that would utilize all the latest technological advances to create efficient work spaces. Below is the example of M.P. Woolfs proposal on similar lines for communal kitchens, dining and food to go.

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Hayden proposes redesigning suburban communities based on Howland and Austin’s proposals. She suggests “a common green area in the center of spaces (3), surrounded by a path (5) for access to the child care area, elderly care, laundry and communal activities (4) around it. She explains that these would bring the communal activities into the center of the community and be accessible to all. These suburban communities would also be enclosed on the external side by a compound wall (6) for security reasons.”(figure.27) This planning creates a secured communal place for the elders and children for interaction and reduces domestic work. 18 This facility would remove the activity patterns of kitchen, family care and laundry that were believed to be feminine by having a built space that catered to these activities. By doing this they are also changing the cultural pattern of what’s considered feminine.

Otto Fick introduced a co-operative housing facility for employed women and their families in Copenhagen in 1903. Later it was encouraged in Sweden by Alva Myrdal and architects Sven Ivar Lind and Sven Markelius who developed “service houses” or “co-operative houses”. Along with housing for employed women and their families, these projects provided childcare and cooked food. This project as Hayden explains does not “challenge the male exclusion from domestic work nor does it deal with
household’s changing need, but it recognizes that it is important for environmental design to change.”

Key:
Yellow- kitchen, dining and day care facilities

Figure 26. Sven Ivar Lind, Marieberg collective house, Stockholm, Sweden, 1944, plan of entrance, restaurant and day nursery. Hayden’s paper, What would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Urban Design, and Human Work (1980).

A project by Nina West Homes, a development group in London proposes a different solution. They renovated over sixty-three units of housing on six sites for single parents. In these projects the children’s play areas or day-care centers are integrated within the dwellings by using the internal corridors and opening windows into it. By doing this the daycare centers can be open to the neighbor residents who can charge a fee for it. In this way single parents can find jobs as day care workers and help other working parents. Hayden suggests that the interesting part here is that not only home and work services get integrated for some residents but home and childcare also gets integrated. The emphasis here is on removing the activity pattern of daycare center, kitchen and dining.

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Key:
Yellow - kitchen, dining and day care facilities

Figure 27. A. Fiona House, second-floor plan, main building, showing corridor used as playroom, with kitchen windows opening into it; first floor plan, rear building, showing nursery school. B. Axonometric drawing. Hayden’s paper, What would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Urban Design, and Human Work (1980).

Hayden believes that Americans separate home and work into public and private life and the only way to deal with this stereotype is to fuse the public and private. She explains that what women require is “community services to support the private household. They also desire solutions which reinforce their economic independence and maximize their personal choices about child rearing and sociability.” She proposes HOMES (Homemakers Organization for a More Egalitarian Society). She outlines the program:

1. “Involve both men and women in the unpaid labor associated with housekeeping and child care on an equal basis.
2. Involve both men and women in the paid labor force on an equal basis;
3. Eliminate residential segregation by class, race, and age;
4. Eliminate all federal, state, and local programs and laws which offer implicit or explicit reinforcement of the unpaid role of the female homemaker;
5. Minimize unpaid domestic labor and wasteful energy consumption;
6. Maximize real choices for households concerning recreation and sociability.”

Hayden mentions that along with the housing facilities, the people living in the HOMES communities would also be provided with the following benefits:

1. “a day-care center with landscaped outdoor space, providing day care and after-school activities;
2. a Laundromat providing laundry service
3. a kitchen providing lunches for the day-care center, take-out evening meals, and “meals-on-wheels” for elderly people in the neighborhood;
4. a grocery depot, connected to a local food cooperative;
5. a garage with two vans providing dial-a-ride service and meals-on-wheels;
6. a garden (or allotments) where some food can be grown;
7. a home help office providing helpers for the elderly, the sick, and employed parents whose children are sick. The use of all of these collective services should be voluntary; they would exist in addition to private dwelling units and private gardens.”

Hayden stresses that the jobs generated by this project should avoid “traditional sex stereotyping” such as men are hired as drivers and women as food service workers. It is important in this project to “break down separate categories of paid work” and unpaid work for both the sexes. This community would be based on the Cuban Family Code; men should be recruited to share the domestic responsibilities equally. She states that non co-operative organizations like HUD and HEW could fund projects based on the HOMES platform.

Hayden believes that attacking the conventional division between public and private space should become a socialist and feminist priority. Women must transform the sexual division of domestic labor, the privatized economic basis of domestic work, and the spatial separation of homes and workplaces in the built environment if they

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21 Ibid.
are to be equal members of the society. She gives the example of a society in Derby Street, in Berkeley, California where “all the neighbors joined their backyards and created a cooperative day care center, one absentee landlord refused to join; his entire property was fenced in and the community space flows around it without difficulty.” 22

Hayden puts much emphasis on the cultural/built/activity dichotomy of public/private between masculine/feminine. It is important to remove this separation of public and private and only by removing this segregation, we will able to move forward towards a more egalitarian society.

**Summary of gender patterns in Reform Movements and Utopian Proposals**

I believe these amazing utopian societies were based on good intentions of making childcare, laundry, and food preparation community activities. In all the above proposals, there was a need to eliminate segregation. They were trying to alter the built pattern of individual housing in order to remove the activity pattern that occurred in kitchen, family care and laundry. All these utopian solutions emphasize that only by altering these activities and built patterns can we change our cultural pattern of segregation between male and female.

I do agree that these solutions could be used for older people, single women and handicapped people but it would be unwise to assume that these people wouldn’t want a degree of privacy that’s lost in communal spaces. Most people live in a suburban single unit house for privacy reasons and not with the intention of increasing household chores for women. It is true however, that living in a single family unit in the suburbs increases the amount of housework required.

A lot of women are housewives and some of them do like to take care of their houses and cook. Perhaps, we will have to focus on all the complex layers that interplay in gender segregation in order to eliminate them. The problem also lies in the community and city scales these solutions were proposed for. There are always financial considerations when projects are proposed at a larger scale.

22 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>19th and 20th century case studies in reform movements and utopian proposals</th>
<th>Cultural Patterns</th>
<th>Built Patterns</th>
<th>Activity Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine pattern</td>
<td>Feminine patterns</td>
<td>Masculine pattern</td>
<td>Feminine patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Beechers proposal of American womens home</td>
<td>Self sacrificing mother, wife, minister of the family</td>
<td>Kitchen, laundry, daycare</td>
<td>manager of the household, nurse, maintaining the house economically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bungalow to Levitttown</td>
<td>exterior</td>
<td>interior</td>
<td>green lawns, basement, garage, factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal of Cultural Patterns</td>
<td>Removal of Built Patterns</td>
<td>Removal of Activity Patterns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Colony</td>
<td>Built in furniture, roll away bed, heated tile floor, windows with decorated frame instead of curtains</td>
<td>Shared dining, kitchen, laundry, housekeeping, full time staff to run the kitchen and dining facilities,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolores Hayden’s proposal of 1983, Putting Women in places</td>
<td>located in the center of the housing community</td>
<td>Kitchen, dining, laundry, daycare, elderly care, community activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sven Ivar Lind, Marieberg collective house, Stockholm, Sweden</td>
<td>Daycare with window openings for neighbors to watch over</td>
<td>Kitchen, dining, laundry, daycare, elderly care,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolores Haydens proposal of HOMES</td>
<td>Kitchen, dining, laundry, daycare, elderly care, community activities</td>
<td>Kitchen, dining, laundry, daycare, elderly care, community activities</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 5. Cultural, built and activity patterns in 19th and 20th case studies in reform movements and utopian proposals.
Conclusion

Dichotomies are a way in which we simplify the interconnected hierarchical complexities of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and power plays in our society. The division between male and female has been the primary dichotomy I have focused on in this discussion. My argument is that dichotomies create a cyclical loop which reinforces social injustice between genders in societies cross culturally and across time. This cycle of gender division includes cultural, built and activity patterns. There is no single point of origin of these patterns, but rather a constant loop of reinforcement from one pattern to the other. (fig.1)

![Figure 1. My conceptual reinforcement loop](image)

The morals and principles of the society produce the cultural patterns. Dichotomous words and concepts like hot/cold, nature/culture, social order/chaos, public/private as related to male and female in many societies create cultural patterns. Recurring organized actions defined by culture in the society are activity patterns. Activity patterns such as decoration/construction, chiefs/witch doctors, herding/learning divides activity among men and women. Physical expressions of cultural and activity patterns are manifested in built patterns. For instance the following dichotomies; front/back, high/low and center/periphery are characteristics often displayed in built patterns.

I found that the public/private cultural pattern was the most recurring pattern. It is present in egalitarian, hierarchical and 19th and 20th century Victorian society. This pattern exists cross-culturally and across time.
In the egalitarian subsistence societies, dichotomies are not understood as a set of oppositions such as superior and inferior. Their belief in harmony and balance in nature emphasized equality, unlike the hierarchical societies. The cultural patterns like day/night and sky/earth are a part of this balanced view of the universe. The women in egalitarian subsistence societies, could practice medicine, had access to magic lore, constructed tepees and could own property. However, women could not become chiefs and among the Acoma Indians could not participate in political activities. Only men could become chiefs and hunt. This proves that the activity patterns in egalitarian subsistence societies had some amount of discrimination towards women. I found no evidence that the built space was separated as superior/inferior. Only in the case of the Navojo Hogan, the Hogan is divided in north/south and it is because of their belief that the male and female are equal parts of a balanced universe. (table 2)

In hierarchical subsistence societies, dichotomies divided people by assigning them public or private roles. This is evident in the cultural patterns of sacred/profane, pure/impure and hot spirit/cold spirit. I found interesting examples of built patterns where the front, center, left, south and east are related to men while the back, periphery, right, north and west are related to women. Public display of ornamentation, height, portions of the house with more light, access to knowledge and guests, are conducted by men. The women’s house is simple compared to the men’s in terms of ornamentation and height. In women’s side of the house there is less light, they cannot access books, cannot entertain and sometimes they cant even talk to guests. In an activity pattern similar to the egalitarian subsistence societies, even here only men can become chiefs. Men are literate, they work outside the house and they consume food but do not have to help in the production of food. Inversely, women are illiterate; they take care of children and household activities inside the house, and help in the production of food. (table 3) Each of these patterns proves how significant the roles of dichotomies are in hierarchical subsistence societies.

In most case studies the cultural patterns were reinforced by built and activity patterns. Among the Barsana Maloca the cultural patterns of sacred/profane and public/private are related to built patterns of front/rear, where the front part of the maloca is regarded as public-male part whereas the rear part of the maloca is
private-female. The cultural public/private pattern can also be seen in the activity pattern. Here only men can become chiefs and women are prohibited from participating in political organizations thereby restricting the women to the domestic sphere.

However, in some societies cultural patterns translated into activity patterns but there was no apparent built pattern. Among the Tuaregs, the men do the public low status job of herding the cattle while the women do the private high status work of learning Libyan script. The cultural patterns of public low status and private high status are not present in the built patterns of the Tuareg tent. They shows no sign of this cultural and activity pattern. I concluded that it’s not necessary that these three patterns are present simultaneously, in the same society at a given period of time. As opposed to the Tauregs, in most hierarchical societies the dichotomy of public/private considers public as high status and private as low status. This led me to the conclusion that it’s not necessary that patterns have the similar meaning cross-culturally.

I found that a number of feminist authors had misinterpreted dualities in egalitarian subsistence societies as dichotomies. There are egalitarian subsistence societies like the Navajo Indians, Acoma Indians and the Northern Plains Indians, where the division of built space is understood as harmony. I think dichotomies should not be simply classified into superior and inferior. As seen in the case of Tuaregs and the Navajo Indians it is possible that dichotomies can occur with women in a higher position than men.

In 19th and 20th century Victorian society an ideal gentleman was supposed to have serious, dignified, chivalrous qualities and an ideal lady was supposed to be moral, beautiful, cheerful and elegant. This shows that the cultural patterns were enforced upon individuals and they had to act accordingly in the society. Built patterns like massive, library, billiard room, gentlemen’s room, study, smoking room, gentleman’s odd room, Men’s Stair, Gentlemen’s stairs and Bachelor’s stairs were related to the male. Built patterns like light, drawing room, boudoir, the morning room and young ladies stairs were related to the female. There was also a commonly held belief that the women needed to be protected by men so more female rooms were seen on the first and second floor while more male rooms were seen on the ground floor.
Throughout history men have built forts and castles and developed countless forms of defense mechanisms in order to protect their beloved women and children. Traditionally women and children are assumed to be at a physical disadvantage. Men are expected by society to be the brave defenders of their family, strong not just physically but also emotionally. In the case of having women and children reside above the ground floor, a level of separation is created between them and any ill intentioned intruders. The butler slept in the basement while maids slept in the attic. There was also gender segregation in work. The butler supervised the male servants while the housekeeper’s room was positioned to supervise female servants. Activity patterns also included gentlemen with professions and the ladies as housewives. (table 4)

In a hierarchical subsistence society, among the Barasana Maloca dichotomies seemed enforced by taboos, for example: according to a local proverb, women could face being gang raped if they reversed the social order and tried to gain political power over men. In the 19th and 20th century case studies, like the Bearwood estate, there were different stairs for the young ladies and bachelors. Ladies were not supposed to enter the gentleman’s study room. I found that the degree of enforcing these dichotomies was more severe in hierarchical subsistence societies than in the 19th and 20th century Victorian societies. In the egalitarian subsistence societies women are considered almost equal to men. This made me conclude that dichotomies of gender patterns are uneven, complex and layered.

I also looked at the utopian solutions of making childcare, laundry, and food preparation community activities. These radical solutions were focused on improving the cultural, built and activity patterns simultaneously. They proposed innovative solutions like built-in furniture, roll away beds, heated tile floors, windows with decorated frames instead of curtains. They planned shared dining, kitchen, laundry, housekeeping with full time staff to run the kitchen and dining facilities. All the shared activities were designed to be in the center of the housing community. Some proposals even had daycare with window openings for neighbors to watch over the children. Unfortunately they were proposed for community and city scale and were difficult to implement and not much thought was given to personalization. (table.5)
I have evaluated these case studies comparatively based on the status of women. While it’s difficult to state a solution to accommodate the layers of gender segregation that exist within cultural, built and activity patterns, I don’t think proposing an overtly radical solution is the right direction either. Removing people from the existing system and creating a new one does not solve anything. For the culture as a whole; rather it creates a new set of problems. These complex cyclical processes are difficult to break away from and it takes ages to move in the direction of progress. To remove restrictive gender segregation we must begin to introduce cultural progress in these cycles.

Although it’s difficult to bring radical change to a culture, a good start would be through education programs and work place gender awareness campaigns. I would strongly recommend more awareness of feminist education in architecture and engineering schools. There should be more incentives and scholarships for women in traditionally male dominated professions like architecture and engineering. Learning about these patterns of gender segregation in different societies is also a way to begin this cultural progress. It is my hope that a thorough understanding of these gender patterns will lead to a new perspective in the process and understanding of design. I can envision that the issues discussed in this paper will become an acceptable part of the social value system in our society.

Now that society as a whole has recognized the inhumanity of gender discrimination, we need to create a framework for change. I believe that this can be achieved through an investigation into the cyclical system of patterns that form our society: the cultural patterns that cause us to shape the built world in order to better perform the everyday activities we all take part in. Through individual choices as designers we can begin to engineer a better future much in a same way that a genetic engineer would change the characteristic of an animal by changing one gene at a time. It is through these small changes that each of us makes, that the world will begin to remove the shackles of ancient discrimination so intrinsic to our society and begin to form a society based on human equality.
Bibliography:


