

Housing and Women's Needs: Emerging Trends in the Middle East

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Résumé

Cet article présente les résultats d'une recherche empirique sur l'expérience que les femmes égyptiennes ont de leur logement. La recherche avait comme premier objectif de comparer la satisfaction résidentielle des Égyptiennes de classe moyenne qui vivent dans des logements modernes et traditionnels en tenant compte de leurs valeurs ainsi que de leurs caractéristiques socio-démographiques. Elle visait aussi à développer des directives pour la conception et l'aménagement de logements qui répondent aux besoins et aux préférences des femmes. L'analyse montre que les femmes d'orientation plus traditionnelle sont plus nombreuses à habiter dans des logements de type traditionnel, ce qui s'explique probablement par un processus d'autosélection au sein du parc résidentiel, et que, dans l'ensemble, les logements de type moderne répondent moins bien aux besoins des femmes, peu importe leurs valeurs. Toutes les femmes ont aussi fait des modifications à leur logement pour en augmenter l'intimité et la privacité, en améliorer le confort et l'efficacité et le personnaliser. Les résultats indiquent qu'en Égypte, comme partout ailleurs, les transformations culturelles rapides créent des situations sociales confuses: des femmes ayant des orientations culturelles fort différentes coexistent dans l'espace, mais simultanément, toutes partagent un certain nombre d'idées sur les aspects importants de la tradition, notamment la manière d'assurer l'intimité, ainsi que sur l'essentielle modernisation des équipements susceptibles d'alléger les tâches domestiques.

Summary

This article reports on an empirical research carried out in Cairo on Egyptian women's experiences of their dwellings. The first aim of the research was to compare housing satisfaction among contemporary Egyptian middle-income women living in "traditional" and "modern" apartments with respect to their value orientation and socio-demographic characteristics. The second aim was to develop design guidelines for housing that would respond women's practical needs and respect their value orientation. The results indicate that more traditionally-oriented women lived in more traditional design dwellings, suggesting a self-selection process, and that, overall, modern design dwellings answered in a less adequate manner the needs of all women, no matter their value orientation. Both modern and traditional women had made physical changes to their apartments in order to increase privacy, improve practical amenities and personalize their interiors. It appears that in Egypt as elsewhere, rapid cultural change is creating a confusing social environment: women with different value orientations and

housing needs coexist in space, but also agree that certain aspects of tradition must be respected and that domestic chores must be facilitated by modernization.

1. Introduction

Creating the conditions for a harmonious relationship between cultural heritage and modern technological advancement is an issue that most developing countries have to deal with. Taking Egypt as a particular instance of this situation, this paper looks at two fundamental social issues for all cultures that have been affected by modernization since the beginning of the 20th. century including, more recently, the developing countries: women's condition and housing.

The development of modern Egypt was largely influenced by Western countries' advanced technology and professional expertise. The results can especially be seen in the shape of its cities, buildings, and particularly housing. Adopting Western architectural values while ignoring the society for which they were designing, the designers, who may or may not have had theoretical knowledge of human behaviour, became quite remote from their role as user needs' translators. In doing so, they imposed alien physical environments on Egyptian culture.

Simultaneously, several other cultural changes affected life in Egypt. During the first half of the century, Egyptians began to change their lifestyles, especially with respect to women's seclusion. Egyptian women themselves have started their struggle to gain more rights. However, the changes resulting from their implication are modest; trends about women's participation in the professional workforce still reflects a traditional bias toward gender role values. In other words, women have not yet succeeded in altering their traditional role as the basic performers of all housework.

Since both housing forms and life styles have changed in the recent past, one could easily make the hypothesis that the two domains were transformed in a clear mutual relationship. Unfortunately, rapid cultural change does not follow such a simple path. The innovations originating from this transitional period have not been without problems. In particular, contemporary housing has been designed in a way that is disassociated from the reality of people's lives.

Because the traditional Islamic house deeply symbolized Islamic culture and its view of privacy and women's seclusion - women had their own domain (i.e. the Harem) and were not allowed in the area where male guests were received-, the study of the inter-relationship between gender and cultural symbols in housing in contemporary Egypt can enlighten our understanding of cultural transformation. It can also help contextualizing Western feminist research about women and the built environment within a specific cultural heritage.

Recent feminist architectural literature has explored women's experiences in the physical environment and tried to identify their needs and preferences. These studies put a special emphasis on women's dilemmas as they attain greater and different life responsibilities. One argument, among others, is that adequately designed spaces will reduce the time women spend in performing their duties as mothers and housewives, and save them energy.

In Egypt, a society in which traditional ways of living exist side by side with modern ways, women are torn between an obedience to inherited norms - such as that of male superiority-, and their desire for change, and therefore their experience of

dwelling is ambiguous. It is the aim of this article to discuss women's dwelling experiences on the basis of an empirical research carried out in Cairo.

New values and practices being assimilated more rapidly by educated middle-class women, the study investigates these women's sociocultural and religious values in relationship to their housing satisfaction. The research had two major objectives. The first was to compare housing satisfaction among contemporary Egyptian women living in "traditional" and "modern" apartments with respect to their value orientations and socio-demographic characteristics. The framework of the analysis emphasizes the degree of assimilation of Western attitudes, and ways that contemporary women seek to create better and more adequate spaces in their environment. The second objective was to develop design guidelines for housing that would respond women's practical needs and respect their value orientations.

2. Research Method

A three stage data collection process containing both quantitative and qualitative methods was developed. The first stage consisted of an exploratory study comparing three Middle-Eastern and two American women's experiences of dwelling. A number of strong patterns emerged that were related to Middle-Eastern women's traditional and cultural beliefs and their interaction with their surrounding built environment. Thematic analysis of their answers led to believe that their ideological values affected their residential satisfaction. A major concern of the Middle-Eastern women was the need for privacy - a need primarily affected by religious beliefs and inherited cultural norms. Another major concern had to do with male domination and female subordination in the dwelling's shared spaces. These women's descriptions of their everyday experiences were used to create a value orientation scale for assessing women's cultural and ideological beliefs. The scale, which comprised five dimensions (religious practices, food habits, family relationships, women's rights, and privacy), was used for the second phase of the study.¹

In the second phase, a random sample of 120 women were interviewed in Madinet-Nasr and New-Maadi (figure 1), two newly-built middle-income housing areas located on the periphery of Cairo. The design of the New-Maadi dwellings is characterized as traditional - apartments have a private entry hallway - and those of Madinet-Nasr as modern - apartments have an entrance that opens directly to the living room. These two otherwise comparable middle-income developments are both representative of housing standards determined by the Ministry of Reconstruction, New Communities and Land Reclamation. These housing complexes were chosen after an examination of all major projects built by the three major governmental companies in charge of middle-income housing in Egypt. Both selected projects are located at about a thirty minute drive from the centre of Cairo, Madinet-Nasr being on the east side, and New-Maadi on the southwest side.

In Madinet-Nasr, all apartment buildings are arranged in a staggered way. Each block is composed of three-to four-story high buildings, depending of its location on the site and whether the units contained one, two, three or more bedrooms. The second

¹ Ultimately, the five dimensions were collapsed into four dimensions through a factor analysis of data from the second phase.

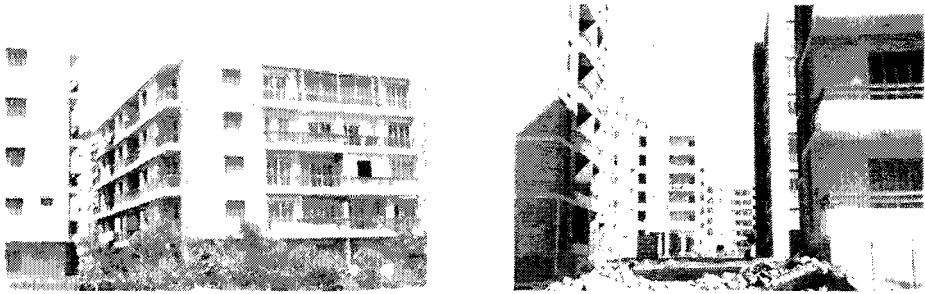


Fig. 1 Madinet-Nasr and New-Maadi Residential Settlement (traditional design)
Résidence Madinet-Nasr et New-Maadi (projet traditionnel)

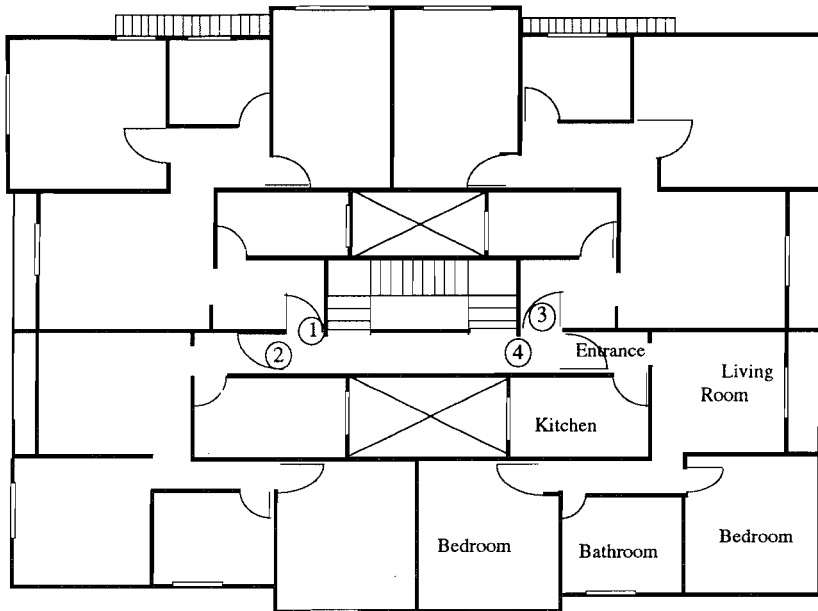


Fig. 2 Layout of New-Maadi (traditional design), Apartments' Entrance 1, 2, 3, 4
Projet de New-Maadi (projet traditionnel), entrée des appartements 1, 2, 3, 4

location, New-Maadi, has similar physical characteristics. The critical differences relate to the issue of privacy and traditional design in the dwelling units.

Sixty respondents were interviewed in each location. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes, and they were structured with close and semi-open questions grouped into four sections. The first one concerned the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, education, marital status, occupation, income, etc. The second section asked questions about respondents' perception of the structural features of their apartments as well as their satisfaction with specific physical characteristics of their residential environment. Questions related to respondents' satisfaction with the dwelling layout (entrance hallway, bathroom location, kitchen location, apartment size) as well as with their neighbourhood. The third section inquired into respondents' satisfaction with respect to privacy in specific areas of the dwelling. During the second and third sections of the interviews, women were asked questions about their daily activities and personal/cultural attitudes, the way they altered their physical surroundings, and the meanings they gave to the physical environment in which they live by changing it and adapting to it.

The last section aimed at evaluating women's "modern" vs "traditional" value orientations. It used a Likert scale for 35 statements constructed so as to reflect women's degree of agreement with traditional Egyptian beliefs and practices as specified in the Koran and classical Islamic literature. This part of the questionnaire allowed to identify women's ideological position and to classify respondents into two major groups: "traditional" and "modern."

It is important to indicate that a number of difficulties occurred during this portion of the field work, a major obstacle being that it was not possible to interview women without the presence of their male guardians. This most likely affected the results of the survey.

Data from the survey questionnaire were analyzed to examine correlations among the variables selected for the study. The result of this analysis indicated that the relationship between women's values and housing satisfaction was much more complex than originally anticipated. This finding led to an additional qualitative ethnographic stage in the study to further explore women's individual experiences through in-depth interviews. This third stage added depth and detail to the statistical results which could only indicate global patterns. The major themes of the interview were partly dictated by the findings revealed in the statistical analysis. A portion of each interview was left to interviewees to be directed in any way they wanted, so they could express their satisfaction, frustrations, and hopes without interference. The intention was to report the facts within the confines of their everyday life, and to discover new phenomena that could elucidate inconsistencies that appeared during the second stage of the research.

Eight participants (4 in each site) were chosen - through a snowball selection process - to represent various degrees of modernism and traditionalism. The first informant from each site was a non-working "traditional" women; the second, a working "traditional" women; the third, a non-working "modern" women; and the last one, a working "modern" women. All eight women were in their thirties, with one to three children. Observations regarding women's uses of specific spaces in the house, and detailed descriptions of their daily activities were recorded as the interviews proceeded. Male guardians were not present in this phase of the study.

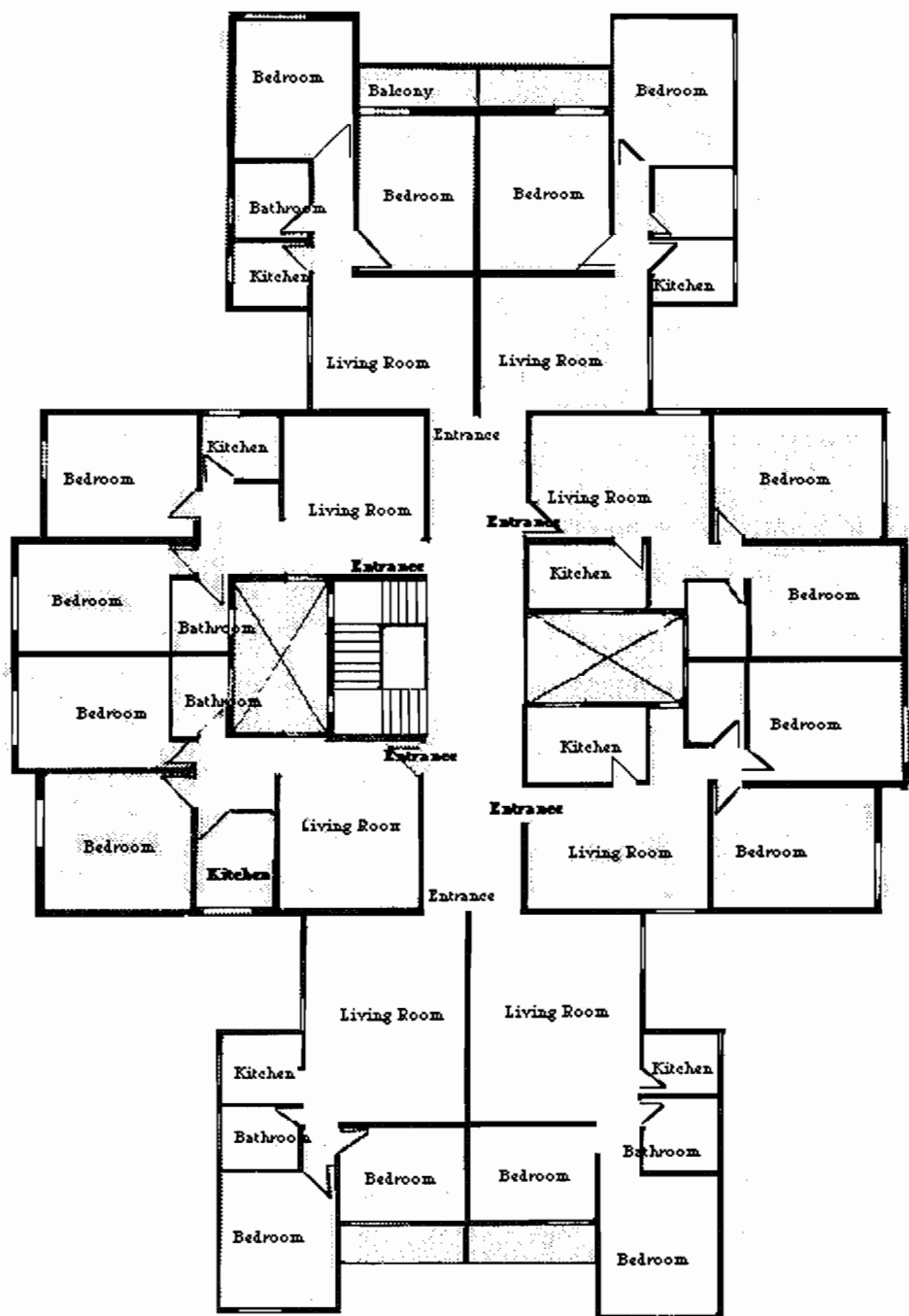


Fig. 3 "Modern Design" Dwelling in Madinet-Nasr
Plan d'habitat "moderne" à Madinet-Nasr

3. Survey Results

Data collected revealed that the two groups of respondents were demographically about equivalent. Levels of education were somewhat higher in New-Maadi (traditional design), while slightly more respondents in Madinet-Nasr (modern design) worked outside the home. These middle-income women were in majority highly educated, participated in the work force in large proportions, and had rather small families compared to Egyptian women in general (Table 1).

	Madinet-Nasr Modern Design		New-Maadi Traditional Design	
AGE				
18-25	13	22%	21	36%
25-35	27	46%	26	43%
Greater than 35	19	32%	12	20%
TOTAL	59	100%	59	99%
EDUCATION				
Elementary School	6	10%	2	3%
High School	14	23%	15	25%
University Level	12	20%	8	14%
Graduate Level	28	47%	34	58%
TOTAL	60	100%	59	98%
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS				
Non-Working	23	38%	29	48%
Working Part-Time	9	15%	7	13%
Working Full-Time	28	47%	23	38%
TOTAL	60	100%	59	99%
LENGTH OF RESIDENCY				
3 years or less	19	34%	13	22%
Between 3 and 6 years	21	35%	27	44%
More than 6 years	16	29%	20	33%
TOTAL	56	98%	59	99%
APARTMENT TYPE				
One bedroom	23	38%	24	41%
Two bedroom	37	62%	35	58%
TOTAL	60	100%	59	99%
FAMILY SIZE				
Two persons	8	13%	10	17%
Three persons	21	35%	11	18%
Four persons	24	40%	27	45%
Five and more	7	12%	11	18%
TOTAL	60	100%	59	98%

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the 120 Women Surveyed, According to the "Traditional" or "Modern" Design of their Dwelling

As already mentioned, the relationship between housing satisfaction and women's values was far more complex than originally anticipated. This relationship varied depending on, among other things, the informants' age, career status, traditional beliefs,

and perceptions about male-female relationships and equal rights. Table 2 describes the relationship between respondents' satisfaction with apartment size in modern design dwellings and their age. A significant chi-square indicates a higher percentage of dissatisfaction among older age women.

Age/Satisfaction	Adequate	%	Not adequate	%	Total (n)	%
18-25	7	12%	5	8%	12	20%
25-35	5	8%	18	30%	23	38%
35 and more	5	8%	20	33%	25	42%
Total	17	28%	43	72%	60	100%

Chi-Square = 6.7 / Signif. = 0.04

Table 2: Satisfaction with Apartment Size in Modern Design Dwellings, According to Respondents' Age

When analyses were run on data from New-Maadi (traditional design dwellings), significant results were obtained by comparing respondents' age and satisfaction with their apartment size. As for respondents living in modern design dwellings of Madinet-Nasr, dissatisfaction with the apartment size increased with age (Table 3). Older respondents and those with longer residency are significantly less satisfied with apartment size, room size, and number of rooms in both projects. It is evident from these results that older age women with growing families need more space in their dwellings.

Age/Satisfaction	Adequate	%	Not adequate	%	Total (n)	%
18-25	7	12%	13	22%	20	33%
25-35	4	7%	12	20%	16	27%
35 and more	5	8%	19	32%	24	40%
Total	16	27%	44	73%	60	100%

Chi-Square = 6.7 / Signif. = 0.04

Table 3: Satisfaction with Apartment Size in Traditional Design Dwellings, According to Respondents' Age

Overall satisfaction was found to be higher in New-Maadi's traditional design than in Madinet-Nasr's modern design. In sum, the survey indicates that satisfaction

with housing is a function of both respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and the physical characteristics of housing and neighbourhood.

Looking in greater detail at women's "traditional" versus "modern" values, as measured by their ratings of the 35 statements described above, a general acceptance of male superiority was found. However, there were notable differences in the way respondents indicated their disagreement with modern ideologies, reflecting an ambivalent feeling between respecting the authority of the male guardian and deciding about their own career.

In order to identify how the major dimensions of Egyptian traditional beliefs might affect residential satisfaction, responses on the 35 statements were correlated and factor-analyzed. Thirty-two of the statements were grouped into four major dimensions: strength of belief in religious rules, needs for women's privacy, denial of equal rights, and religious restrictions on women's behaviours. The next step was to explore the relationship between respondents' value system and their degree of satisfaction with housing design. Tables 4 and 5 describe the relationship between women's satisfaction, their value orientation and the design type of their dwellings. The analysis indicates that more traditionally-oriented women lived in more traditional design dwellings, suggesting a self-selection process. Among the women who lived in modern design dwellings, traditionally-oriented women were more likely to be dissatisfied compared to more emancipated women. Comparing the overall satisfaction of respondents from both housing projects with their average score on values, it was found that the majority of respondents expressed middle-ranged degree of satisfaction and values, and that "modern" women were more likely to be dissatisfied.

Dwelling Type	Traditional Value-Oriented Women Degree of Satisfaction			
	Very	Neutral	Dissatisfied	TOTAL
Traditional	17 27%	21 33%	5 8%	43 68%
Modern	3 5%	11 17%	6 10%	20 32%
Total	20 32%	32 51%	11 17%	63 100%

Table 4: Satisfaction with Dwelling of Traditionally-Oriented Women According to the Design Type of the Dwellings in Which they Live

	Modern Value-Oriented Women Degree of Satisfaction			
Dwelling Type	Very	Neutral	Dissatisfied	TOTAL
Traditional	6 11%	5 9%	5 9%	16 29%
Modern	9 16%	20 36%	11 20%	40 71%
Total	15 27%	25 45%	16 29%	56 100%

Table 5: Satisfaction with Dwelling of Modern-Oriented Women According to the Design Type of the Dwellings in Which they Live

Analysis also revealed significant differences in overall satisfaction among the respondents when the types of dwellings were confronted to women's value orientations, that is, their strength of belief in religious rules. On the one hand, a larger number of "traditional" women living in traditional design dwellings, compared to "modern" women, indicated that their dwelling met their needs (Table 6). On the other hand, "traditional" women living in modern design dwellings indicated, in a larger proportion than "modern" women, that their dwelling did not meet their needs (Table 7). Even among women who had "modern" values, the majority thought their dwellings did not meet their needs; neither were they satisfied with traditional dwellings (even though in this case the number of women interviewed was small). Overall, modern design dwellings seem to answer in a less adequate manner the needs of all interviewed women, no matter their value orientation.

Women's Value Orientation	Dwelling meeting needs %		Dwelling not meeting needs %		Total (n) %	
Traditional values	30	55%	16	30%	46	85%
Modern values	2	4%	6	11%	8	15%
Total	32	69%	22	41%	54	100%

Table 6: Degree of Fitness between Traditional Design Dwellings and Women's Needs, According to their Strength of Belief in Religious Rules

Women's Value Orientation	Dwelling meeting needs %		Dwelling not meeting needs %		Total (n) %	
Traditional values	1	2%	13	25%	14	27%
Modern values	14	27%	23	45%	37	73%
Total	15	29%	36	70%	51	100%

Table 7: Degree of Fitness between Modern Design Dwellings and Women's Needs, According to their Strength of Belief in Religious Rules

The results of this first stage of the study yield to a set of observations and raised issues that were further analyzed in the qualitative part of the study exposed below. It explores the degree of fitness between women's changing sociocultural values and their residential experiences.

4. Qualitative Results

Several themes included in the survey questionnaire were further developed during the in-depth interviews in order to reconstruct women's point of views about their surroundings housing environment. Some of the important issues that emerged from these interviews are "privacy", "time and space", and "personalization of space and identity". The eight informants had definite ideas about what their ideal home should be. Also, their biographical descriptions indicate that feminist perspectives impacted, positively or negatively, their understanding of Egyptian cultural norms. These propositions influenced their conception of their ideal dwelling.

4.1. Privacy

Feelings about privacy revealed by women's interactions with their dwellings, indicate that visual privacy is critical within the context of their cultural value system. All eight women were clearly struggling with traditional religious restrictions in relationship to privacy, and this struggle was especially apparent in the "modern" apartments where the entrance gave directly into the family living room. In fact, both "modern" and "traditional" informants made physical changes to their homes in order to increase privacy, especially in the entrance area where control over social interaction is a major cultural requirement. They all achieved greater privacy by somehow cutting off visual access into the kitchen's cooking area, and by separating the public and private domains of their home using curtains or swinging doors.

Moreover, the interviews confirm that women were primarily responsible for domestic chores on a day-to-day basis. Most women indicated that they preferred to

have a traditional kitchen with a closed door to minimize visual access from the guest room area. In addition, a common requirement was to be able to watch their families from the kitchen. To answer these needs for privacy, the majority had added a half swinging door. The importance of the kitchen as women's domain, especially in Middle-Eastern cultures, was clearly confirmed by the interviews with both "traditional" and "modern" women and the observations of their dwellings.

Windows were another critical issue in relationship to privacy. Women complained that they were being observed by neighbours. To overcome this problem, they either kept their windows shut, had changed their locations or added double curtains.

Another problematic aspect related to the need to separate, first, the public and private areas of the apartment - private space for family life and public space to share with guests -, and, second, the male and female private domains. A common solution was to maintain a formal guest area - an unused area except for certain occasions throughout the year - while providing a private family living room for everyday activities; the second bedroom was often converted into a living room, creating a private social area for the family. The guest area was important in traditional houses. It was then combined with a family living room in which women spent most of their time, and accomplished some domestic chores such as ironing. However, this combination of living spaces is not present in the apartments of the women interviewed. With regard to the male/female domain separation, some women had converted the balcony into an extra room in order to separate boys from girls, as required by the Islamic religion. To answer their need for privacy some women expressed a desire for a work room or multipurpose room for either relaxation or as personal space for themselves.²

In essence, visual privacy is a need that must be addressed through housing design in Islamic culture. The lack of privacy in apartment was a serious frustration among all interviewed women. They were engaging in cultural interpretations of their newly-built dwelling when they tried to alter them. Women's efforts to overcome inappropriate designs to answer their cultural needs indicate that special attention should be paid to specific design features (for instance, a private entrance hallway and a private living room) in contemporary housing to ease cultural change while accommodating tradition.

4.2. *Time and Space*

Time and space are two variables that were closely associated to each other by all interviewed women, especially working women. For example, working women expressed the need for a better transportation system to get to work on time, and to reach facilities, such as shopping centres and health services, without additional burden.

All women were also primarily concerned about dwelling amenities that would allow them to save time and energy in performing their domestic chores. For example, they express the need for a more efficient and larger kitchen to accommodate major activities such as eating, washing, and cooking. Their suggestions regarding the kitchen's space included enough counter spaces to accommodate electrical appliances,

² This area could also function as a work station for professional women who have to finish part of their work at home.

enough space for a movable table and chairs for everyday meals, enough storage space, and cupboards placed at an adequate height for the typically smaller stature of women.

As an example of women's practical perception of the kitchen, they inserted various storage spaces which constituted a major weakness in all the apartments. Each woman described her frustration with the lack of storage, and all tried to overcome this problem in many clever and decorative ways. Different additions were created for storage spaces such as: using the corridor height by adding a false ceiling, enclosing the space under the sink in the bathroom or the kitchen with decorative doors and cabinets, building closets with colourful doors on balconies, etc.

Findings related to time and space indicate that women want modernization to diminish their work load even though they keep traditional values as a way of life. They also show that "modern" oriented women, although they have modern ideas regarding equality and career, must still split their time between their domestic chores and work.

4.3. Personalization of Space

Another common pattern among all the respondents is the way they personalized domestic space. Women experienced a great deal of satisfaction in decorating and modifying the interior of their apartment, for instance, by adding partition doors, curtains, fireplaces, wallpaper, etc. These elements, while providing privacy in the family area, also expressed women's cultural identity. Indeed, the personalization of their dwellings - especially the modern design ones - reflected Egyptian Islamic culture with its traditions.

"Modern" women tended to add more stylish furniture such as fireplaces and different kind of ornaments (wall paper and statues), whereas "traditional" women mostly adapted their environment to answer their needs for privacy and to separate male and female domains. Thus, sliding doors, partitions, and curtains. The findings indicate that the personalization of space is an important way for women to state out their own territory in a male-dominated society.

The living rooms of the apartments in which women lived, located nearby the front door in a Western manner, did not answer Egyptian's cultural need for a private family room where only close friends and relatives are allowed. The family room needs to be more related to the bedrooms than the front door. All eight women reacted to this inappropriate arrangement by transforming the second bedroom or an enclosed section of the balcony into a family room. Decoration and other expressions of the family tastes and resources were commonly displayed in the formal guest rooms since the family room is a private space not to be seen by strangers.

5. Women, Space, Cultural Transformations and Design

Feminist research on women-environment relationship has shown how difficult it is for women to operate in a man-made physical environment. The present research pointed out that Egyptian women also have to survive in a man-made traditional value system that imposes very strict limitations on their behaviours. However, in Egypt as elsewhere, rapid cultural transformations are challenging traditional social patterns and structures, but creating at the same time a confusing social situation that calls for a reflection on the impact of social values and cultural meanings on housing design.

The analysis presented here revealed two different perspectives in the way contemporary Egyptian women believe they can reach their full human development. On the one hand, all working women, "modern" and "traditional", believed in women's right to political participation, economic independence, and social equality. They had critical ideas about sexual equality and were willing to compete in two areas: family life and career. However, they were faced with the challenge of both career and home life. Great tensions existed between their daily responsibilities and the constraints surrounding these responsibilities, one of them being their daily travel to jobs on inefficient public transportation. However, the major constraint on women's lives is that the new generation of professional women has not succeeded in altering traditional beliefs about women's roles in the home.

The results presented show that, on the other hand, non-working women tended to believe that they should not compete in career life with men because they are weaker in nature: their daily activities should be devoted to their families. The activities of the non-working women revealed an intimate world connected to old beliefs (i.e. a women's place is in the home). Their attitude can be attributed to strong cultural beliefs and structures. Most of the decision-making power for these non-working women is in fact held by their husbands. They have to live with male superiority and male financial domination. In fact, the two traditionally-oriented non-working women had been so affiliated with Islamic gender ideologies that, during the interviews, it was not easy for them to express their own personal feelings. They upheld Islamic religious rules and had accepted an unequal relationship with their husband. They seemed to completely neglect their own needs, their daily activities being mainly devoted to the fulfilment of the family's well-being. Their husbands were responsible for all basic financial needs, which created a money-power relationship between husband-wife. The husbands had more to say in all family decisions, were typically very dominant, and demanded special treatment. However, the wives, in these cases, had more control over the household domain. They could change anything they wanted in the home regarding its arrangements or rules. Nevertheless, their power or equality remained minimal.

The presence of groups of women with so different needs and value orientations necessarily challenges any housing design policy. If there is a definite need for reconsidering women's position in Egypt from an equalitarian point of view, and for supporting this change through the built environment, one must also accommodate the demands of more traditional households. A resolution of this situation calls for a better understanding of the actual needs of women at different stages of development, where both traditional and modern values coexist.

The research showed that "modern" value-oriented women want to retain part of the tradition and that "traditional" value-oriented women obviously desire some degree of modernization in their everyday life. Such ambiguity between traditional and contemporary values are becoming a major issue for responsible housing design, especially if one considers that contemporary Egyptian architecture appears to accommodate neither new ideas, norms, beliefs, and lifestyles, nor traditional ones, serving a logic of its own, without much input from either tradition or new social trends.

Assessing the impact of the findings on apartment "re-design", one should first note the degree to which Egyptian women are struggling to maintain their culture. For instance, in all types of households, enduring traditional activities are manifested in specific spaces of the housing environment, such as celebrating religious ceremonies, thus reaffirming the interconnectedness between existential acts and traditional cultural

the workforce and want to gain autonomy - to lead productive professional and personal lives. Findings revealed in the study suggest that field work, taking women's perspective into consideration, needs to be carried out extensively in various cultural contexts in order to monitor these on-going cultural transformations and to inform the housing design process.