

Gendered Spaces at Home

Feminine and Masculine Traits in Domestic Interiors

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Abstract

As a cultural product, the home and its settings are shaped according to social norms and characteristics. Throughout history, domestic interiors continuously changed as a mirror of Feminine and Male roles in society. This paper focuses on the analysis of domestic interiors from the modern age until present times, describing and depicting cases of spatial segregation and specialization based on the gender of its users or occupants. The historical account that is portrayed revisits the domestic arrangements where genderization was more evident, namely bedrooms, kitchen and, at times, rooms for specific uses or functions. The goal of the study is to understand in which manner gender roles and society's views of gender character and behaviour have impacted domestic interiors and living modes. The produced scholarship shows that the former have indeed determined the latter and that from the beginning of the modern era until today western society has witnessed a cyclical evolution: from degendered spaces to highly segregated homes, from these to spatial democratizing and, finally, from a democratic home to a return to segregating models. The study concludes that domestic interiors were and somewhat continue to be greatly determined by social concepts of gender attributes, hierarchy and behaviour. Furthermore, although the paper focuses only on western homes, being limited by this context, further research could be developed on the analysis of gendered spaces in other cultures, societies and geographic contexts, to consolidate enlightenment on the subject.

Keywords: gendered spaces, home, feminine and masculine spaces, gender segregation, equitable or segregating use of space

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope and Objectives

“(…) building a house is a cultural phenomenon, its form and organization are greatly influenced by the cultural milieu to which it belongs. (…) inside the dwelling, symbolic attitudes account for the prevalence of symbolic space distribution in the house (…).” (Rapoport, 1969, pp. 46-54)

As Rapoport (1969) stated when composing his work “House Form and Culture”, housing is a cultural and social product, whose characteristics are influenced and determined by the society that develops and creates it. As such, it is vulnerable to social change, consequently reflecting the dominant inhabiting modes and social models and transforming itself when both evolve and change. Mirroring differences between Man and Woman and their roles in society, family and in the household, dwelling spaces tend to absorb functions and characteristics attributed to gender stereotypes. Throughout the history of domestic interiors, in various moments and home types, spaces were exclusively assigned to a specific gender, thus segregating the domestic layout and the domestic use of space. Much like a household, whose members played distinct roles (both inside the family unit and in society), so did the various spaces in a home distinguish themselves according to the gender they were assigned to - or designed for - in several ways.

Space typology, location in the home layout and furnishings are a few of the aspects where gender segregation at home is most noticeable. Through times, and especially during the 20th century, motivated by social change, domestic interiors moved towards becoming more democratic and gender segregation tended to attenuate or cease altogether. To this more egalitarian use of space contributed numerous factors, inter alia the continuous decreasing size of homes (due to urban popular growth and consequent housing crisis), both in area and number of compartments. Also, a new approach to

marriage and the family unit, which became smaller, more nuclear; and the role of women in the household and society, abandoning their role as housewives and playing an active part both socially and professionally are considered deciding factors.

This paper focuses on the analysis of the evolution of dwelling spaces, discussing their gender identity, by studying the progressive transformation that occurred from gender segregation to a more equitable use of domestic interiors, examining various moments in the history of domestic interiors to document this evolution.

The historical account presented in this study shows that gender segregation was, at times, a consequence of power relations (Rezeanu, 2015; Rendell, 2003) and later, a response to socially defined spheres – public/private or productive/reproductive (Rezeanu, 2015; Rendell, 2003; Ahrentzen, Levine & Michelson, 1989). As Spain (1992, p. 140) claims, “houses are the spatial context within which the social order is reproduced”. A similar point of view is expressed by Hanson (1998) who asserts that “(...) the internal organization of the space of the dwelling presents a fairly precise map of social relations of the members of the household.”

The objective of the study is, hence, the analysis of gendered spaces at home, while also examining the social traits that underlay home use, spatial definition and spatial properties. Ascertaining both aspects is essential to understanding domestic interiors’ design and the evolution of space use that has shaped contemporary homes and living modes. As such, the importance of this investigation lies in its subject: understanding and recognizing living patterns throughout history while examining the social aspects that led to their development. Further knowledge on this relationship is considered vital to better comprehend historical and contemporary living spaces and patterns.

As a result, the research question that is posed is how gender issues and social views of gender have influenced domestic spatial definition in western culture, from the modern era until today.

Bearing in mind this question, one hypothesis has been formulated: gendered spaces are proposed, created and transformed according to social characteristics and social change, namely society’s views of male and female roles - behaviour and hierarchy.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Bearing this scope and objectives in mind, the study draws from several authors’ works, from different scientific areas – sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, architecture and architecture history – in an attempt to depict the evolution of western domestic interiors, its form, functionality and uses, from the perspective of the gender of its occupants. While some authors focus mainly on the description of spatial characteristics (Eleb & Debarre, 1989 and 1995; Kerr, 1871; Pereira, 2011; Rybczynsky, 2001; Zabalbeascoa, 2011; Moreira & Farias, 2017), some narrate the history of western society, the private and public life (Ariès & Duby, 1990; Hall, 1990; Perrot, 1990; Prost, 1991; Singly, 2001) and others elaborate on gender issues and gender segregation in the domestic environment (Ahrentzen, Levine & Michelson, 1989; Butler, 1971; McClintock, 1995; Rendell, Penner & Borden, 2003; Rezeanu, 2015; Spain, 1992; Barcelona City Council [BCC], 2019). The present study’s intent is to aggregate this previous knowledge and build upon it, addressing the evolution of western homes and society regarding gendered use of the domestic spaces, from medieval times to present day.

The question of gendered domestic spaces has had few development or mention in recent years. This realization prompted the research on the theme, considered timely as it proposes a reignition of the subject. In a time when western societies have been debating gender issues and gender segregation, the present study looks at domestic architecture as an important cultural product, one that mirrors and conveys social aspects and views regarding gender roles, proposing to understand how social norms influenced and determined living patterns and home organization.

1.3 Methodology

As afore mentioned, the study of gendered spaces in the domestic environment is based on a historical account and description of house plan and house use in several eras in the western context, from the modern age until present times. This chronology of gendered spaces was grounded on a literary review and a collection of house plans and photographs that describe and depict domestic space use, either in a segregating or unifying manner.

The account starts with examples in the modern age – the European medieval home, the French noble homes of the 17th to 19th centuries, the French bourgeois homes and the English Victorian country homes of the 19th century - all representatives of use segregation based on gender. Ensuing these periods, the study features the early signs of democratizing the domestic setting – the 17th century Dutch home and domesticity and the 19th century North-American domesticity forged by (mostly female) Household Engineers. Finally, the account arrives at the 20th century and the Modern Movement’s ideals for space saving homes and individual roles (in society and inside the family unit), when gendered spaces progressively disappeared. The historical report ends in present times when new forms of spatial segregation, some based on gender, are arising, mostly as a consequence of the need for privacy and the importance of

the individual and individuality (the need to be alone or possess a private or exclusive space).

The analysis of gendered spaces throughout history will enable the identification of the social aspects and patterns that generated the described domestic interiors, and the realization of how transformations in society have impacted the design of the home. This scholarship is essential to the comprehension of western homes (even the present-times dwellings, which are the result of the evolution of their predecessors) and also the living modes and patterns that shape domestic arrangements and the process of how this comes to happen.

2. History of Female and Male Spaces at Home

In this section an historical report of domestic interiors is presented, starting with examples of clear gender segregation and spatial definition based on sex and its differences and traits, and proceeding with domestic arrangements that show progressive democratic layouts and uses.

Concepts of *intimacy*, *segregation*, *domesticity*, *hierarchy*, *democratic use of space* and *individuality*, referred throughout the text, are paramount in this analysis and represent the evolution and transformation that occurred in the domestic setting: from segregation to equitability, and the recent return to separateness.

2.1 Specialization, Intimacy and Segregation

Before the emergence of concepts like function, intimacy, privacy and comfort the segregation of housing spaces did not exist. When analysing the medieval home, we realize that it functioned like an extension of a public space, solely comprising one big hall where all activities took place and all actors came to be, act and interact. As Rybczynsky (2001, p. 34) put it, “since there was no such thing as ‘pure function’ it was difficult for the medieval mind to consider functional improvements (...).”

This was the characterization of a typical European home up until the 17th Century, when specialization of living spaces commenced along with allocation of specific functions to certain spaces. While living spaces started transforming, societies started evolving too with the alteration of gender roles in public and private life. Family structures and the dichotomy of public-private life became the determinant factors in domestic interiors design and definition. Social transformations and living spaces specialization combined resulted in the differentiation of domestic compartments according to the gender of its occupants, making way to exclusively male or female spaces. Eleb and Debarre (1989, p.235) mention the existence of a correlation between domestic layout and social structure stating that “space was a specific conception of man-woman interactions, as well as a specific conception of different roles and statuses.” A similar point of view is expressed by Prost (1991, p. 40), who avers that “spatial specialization breaks with conjugal equality and turns the woman into a servant.”

In wealthier households, between the 17th and 19th Century, a relevant trait of the family unit thus transpired in home layouts: the separation of intimate spaces by gender, each in a different ‘wing’ – the French *appartement*. Man and Woman started living independent lives, a reflection of conjugality models of that time – family alliance, marriage of convenience, union for social purposes (social image and prominence). The lack of intimacy and the couple’s detachment led to a split and separation of their private and intimate spaces (in Eleb and Debarre’s *Architectures de la Vie Privée* (1989). The chateau de Vaux-le-Vicomte is a perfect illustration of such separation [fig. 1].



[1] Masculine (4 to 6; highlighted in darker shade) and Feminine (1 to 3; highlighted in lighter shade) separate appartements (Eleb & Debarre, 1989: p.62)

However, gender segregation was not only apparent in the separation of sleeping chambers. Bourgeois and noble domestic interiors display other specifically gender assigned spaces. According to Eleb and Debarre (1989, p.58-236):

“The 17th century is characterized by the creation of exclusively feminine spaces: with rapport to women’s role, the ‘chambre de parade’ is a place where the ‘lady of the house’ entertains visitors. Sometime later the ‘boudoir’ appears, a place of intimacy where the matron retires to. The ‘boudoir’ is defined as an intimate female space, closed and dark, adjacent to the sleeping chamber and the toilette, and very well decorated.

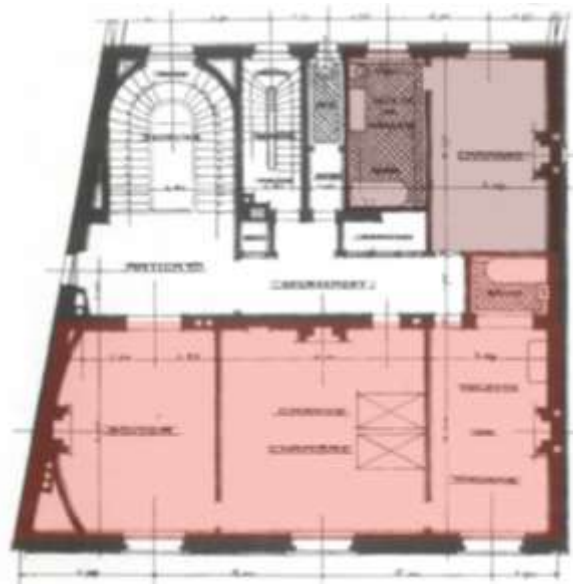
(...)

The ‘boudoir’ is an 18th century invention that corresponds to a new perception of the life of women. (...). The ‘boudoir’ is regarded as the place for lust.”

Gender segregation in domestic layout design during the 17th and 18th Century is the result of social relations and family structure. This resulted in the invention of feminine spaces – the sleeping chamber and its satellite compartments, with great relevance for the *boudoir*, a feminine haven ([fig. 2] depicts this arrangement), a space that was present in bourgeois and noble homes until the mid-19th century and eventually disappeared, due to alterations in the role of women in society and inside the family unit. Although still present in some cases, its character and function changed, losing its gender specific character, by becoming a less intimate space when moved to a different location, in the adjacency of the more social areas, as the *salon* (Eleb & Debarre, 1989).

The masculine counterparts for these feminine spaces comprise the masculine sleeping chamber and the study, both of which had a semi-public character and could be used as smoking rooms. In some homes the masculine bedroom did not exist and the madam-assigned sleeping chamber was shared between husband and wife, in which case, the male study normally had a bed:

“The Marquis de Saint-Papoul transformed the small room [petit salon] into his study. Lady de Saint-Papoul kept to herself the woodwork room, which is the largest... As a principle, M. de Saint-Papoul shares the room with his wife. But sometimes he lies alone, in his study, in a comfortable settee built into the library bookcases.” (1)



[2] Hôtel Avenue de Ségur, Paris, architect. G. Vaudoyer – female-assigned quarters as the primary and in greater number and surface, with two single beds. (Eleb & Debarre, 1995: p.144) (highlighted in lighter shade are the female-assigned rooms; male-assigned rooms in darker shade)

The 19th Century witnessed a number of transformations, both socially and in domestic interiors’ layout, especially regarding gendered spaces. One of the most significant social changes is that of the role of Man and Woman in society, which took place with the French Revolution, firstly in France and then sprawling in the European continent, deepening and consolidating gender differences and rights (2). This event “accentuates the definition of public and private spheres, values the family, differentiates sexual roles, opposing political men to domestic women” (Hall, 1990, p. 17). Man became a public *persona*, the superior sex, while woman was bound to private life, indoors, focused on her household and dependant on her spouse (Eleb & Debarre, 1989). This new social dynamic had significant consequences in the

domestic space, architectural plans, and theoretical treatises. It also highlighted male supremacy. Homes were designed and conceived having masculine spaces for socializing and allocating the noblest rooms to male gender activities:

“Although often absent, the father rules the home. He has his own rooms: smoking room and billiard, where men retire to to talk after mundane dinners; the library because books – and the love of books – continue to be masculine affairs; the study (...)”(3)

“The billiard room as well as the gentleman’s study (...), lead us to notice that all socializing spaces other than the parlour are masculine.

(...)

The rooms specifically designed for social purposes are masculine, the smoking room or the billiard room. The primary bedroom is no longer the female’s (when this is still detached) and it tends to become a shared conjugal chamber.” (4)

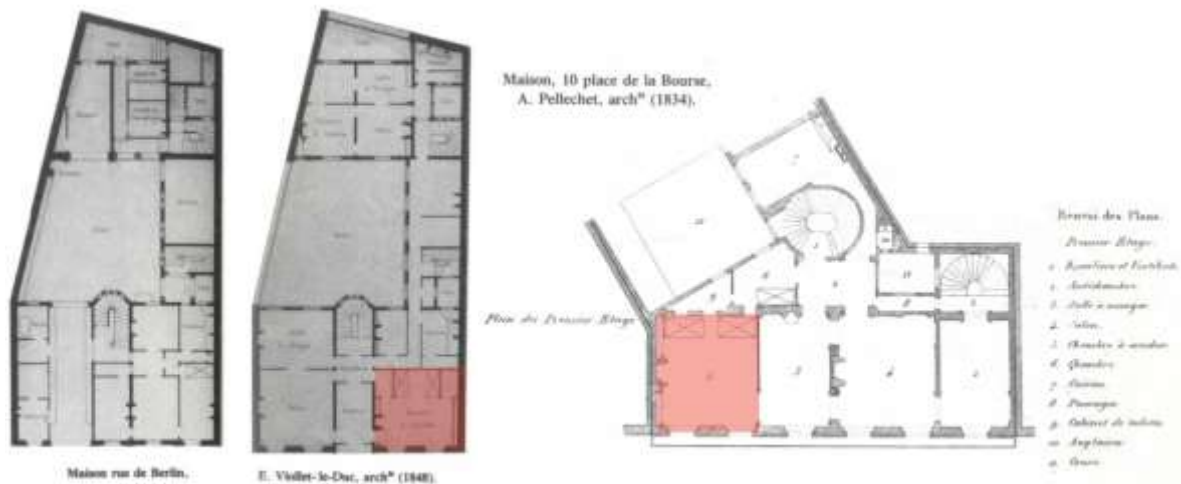
In England, evangelicals within the Anglican Church also promoted gender disparity, believing each had a different role in society (Hall, 1990). In this context, a new conception of home for the upper classes arises – the country home, a place for family life where “no longer would genders mingle (...). (...) smoking rooms, strictly reserved for men, and small rooms, mainly for ladies. The whole house was divided in masculine and feminine territories” (Hall, 1990, p.85). To Rezeanu (2015, p. 17), “women were conventionally placed in spaces associated with body care and emotional tasks (socialization and child caring) while men with mind-related work, leisure time, and prestige”. This Victorian dwelling model, a reflection of idealized domesticity, “represents a case study of the relationship between spatially segregated housing and gender stratification. (...). Each room in the country house was designed for a single purpose, and each territory (except the nursery) was divided into male and female areas” (Spain, 1992, p. 112). *The Gentleman’s House; or How to Plan English Residences*, by Robert Kerr (1871) indicated which rooms were exclusively destined to man and woman, its characteristics and how they should be used. Apart from spatial segregation, gender characteristics were also conveyed through interior design. Rezeanu (2015) refers to decoration manuals of the 19th Century England that described how to style gendered spaces, equating lighter colours with feminine spaces (parlour, reception room and morning room, for example) and darker ones with masculine rooms (dining room, smoking room, billiard room, library and studio).

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the ground floor plans of two different English country homes, exemplified by Kerr (1871), both designed having specific spaces for male and female activities – *drawing room* for ladies and *billiard room*, *library*, *gentleman’s room* and *dressing room* for men. It is also interesting to realize gender separation was desired not only for the owners’ use of the house but also the servants’, as is seen in figure 3 with a duplication of service stairs – *men’s stairs* and *women’s stairs*.



[3] [4] English country houses. (Kerr, 1871, plate 31 and plate 26) (Female-assigned rooms in lighter shade; male-assigned rooms in darker shade)

In the post-revolution home, as a consequence of Man being regarded as superior, both socially as well as inside the family unit and the domestic space, feminine spaces diminished and female chambers ceased to be the primary ones, as they use to be in the 17th and 18th Century. Further, progressively split sleeping rooms were abolished, and the conjugal bedroom became the norm. Despite this tendency, in French Bourgeois *hotels*, a diversity of variations of gendered sleeping arrangements can be found: two separate *appartements*, male and female; two separate bedrooms with a shared *toilette*; a conjugal bedroom with separate male and female annex spaces; or a conjugal bedroom with common annex spaces. The latter [fig. 4 and 5] configuration is replicated more often and persists as *canon*, mostly due to the aforementioned cultural and social transformations and the tendency to reduce the total area of the home, which in turn is accomplished by diminishing the number of compartments that comprise it (Eleb & Debarre, 1995, pp. 141-143).



[4] [5] Two examples of homes with conjugal bedrooms with two single beds (highlighted in colour) – House in Rue de Berlin, by Viollet-le-Duc, 1848, and Place de la Bourse 10, by Pellechet, 1834 (Eleb & Debarre, 1989, pp. 80-81)

In this first analysis of domestic interiors history, focusing on European homes of the 17th to 19th Century, it is apparent that since the moment dwelling spaces started to have specific functions gender segregation became a way of defining the use of the house and its layout. Rooms were designed and positioned in plan according to the gender of the user assigned to it and some spaces were the exclusive domain of a specific gender. In these gendered spaces, segregation was apparent not only in planned and built domestic layout but also in effective house use since in a unisex space the disparate gender would not be welcome or would feel like an alien in a foreign territory.

Space typology, location in the home layout and furnishings are a few of the aspects where gender segregation at home was most noticeable.

The following section addresses cultures and homes where social views of gender roles resulted in less segregated domestic settings, focusing on cases where women had centre stage, albeit still not considered socially equal to men.

2.2 From 'Lady of the House' to 'Housewife' and the Democratizing of Space

Contrary to the evolution of the bedroom as described above, from independent spaces to a common room, the kitchen has undergone a reverse change.

Dutch homes of the 17th Century, as per Rybczynski (2001), were characterized as having a feminine atmosphere. The author highlights the 'feminization' of the home as a relevant evolution in domestic interiors and defends that it made possible the conception and realization of the home as a more intimate space, giving birth to the concept of *domesticity* (5). An important aspect of this 'feminization' of the 17th Century Dutch home is the elevation of the kitchen, a feminine space, to one of the most important rooms in the domestic layout and organization and in one's family life. The 17th Century Dutch home is the only European example, among bourgeois or noble living patterns, of a place where the kitchen was considered as the stage for the lady of the house (6).

Generally, and throughout the rest of the European continent, in middle and higher class's homes, the kitchen continued to be viewed as a service area, pertaining to household work/chores and the domain of the house help (Cromley, 1996; Salvador, 2014), located in the back of the home, far from living and entertaining spaces. It was only in the 20th Century, when, as a consequence of the reduction of the number of servants and the decrease of space and area of the home, the bourgeois woman started developing a more domestic role and the kitchen thus gained a feminine character (Eleb &

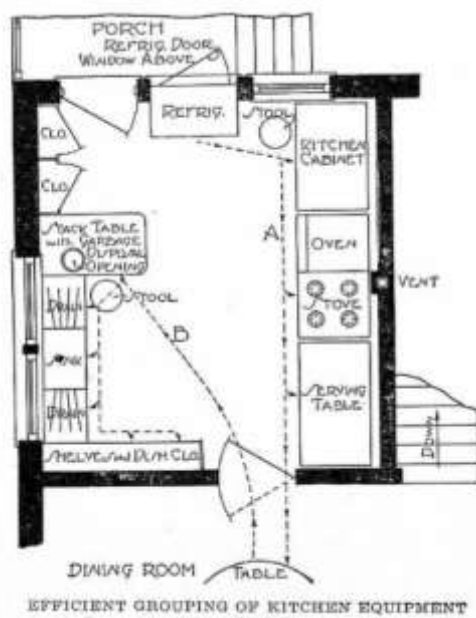
Debarre, 1989; Heathcote, 2012). As a result, the matron of the house commenced to be more involved in household work, which paved the way for the commonly attributed role of a homemaker.

Still in the 19th Century, though Europe was still witness to spatial gendered segregation, where the middle and upper class woman was still the ‘lady of the house’, afar from household work. In the United States of America, though, a new domesticity developed, one which was once more (as had been the case in the 17th Century Dutch home) centred in the user (Rybczynski, 2001), the one responsible for household work – the woman. The American domesticity, which applied Taylorism to home planning, was forged by the ‘Household Engineers’, to which Catherine Beecher and Christine Frederick are important contributors and whose books and writings are a testament to how the home was indeed a woman’s territory (7). The works developed by these Household Engineers are considered precursors to modern architecture (Giedion *apud* Rybczynski, 2001; Zabalbeascoa, 2013), with particular relevance to the *labor-saving kitchen* developed by Frederick [fig. 6].

In the 20th Century, in Europe, new concepts of individual, family and living patterns and the search for spatial rationalization founded the principles that oriented the Modern Movement and its house planning. Once more the kitchen became the space, which transpired that change, being transformed in character, design and equipment, to become more efficient, as a laboratory, and to function as the feminine ‘office’ space. Conceived by a woman, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky in 1926, the epitome of this rationalization is the *Frankfurt Kitchen* [fig. 8], designed to allow for the reduction of the time spent carrying out domestic chores and increase productivity, since the *New Woman*, a more public individual, with more social and, in some cases, professional activities, had less time for domestic work.

In both contexts – 19th century America and early 20th century Europe –, the kitchen’s place in a dwelling’s layout changed, relatively to the bourgeois home, becoming a more central and visible room, connected to living spaces [fig. 8 and 9]. This evolution in living patterns and domestic arrangements was mostly due to social transformations in gender roles. The social perception of women as household ‘manager’, as the 17th century Dutch society had previously viewed them, propelled this shift.

Furthering this new concept of kitchen, integrated in the living spaces as a means of integrating female domestic chores in family life, Frank Lloyd Wright proposed a series of homes – Usonian Houses – featuring a more open plan, incorporating the kitchen space in the living area, once more with the intent of including the housewife in social and family life [fig. 10]. This modern plan soon became the norm in north-American homes, viewing the kitchen as the “social core of the home” (Cromley, 1996, p. 19).



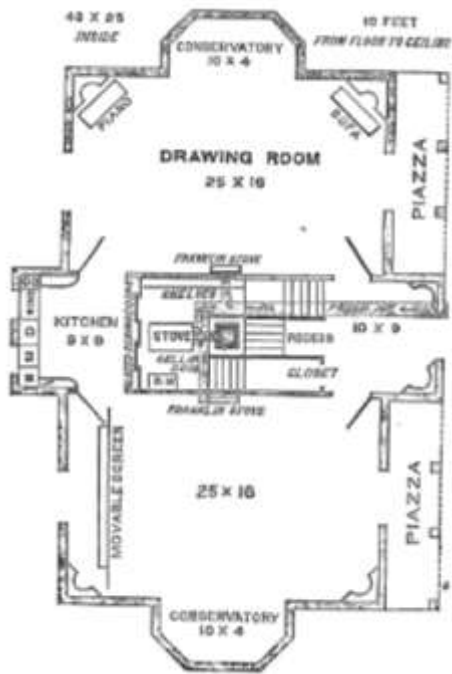
[6]



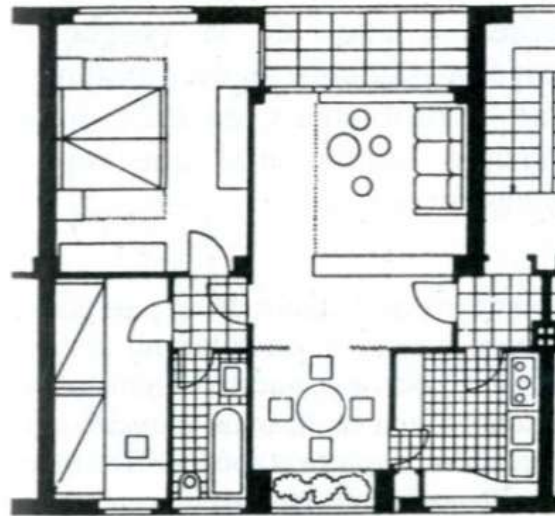
[7]

[6] The *Labor-Saving Kitchen* designed by Frederick (Frederick, 1923, p. 22)

[7] Frankfurt Kitchen (photographed by the author)



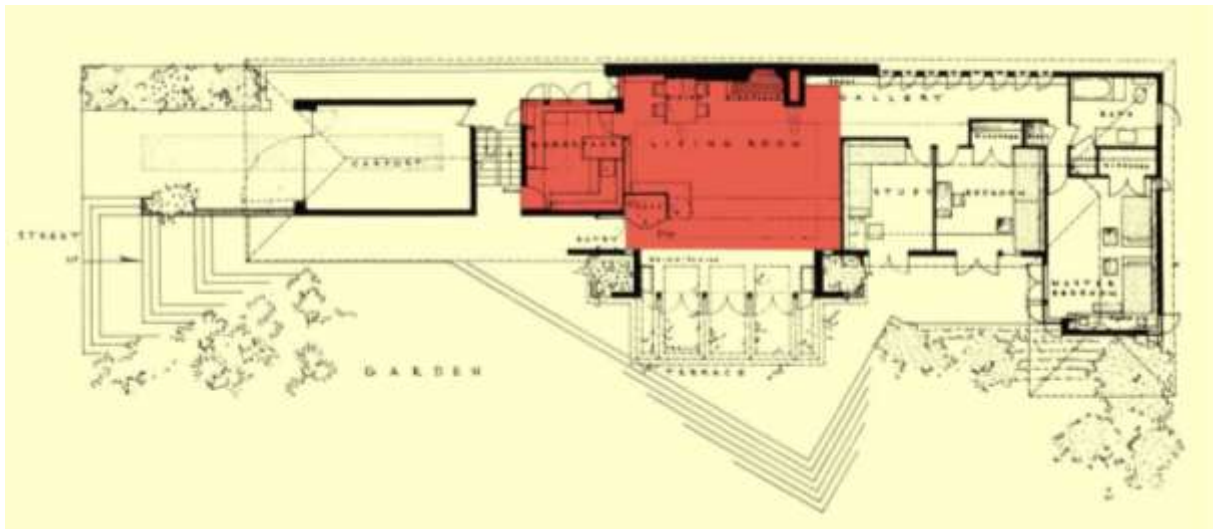
[8]



[9]

[8] Ground floor plan proposed by Beecher and Stowe (1869, p. 26)

[9] Ground floor of a home in Dammerstock, Walter Gropius (Benevolo, 1971, p. 537)



[10] Ground floor plan of Frank Lloyd Wright's Willey House, where the kitchen is renamed 'Workspace' (Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 2017)

Despite this evolution in domestic space (both in architectural plan and effective use) the kitchen kept on being equated as an exclusively feminine space, as it was in the 19th Century, both in Europe and the United States of America.

Apart from the kitchen, Modern Movement's architects and theorists, severing ties with the bourgeois logic of space of the 19th Century, proposed other significant changes in the design of the home. Minimum dwelling became the motto for mass collective housing, partly due to housing crisis and shortage, which overtook Europe as a result of urban migration and war destruction. Contrasting with the bourgeois home and its multitude of spaces, all with determined and fixed functions, this New Dwelling (*Neues Wohnung* as Ernst May would call it) is a smaller unit in area and in number of rooms, a home for a new type of family – the nuclear and reduced family, with no servants – where spaces are intended to be multifunctional. This spatial reduction results in the democratizing of the home and its compartments. The lack of area and spare rooms eventually led to the abolishment of gender segregation – exclusively masculine rooms (study, smoking room, game room, among others) and exclusively feminine rooms (private bedroom, *boudoir*,

sewing room (8)) ceased to exist because the home simply has no space for gender related distinctions (9) [fig.7]. Once more social changes, domestic interior layout and house use became paralleled: a new and different concept of man, woman and family came to be translated into a more condensed and democratic home.

Hence, the 20th Century witnessed the birth of democratic domestic space, through the dissemination of modern movement models and ideas, which influenced and shaped housing and home design until our times. Apart from this architectural movement, the social and cultural revolution in the first half of the Century up to the 1960's marked the beginning of an era when women and men started to be perceived as equal, their roles in society, family and professional life being considered the same. Although gender discrimination did not fully disappear, for domestic work was still a woman's job in the mid-20th Century, domestic spaces gradually started losing stereotypical gender traits and exclusive gendered use came to be eradicated. The modern family, which arose in the first half of the Century and matured in the second, was based on a new role for women (both in the public and the private spheres), less domestic and domesticated. This social breakthrough is founded in three factors: the feminist movement in the 1960's, a new understanding of marriage (and divorce) and the growing importance of the individual (Singly, 2011).

The new social context and the new dwelling models that have just been described are the foundation of the postmodern age western dwelling, a more democratic and gender equitable setting. And although the 20th century witnessed spatial equitability and degendering, it was also when new forms of spatial gender-related segregation started to arise. These have persisted in the new millennium and are grounded not on social notions of gender roles, but on people's search and need for privacy and individuality, as the following section describes.

2.3 From the Democratizing of Space to the Sublimation of the Individual

As demonstrated earlier, the Modern Movement's canons led to the establishment of democratic space. In addition, it is also responsible for the notion of the importance of the individual and private personal space. The axiom 'to each individual its room' is one of the aphorisms of the movement's ideology.

Although the grounds for this idea were a consequence of the problems of overcrowding in homes in the beginning of the 20th Century and the notion was to put into practice 'to each family member or person its own bedroom and bed', the sublimation of the individual grew and evolved. In recent times, society became overly focused on the individual, in a self-centred fashion. Augusto (2018) highlights this exacerbated individualism, referring the existence of a "process of empowering of individuals, becoming more reflexive and individualized."

This social concept of the person, as one who is closed in oneself, in conjunction with the notion of the home as a symbol of status, vulnerable to fashions (10) and a product of the real estate market, rather than a place designed to suit a person or family's needs to allow for the development of their way of living, resulted in the reappearance of gender segregation in home design and home use. American homes pose a perfect illustration of that with some ripple effects in the rest of the world, especially in wealthier cities or countries.

Homes with gender segregation in space use and functions became desirable and models/layouts containing gender specific rooms started being proposed. Spaces like *his and her walk-in-closets* [fig. 10], *his and her bathroom* [fig. 10], *his and her sink* [fig. 12], *man-cave* [fig. 11] vs *she-shed*, *masculine office* vs *female work station by the kitchen*, *masculine tool shed or masculine workshop* (11) vs *feminine craft/sewing room*, among many others, are a well-known reality. This second wave gender segregation has less to do with the perception of gender role in society, family or the home, but, as already stated, is more related to the pursuit of privacy and individuality. Moreover, to its appearance and maintenance contributes the fact that homes have become and are becoming larger, both in urban and suburban areas. Even though family size is shrinking, homes are getting bigger in area and in terms of the number of rooms, allowing for the allocation of unneeded or superficial functions to spare spaces.

Pereira (2011) characterizes this tendency as a "radicalized generic privatization", which distances itself from the modern model by way of making private spaces more complex and autonomous [fig. 10 and 12].



[10]



[11] [12]

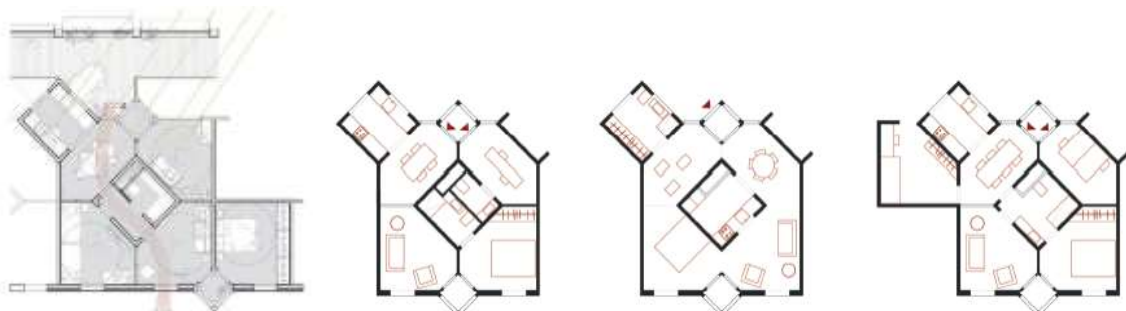
[10] Plan of an ensuite with separate toilets and closets, by gender (www.houzz.com)

[11] man-cave (<http://www.stanleyhomesinc.com/the-history-and-future-of-the-man-cave>)

[12] His and her sinks (<http://granitevision.com/increasing-the-value-of-your-home-kitchen-and-bath/>)

Nonetheless, as the counterpart to this self-centredness, some contemporary western homes have started to display living open-floor plans, promoting inclusion and unity, demonstrating no gender-based segregation and reflecting a more equitable society, where gender role differences have progressively dissolved. What Cromley (1996) defines as the *merged kitchen-dining-living areas*, predominant in North-American domestic architecture, have progressively pervaded European homes, as Moreira and Farias (2017) describe when discussing the *social-kitchen*.

Notwithstanding this important advancement, home still lacks a complete neutral character. The need for degendering domestic interiors has been referred by Montaner (BCC, 2019), who delineates strategies for the achievement of gender equality at home: a central and visible kitchen for collaborative work and a non-hierarchical bedroom design (same dimensions/area and no ensembles) [fig.13]. The same point of view is expressed by Falagan (BCC, 2019) and Paricio (BCC, 2019), the latter voicing the need to move away from the patriarchal nuclear family pattern as the prevalent family type, an idea also defended by Moreira (2022).



[13] De-hierarchized 'Housing Community' homes, CIERTO ESTUDIO (in *Qüestions d'Habitatge* n.22, p.79)

3. Conclusion

The paper analysed domestic interiors history, focusing on gendered spaces, *i.e.*, rooms with exclusive use of a certain gender and distinct ambience reflecting its traits. The goal of the study was to examine these gendered spaces throughout history and understand the social factors that determined their inception.

The paper demonstrates, through this brief history of gender features in domestic spaces and gender segregation in home use and layout, that dwelling patterns tend to be cyclical: from medieval multifunctional and de-gendered spaces; to profound spatial gender segregation in the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries; to democratic interiors in the 20th Century, when spaces lost gender characteristics and allocation; until present times when new tendencies of gender segregation have started to appear. As was the case in the 17th to 19th Century, these new tendencies correspond to higher class's homes, and exist as a symbol of luxury and status. Although it may be a frequent model in the United States of America, both in collective housing, in urban landscape and single family homes in suburbia, it is not yet so common in European homes.

Even though a recurrence in patterns is noticeable, the causes that underlay their emergence differ. Thus, the segregation, which characterized 17th to 19th Century homes is founded on a social model, which differentiates Man and Woman and their roles in society and family, while the segregations in present times are related to the need for privacy, seclusion, and the sublimation of individualism, as a mirror of a growingly individual and egotistical society.

Despite contemporary return to some spatial segregation, the study also shows that recent dwelling plans propose unifying living spaces, merging kitchen, living and dining rooms in one common space, degendering these spaces, showing that contemporary segregation is mostly present in the more private and use-specific spaces.

Considering the presented chronology of gendered spaces, it is noticeable that cultural and social factors have always been catalysts for domestic layout definition and, inherently, segregating or democratic use of space. Moreover and in spite of this, whenever spaces became more democratic, one of the defining factors (and one could argue the main motive) has been spatial constraint which seems to dictate the reduction of dwelling area and, therefore, the increased intimacy of the home and the sharing of spaces by family members, regardless of gender.

In urban context, in present times and into the future, it is foreseeable that the democratizing of home will continue to subsist, mostly due to space constraints, although there may be glimpses of gender segregation in some aspects of the home in some developments, especially when dealing with homes as symbols of status or promoted as luxury products.

And whilst the paper focuses only on western homes and society, where degendering the home is a present important issue, one to be attained, it is important to mention a recent proposal by Wutopia Lab for the Shenzhen architecture biennale that relaunches stereotypical gender notions. Named "His House and Her House" it consists of two houses, pink and blue, the first feminine and the second masculine [fig. 14], demonstrating that contemporary architecture continues to be influenced and determined by social concepts of gender and gender behaviour or characteristics.



[14] "His and Her House", Wutopia Lab (*in* <http://www.wutopialab.com/>)

Having thus addressed the research question initially proposed, the body of work that is presented permits the confirmation of the formulated hypothesis: gendered spaces have been (and to some extent continue to be) proposed, created and transformed according to social characteristics and social change, namely society's views of male and female roles - behaviour and hierarchy.

It is thought that the study has greatly contributed to the comprehension of domestic interiors since the modern age, better understanding how social concepts of gender roles have influenced living patterns and, in turn, determined dwelling layouts. By also approaching contemporary architecture and how it addresses gender issues, the paper aspires

to entail a significant contribution to recognizing segregation triggers and, consequently, aiding in the process of degendering domestic spaces, for a more equitable use of space and equitable society.

The limitations of the study could be addressed in further research, which could be founded on a widening of the analysed timeline and geographic context. This supplemental work would enable the comparison between different cultures and the examination of how social perception of gender in other societies is reflected in the domestic setting, space use and dwelling plan.

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Notes

- Note 1. Romain, J. *Le 6 Octobre apud* Eleb and Debarre (1995, p. 142)
- Note 2. Perrot (1990a, p. 121) states that man’s superiority was in fact determined by the French civil code
- Note 3. Perrot (1990b, p. 126)
- Note 4. (Eleb & Debarre, 1989, p. 113-238)
- Note 5. Which later came to influence the English upper-class country homes, afore mentioned. The 17th Century Dutch domesticity, although democratic in nature, influenced Victorian homes and the idea of home (Rybczynski, 2001), where, according to McClintock (1995, p.35), “the cult of domesticity involves processes of social metamorphosis and political subjection of which gender is the abiding but not the only dimension”, highlighting also that domestic and domesticity derive from the Latin words *domus* and *dominus*, which also relate to domestication and dominance, in this case, of men towards women
- Note 6. Underprivileged classes always viewed housework – which encompasses kitchen activities – as a woman’s task. Perrot (1990a) characterizes the bourgeois woman as ‘matron of the house’ and, by opposition, the working-class woman as ‘domestic’, as someone who occupies herself with household chores
- Note 7. Beecher wrote *A Treatise in Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School* (1841) and *The American Woman’s Home* (1869; with Harriet Stowe); Frederick wrote *Planning the Efficient Home* (1923)

Note 8. Apart from the kitchen which remains a woman's domain, a feminine space

Note 9. A similar aspect of democratizing space had already occurred in the bourgeois home, as mentioned, with the adoption of the conjugal bedroom.

Note 10. Fashion refers to what is *en vogue* in terms of space use and spatial configuration (as opposed to furniture or interior decoration), what is conveyed by media and advertising and can become an ideal to aspire to

Note 11. It could be argued that the man cave, the masculine office or workshop could be the rebirth of the smoking and billiard room of the 17th to 19th centuries

Authors' note

This paper focuses on the history of gendered spaces, taking into consideration the traditional (social and culturally) gender classification *male-female*, *man-woman*, despite contemporary gender theories that perceive sex and gender as aspects that can be split and that gender can be non-binary (Butler, 1990). In spite of the notion that gender is a complex and sensitive topic, the article is based on the duality *masculine vs feminine* because in the eras/places it mostly depicts this was the sole definition of gender/sex.

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