In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Architecture

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date 23 April, 1998
ABSTRACT

Housing patterns and developments of the traditional urban areas are a source of rich and complicated social networks. The complexities of these social relationships are reflected in the physical spaces of the community and in many cases are activated and shaped by gender relationships. The link between gender and space is culture specific and is reinforced by norms of social behavior. Over time, repetition and familiarity, this space becomes a symbol which has meaning and a gender association. These signs are integral to a community and are maintained in both informal and formal communities. For example, in Cairo's community of traditional urban people, main portals and intimate doorways function in a hierarchy of surveillance. The man is responsible for the main portal, or the larger community while the woman oversees the activities of the intimate doorway, or the local residence. In the dense and often dilapidated structural conditions of the urban poor it is easy to miss these deep-rooted patterns and relationships between people and architectural form. The medieval core of Cairo consists of these rich communities but each are threatened by the frequent collapse and deterioration of buildings and infrastructure. The challenge is to provide appropriate housing forms that respond, preserve and build on these social symbols.

Each year the demands on Cairo's insufficient affordable housing supply increases, adding only more dwellings to the informal settlements. The draw into the economic center of Egypt remains strong with informal settlements thrive in and around the city center. Many of those migrating into the city come from the villages and are called baladi (from the country). The baladi bring with them the traditions that are practiced and preserved by the traditional urban population who are originally "from the country." Appropriate housing for the urban poor is not a simple task consisting of four walls and a roof with sanitation systems. It includes people with complicated family and community networks.

The family unit is a central building block of Egyptian culture. Daily activities, routines and life events shape the spaces which are part of life. Over years and sometimes generations of inhabitation communities and housing patterns reflect the social organism that Fathy describes. The form of the harah (alley community) of Medieval Cairo is an urban representation of men and women's participation in the public and private spheres. The built environment is an expression of gender defined activities that appear in the community, the street and the home. The home functions as an important node for women, men and children but in very different ways. The focus of this investigation is to explore and record spatial patterns of the harah family home within the discourse of gender issues. A list of design guidelines will summarize and interpret the findings with architectural implications inseparable from Egyptian culture.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii
Table of Contents iii
List of Figures iv
Acknowledgement v
# List of Figures

## The Site Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site Model</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation Hierarchy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Aerial</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground Plan</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Floor and Third Floor Plan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Wall Elevation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughway Crosssection</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## The Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhabited Platforms and Edges</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activated Throughways</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence of Social Filters</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalized Rooflife</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Social Wall</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Community Participation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Presence of Place</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's Refuge</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgement

This research project would not have been possible without all the families I met in my travels and the friends that supported me, took interest and helped bring valuable insight to this part of the world.
Socially generated
Gendered spaces in the
Traditional urban community:

The Harah in Cairo
LRU School of Architecture
Cairo University

"In the passionate dark
of dawn, on the path
between death and life,
within view of the
marched stars and
within earshot of the
beautiful anthems,

...a voice told of the trials
and joys promised to one valley.

--Naguib Mahfouz

plaza floor plan

upper floor plan
Socially generated
Gendered spaces in the
Traditional urban community:

The Harah in Cairo
UBC School of Architecture
Carol Kwon

"...spatial organisation
of culture can be seen as
direct result of spatial
organisation of activity,\nincluding those routines
of day to day activity."

"Not the spatial
organisation of culture
will influence the
organisation of activity."

Fawzi were Scott
Socially generated
Gendered spaces in the
Traditional urban community:

The Harah in Cairo

UBC School of Architecture
Carmen Kwan

"The building takes on
the many dimensions
shape of its society,
as an old shoe takes the
possible shape of one
man's foot.

or rather as man
grazing plant
essentially adopts itself
to its environment."

-Samuel Flaherty
Socially generated
Gendered spaces in the
Traditional urban community:

The Harah in Cairo

UBC School of Architecture
Carman Kwan

inhabited platforms and edges

"So then they erected a morning tent, a sewer, with the men on one side to receive the men and the women the other.
The Koran is read over a loudspeaker and black coffee is served.

The coffee on this occasion has no sugar in it to show a sign ofatitude." - Suleh
Socially generated
Gendered spaces in the
Traditional urban community:

The Harah in Cairo
UBC School of Architecture
Carman Kwan

"He felt his way along
with his rough stick.
his guide in his eternal
darkness.

He knows where he was
by the smell,
by the number of steps
he had taken..."
Saghib Mafouz

activated throughways

semi-private throughway

public throughway
Socially generated
Gendered spaces in the
Traditional urban community:

The Harah in Cairo

UBC School of Architecture
Carman Kwan

"In Egypt where the family is the absolute center of life the daily pattern...

Egyptians are constantly moving in and out of each other's lives

as they intermingle in a constant interwoven flow.”

- Andrea B. Rugh

sequence of social filters

vertical social filter

social flow of unit
Socially generated
Gendered spaces in the
Traditional urban community:

The Harah in Cairo

UBC School of Architecture
Carman Kwan

internalized roof life

"We would transplant
any tree we admired on
extra tin or bucket, and
with it we would elevate
the wall around us.

Above the second
floor room we had
a creepa growing
to provide shade for
that room had no
roof and was open
to the sky."

-Dinaya

private roof unit

public roof garden
Socially generated Gendered spaces in the Traditional urban community:

The Harah in Cairo

UBC School of Architecture Carmen Kwan

"Aside from unavoidable ‘neighbourliness’ there exists a baladi female society of the hearth and the street... that is independent of men and intersects with both public and domestic spheres."

- Evelyn A. Early

living social wall

balcony detail

window seat detail
Socially generated
Gendered spaces in the
Traditional urban community:

The Harah in Cairo
UBC School of Architecture
Carman Kwan

visual community participation

"When I went back
down
the cook was still
making a scene on
the street.

People gathered to
watch and listen."
- Sam Gad

visual circulation core
Socially generated
Gendered spaces in the
Traditional urban community:
The Harah in Cairo

UBC School of Architecture
Carman Kwan

women's presence of place

"Um Jameil sits like a
rounded Buddha on her front
doorstep.

Every morning finds her
sitting there knitting

"Talking with women or
bouncing a grandchild on
her knees."

Andrea B. Rugh

entry way prospect

protected entry and exit

recessed seat
Socially generated spaces in the
Gendered spaces in the Traditional urban community:
The Harah in Cairo
UBC School of Architecture

men's refuge