

ROOM FOR WOMEN

An Atlas of Feminist Housing Projects from the 1980s

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Theoretical Statement TPOD EPFL 2023–2024

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INTRODUCTION

While much attention has been given to the feminist scholarship and theory produced in the 1970s, lesser known is its influence on the architectural debate and the resulting projects, involving women as planners, architects, or users designed and built between the late 1970s and early 1990s. These projects, located in Italy, Austria, the U.K., Sweden, Germany, the U.S., and Canada, are all highly diverse but share a radical questioning and rethinking of the paradigms of Western domesticity. Through the analysis of twelve case studies, the paper argues that the 1980s was a remarkable decade in feminist history, as many of the political themes that had been hotly debated in the 1970s, were addressed architecturally through projects that sought to challenge conventional domestic designs. The paper aims to foreground this lesser-known phenomenon with the aim of acknowledging and learning from the daring architectural legacy of this decade.

Prior to the 1980s, the feminist movement had developed in waves, distinguished for their diverse focus and approaches. The first wave of the women's liberation movement, as argued by sociologist and activist Maria Mies, started at the end of the eighteenth century, in the context of the bourgeois revolution, which deliberately excluded women from being granted the human rights at stake.¹ The primary focus of the struggle of that time was to give women access to the public or political sphere. Mies seems to include in this wave the struggle for equal legal rights of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century with its notable suffrage movement. A new feminist movement followed between the 1960s and the 1980s, commonly referred to as the 'second wave'. Mies has argued that this period was the first in history that saw the struggle opened up to the private sphere.² As women started sharing their experiences with their own bodies, intimate relationships with men, sexuality, pregnancy, child-rearing, and contraception, they challenged the notion of the private sphere as one removed from politics.

Within this evolution of the struggle, the ethos and the understanding of 'feminism' changed. Notably, the models of femininity and family which resulted from the first wave were fundamentally questioned by representatives of the second wave.³ For example, the second wave critiqued the capitalist division between private housework and public productive work, which was accepted by the first wave.⁴ Mies presents Maria Rosa Dalla Costa as the first feminist, in 1972, to challenge the notion that housework or – in Marxist terminology – 'reproductive work' is non-productive work.⁵ Together, they argued that through reproductive work, women are producing 'labor power', which is then sold as a commodity on the capitalist market as a 'free' worker.

As she stresses the necessity to demystify women's reproductive labor as 'natural,' Mies clarifies that the capitalist definition of productive labor by Marx automatically excluded the production of life by women, since it was narrowed down to mean only the production of surplus value.⁶ Consequently, Marxist feminists place female productivity as the precondition of male-waged productivity.⁷ They understood the exploitation of women's unwaged labor by the waged and set patriarchy as the basis of capitalism.⁸ Mies calls 'housewifization' the process in which the ideal

1 Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, Critique Influence Change (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 19.

2 Ibid. 24.

3 Anna Krüger, *Emanzipatorisches Wohnen: Myra Warhafts Beitrag Zur Internationalen Bauausstellung 1984/87*, KIT Scientific Publishing (KIT Scientific Publishing, 2022), 75.

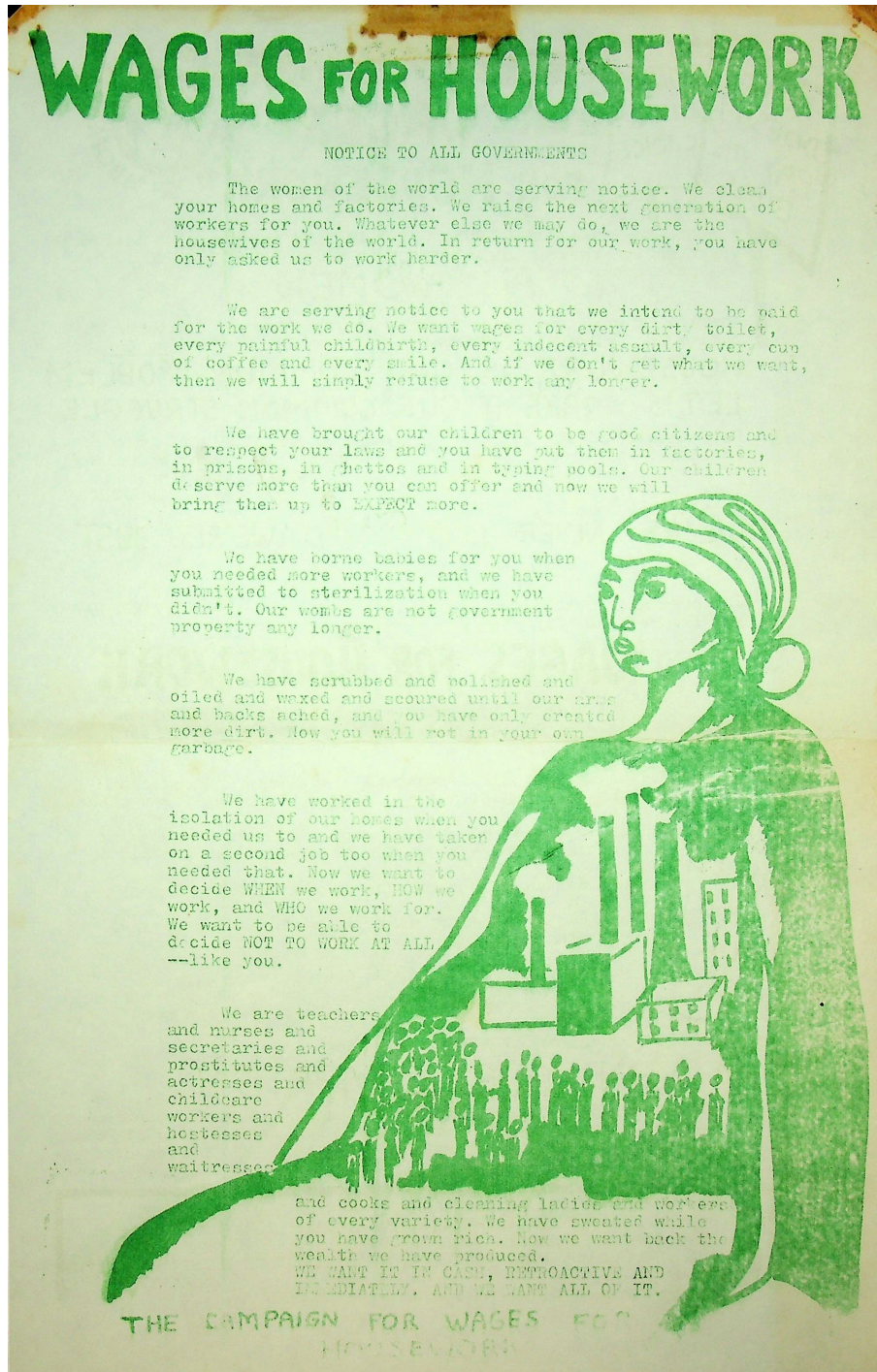
4 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 31.

5 Ibid. 31. Referring to Mariarosa Dalla Costa, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, 1972.

6 Ibid. 47.

7 Ibid. 58.

8 Mies identifies the other non-wage laborers exploited by the capitalist system as slaves, contract workers, and peasants in the colonies. Ibid. 48.



Poster presenting the campaign for Wages for Housework signed by the New York Wage for Housework Committee. Image from Biblioteche Civiche Padova.

9 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 69.

10 Jacopo Galimberti, *Images of Class: Operaismo, Autonomia and the Visual Arts (1962-1988)* (London: Verso, 2022), 263.

11 Welfare in the U.S. was considered a “mass victory on wages for domestic work.” The Wages for Housework campaign was aiming at the autonomy that women on welfare gained since they did not have to rely on a man’s wage. Mariarosa Dalla Costa, “A proposito del Welfare...,” *Primo Maggio - Saggi e documenti per una storia di classe*, no. N. 9-10 (1977): 76–77.

12 Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, “The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community,” in *Class: The Anthology*, ed. Stanley Aronowitz and Michael J. Roberts, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2017), 20.

13 Formed around 1974–75, the collective also included four artists Mariuccia Secol, Silvia Cibaldi, Mili Gandini, Clemen Parrocchetti. All women were based between Milan and Varese. It dissolved around mid-1980s.

14 Solo exhibition by Mili Gandini at the Centro de la Maddalena in 1975. The title of the exhibition refers to Dalla Costa and James’ injunction “we must get out of the house.” Galimberti, *Images of Class*, 270.

15 Ibid. 270.

16 Dalla Costa and James, “The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community,” 13–14.

17 Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life*, Revised and expanded (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 72.

18 Matrix, *Making Space: Women and the Manmade Environment* (New York: Verso Books, 2022), 25.

domesticated privatized women are transformed into housewives and made dependent on the income of the husband. ‘Housewifization’ became the model of the gender division of labor under capitalism.⁹ For this reason, Marxist feminists see women’s liberation as possible only through revolution and more precisely, through the abolition of capitalism.

Beyond theoretical discourse, the Marxist feminist critique manifested in other forms. One notably radical expression was the ‘Wages for Housework’ campaign, proposed around 1974 by Dalla Costa and like-minded activists in Europe and North America.¹⁰ This transatlantic innovative campaign called for the remuneration of all women for their commodified housework and care for the family.¹¹ For Dalla Costa, the function of this demand was essentially to link female oppression, subordination, and isolation to female exploitation as their material foundation.¹² A second instance is found in the Italian collective *Gruppo Femminista Immagine* (Feminist Group Image).¹³ Associated with the ‘Wages for Housework’ campaign and masterminded by artist Mili Gandini, *Gruppo Femminista Immagine* focused on the image as a vehicle for their militancy. Art historian Jacopo Galimberti cites the 1975 exhibition *La Mamma è Uscita* (Mum Has Gone Out)¹⁴ as an instance where Gandini played with subversiveness to highlight the creativity found in the refusal of housework.¹⁵ It was the opinion of Marxist feminists such as Dalla Costa and Selma James that the isolation of women in the house had robbed them of the possibility of developing their creativity.¹⁶

Yet, the second wave feminists did not form a monolithic group, and the social apparatus of reproduction was challenged by different facets in varying degrees of radicalness. A conflict emerged between the Marxist feminists and another facet known as Material feminists, who advocated for a reformist approach as opposed to revolutionary one. As such, it followed the footsteps of the proposals of the American Material Feminists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, uncovered by architect and researcher Dolores Hayden in her 1981 book *The Grand Domestic Revolution*. Through architectural projects and with the help of architects, the first Material feminists had acted on the idea that gender division of labor was reinforced and reproduced by spatial design.¹⁷

This paper focuses on the reformist approaches within the second wave, expressed in the form of architectural projects developed starting from the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. In this period, feminist ethos was met with a strong architectural response and women architects and inhabitants addressed feminist concerns through a critique of domestic space and dared to imagine alternative forms of domesticity. The experience of the 1970s was certainly foundational for the phenomenon foregrounded in this paper. In 1981, Matrix, one of the most recognized feminist design groups of this period, acknowledged that “the existence of a strong women’s movement is indispensable for the development of feminist design.”¹⁸ The 1970s can thus be seen as a period of incubation for the spatial experiments that later occurred in the 1980s. The fact that the architectural phenomenon was slow to follow the critique of political economy can be due to many geo-political reasons, but perhaps the major reason being that architecture, as a capital-intensive service industry, is a profession that resists being politicized.

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Photographs of a woman tracing female symbols and 'salario' (salary) in accumulated dust and dirt exhibited at Mum Has Gone Out, 1975. From Milli Gandini's archives.

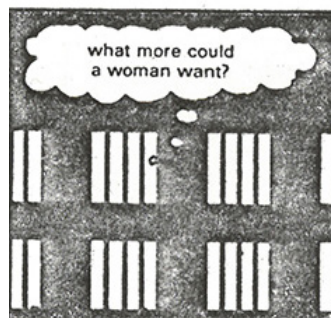
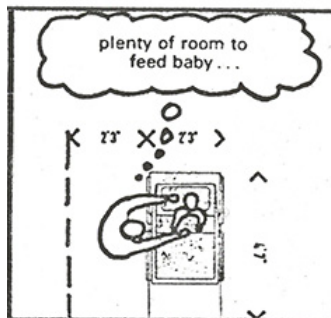
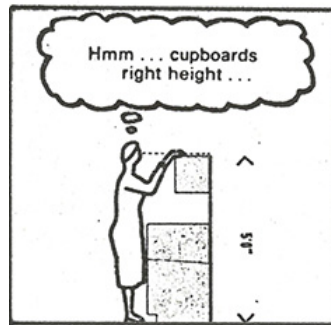
19 Silvia Federici is a revolutionary feminist militant who notably founded the Brooklyn wing of the ‘Wages for Housework’ campaign.

20 Silvia Federici, *Caliban et la sorcière: femmes, corps et accumulation primitive*, trans. Julien Guazzini and Senonevero, 2e édition, La rupture (Genève: Entremonde, 2017), 174.

21 Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, “Familiar Horror: Toward a Critique Of Domestic Space,” *Log*, no. 38 (2016): 116.

The family and the house are fundamental themes in the feminist discourse. As noted by political theorist and activist Silvia Federici,¹⁹ the family is the most important institution for the exploitation and dissimulation of the reproductive work of women.²⁰ Through the family, economic asymmetries, resulting from productivity and reproductivity carrying different social values and differentiated by gender, have been enforced and organized within the house.²¹ This paper explores how feminist housing projects of the 1980s challenged the naturalized definition of the family and the position of the woman within it, by questioning the spatial condition of the house. The selected twelve domestic projects will serve as paradigmatic examples of a more vast and far-reaching phenomenon. Against the backdrop of the theoretical framework of Marxist feminism, the case studies will be discussed through the lens of three main themes, that are both political and spatial, without claiming to cover them exhaustively. The first chapter, “Labor and Leisure” will examine the Constance Hamilton Co-op by Joan Simon, the Beguinage Co-op by Philip Goldsmith, as well as the emancipatory apartments by Christine Jachmann and those by Myra Warhaftig. The second chapter, “Frame and Function”, considers the Grosvenor Terrace housing by the Matrix Design Group and the apartment layouts by Gisela Podreka and Else Prochazka for Frauen-Werk-Stadt along with the House of Meanings by Susana Torre and the Congregate House by Jacqueline Leavitt and Troy West. The third chapter, “Privacy and Property” will examine Casa Giudice by Mariagrazia Sironi, Prästgårdshagen by Stockholm Coordinator architect, and Stacken by Lars Agren - both based on the work by Swedish women’s group *Bo i Gemenskap* (BiG) - as well as HOMES revitalization by Dolores Hayden. Through a close-reading and comparative analysis of these projects, the paper aims to uncover the different ways in which architects challenged inherited domestic architectures in light of the questions raised by radical feminist theory.

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Satirical cartoon about perfect house planning for a woman's desires by Helman. From Matrix Open Feminist Architecture Archive.

LABOR AND LEISURE

Through gender division of labor, not only were women assigned to the private sphere of the house, but within it, they were also relegated to the kitchen as one of the main settings for their reproductive labor.²² The specific function of this room is an example of the division of activities within the house to better institutionalize domestic labor. Once individual kitchens appeared in the 18th century, it was gradually set apart within the dwellings as a distinct room to enforce and organize the economic asymmetry within the family.²³

In his groundbreaking essay *First the Kitchen: Then the Façade*, Nicholas Bullock situates the ‘domestic science’ and ‘scientific housekeeping’ as innovations of the 1920s that were to secure the housewife’s position at the center of the family. He shows how the economical, traditional Wohnküche (living-kitchen) where family activities took place alongside cooking, was condemned as inappropriate for the urban working class as the Kochküche (cooking-kitchen) case strengthened after WWI.²⁴ Reduced to the minimum size arguing efficiency, the cooking kitchen was supported by the agenda of the scientific management of the household by now ‘professional housewives’. In the German and U.K. working class, a clear separation between labor and leisure appeared with the cooking kitchen, which moved cooking out of the living room. Similarly, Hayden notes that the small ‘workplace’ assigned to women was also present in the speculation model houses massively built in the post-war period in the U.S.²⁵ The dream house culture had at heart the Victorian programming which had separated the kitchen, for servants, from the living room as the space for leisure and hospitality. By the time the bourgeois notions percolated down the class strata, the middle- and working classes had almost formed one social body, and the servant role was shifted to the women, the housewife.²⁶ The living room could thus be read as opposed to the kitchen; as a space of leisure and typically not subordinated to the logic of labor.

When it comes to women’s emancipation, whether the kitchen should be contained and demarcated as a space of ‘work’ (like the Kochküche), or whether it should be integrated back into the other common areas of the house (similarly to the Wohnküche) is a debated question. The following projects illustrate the divergent perspectives on how reproductive work should be spatialized within the home as they illustrate different, even opposing approaches to this question: The Constance Hamilton Co-op (1982, Toronto), the Beguinage Co-op (1985, Toronto), and the Emancipatory Living Lot 3 and Lot 2 (1993, Berlin).

22 Ibid. 116.

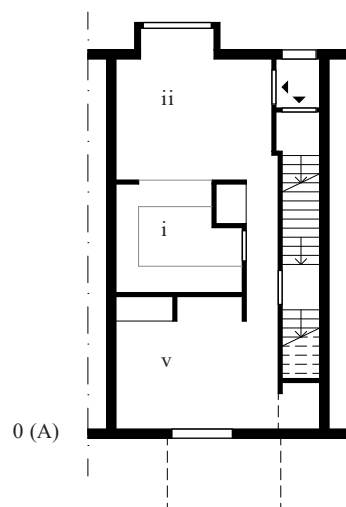
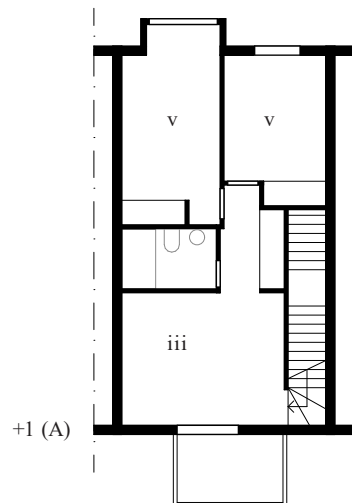
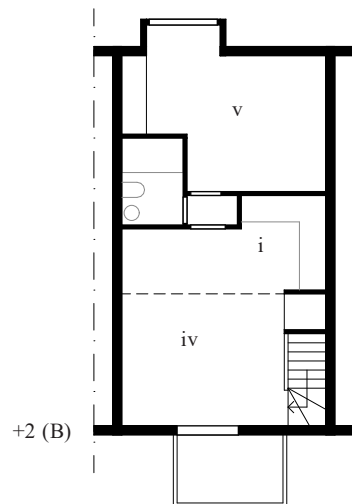
23 Ibid. 121.

24 Nicholas Bullock, “First the Kitchen: Then the Façade,” *Journal of Design History* 1, no. 3/4 (1988): 182.

25 Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, 61.

26 Matrix, *Making Space*, 78.

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Selected unit plans of Constance Hamilton Co-operative. Drawn by the author, adapted from Gerda R. Wekerle and Sylvia Novac, "Developing Two Women's Housing Cooperatives", 232.

27 Low to moderate income women formed a community based group who, under the Canadian Non-profit Housing Program could initiate the development of a 'modest' housing project whose development was assisted by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Resource groups were funded by the program to support the women, most with little to no experience in property development, for all stages of the development process.

28 'Joan Simon: In Memoriam', *Economic Horizons*, Women & Environments Magazine, 9, no. 1 (1987): 4.

29 Gerda R. Wekerle and Sylvia Novac, 'Developing Two Women's Housing Cooperatives', in *New Households, New Housing*, ed. Karen A. Franck and Sherry Ahrentzen (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989), 230.

30 Ibid. 230.

31 Ibid. 230.

Initiated by a community-based group of low to moderate-income women²⁷ and built in 1982, the Hamilton Co-op was the very first housing built for women in Toronto, Canada. The townhouse of 30 stacked units and an attached 6-bedroom transitional house were designed by Joan Simon. Simon was chosen by the women on the selection committee because she had experience in developing projects with the involvement of future residents, and also had a unique focus on the design of kitchens and their relationship to the total living space.²⁸

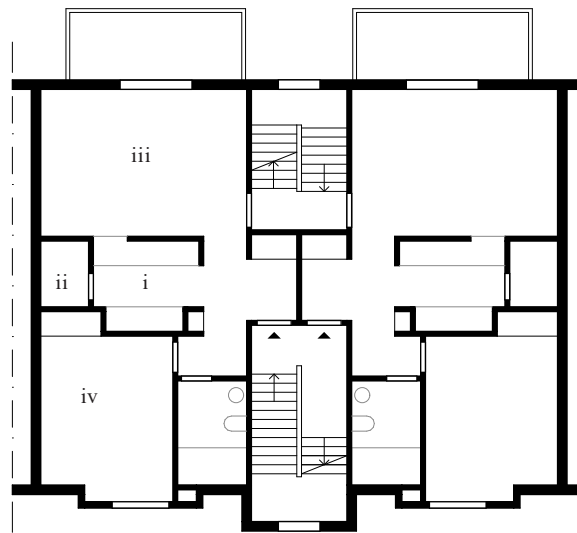
Of the six unit types of the building, the most relevant to the discussion are the largest (A) and the smallest (B) units, since the number of inhabitants influenced the disposition of the kitchen to the living room. In traditional single-family duplexes, individual private rooms - such as the bedrooms - are typically stacked above the more common spaces. On the contrary in the three-bedroom duplex (A) of the Constance Hamilton Co-op, the living room (iii) is located on the uppermost floor, while the kitchen (i) and dining room (ii) are on the lower level. The kitchen is contained, but well connected to the dining room. Since the latter also acts as the main entrance of the unit, it challenges its formal aspect for a more functional concern. The sharp disconnection of the living room from the kitchen reflects the attitude of having a clear middle space, not subordinated to the logic of labor. Even though this could be seen as a way to make sure women would not always be reminded of the work, Simon's intent in separating these spaces was to enable all members of this large household to find their place within the social spaces, and that multiple uses could be performed simultaneously.²⁹

This approach of separating labor and leisure is translated differently in the one-bedroom apartment (B) on the upper floor. Here, one large space acts as the living-dining room (iv) in which the kitchen (i) is also included. Tucked in a corner, but not enclosed, the kitchen thus allows the people working to be visible and the work to be socialized. Such dining kitchens were not common practice, they were implemented to the demand of the board.³⁰ Despite different attitudes regarding the proximity of labor and leisure within the units, the kitchen was brought forward within the house and close to the entrance. Simon highlighted that her decision to do so was met with resistance by almost all the men involved in the financing of the project, whereas all women who looked at the plan thought it was sensible.³¹

- i. kitchen
- ii. dining room
- iii. living room
- iv. living-dining room
- v. bedroom

- A. three-bedroom unit
- B. one-bedroom unit

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Selected plans of Beguinage Co-operative. Drawn by the author, adapted from Gerda R. Wekerle and Sylvia Novac, "Developing Two Women's Housing Cooperatives", 233.

32 Despite an early commitment of working with a feminist architect, since the acquired site was only available as a turnkey project, the developer had already pre-selected Phil Goldsmith as the architect of the project. Wekerle and Novac, 'Developing Two Women's Housing Cooperatives'. 229

33 Ibid. 228

34 Gerda R. Wekerle, *Women's Housing Projects in Eight Canadian Cities* (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1988), 16.

35 Matrix, *Making Space: Women and the Manmade Environment* (New York: Verso Books, 2022), 69.

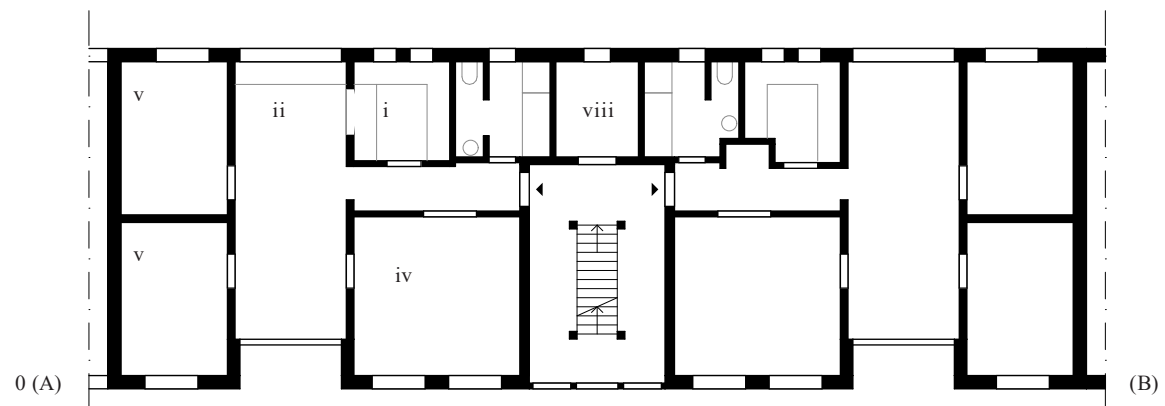
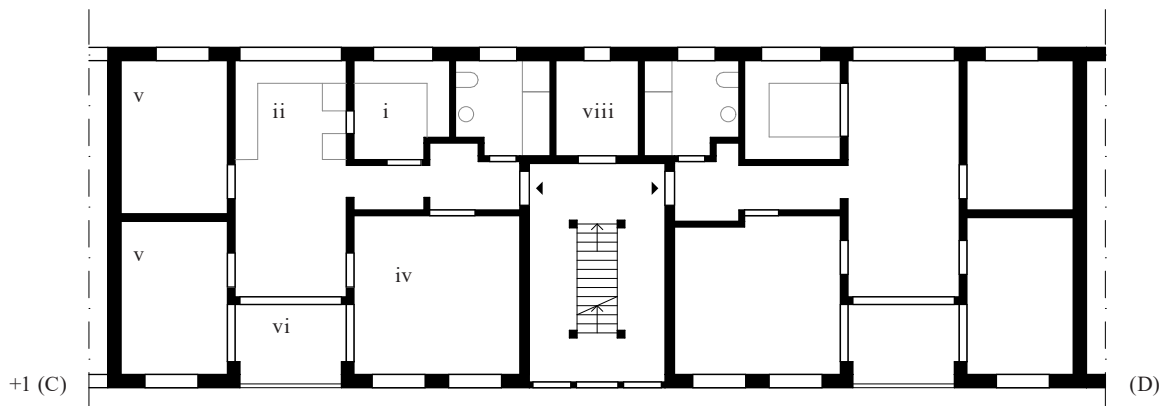
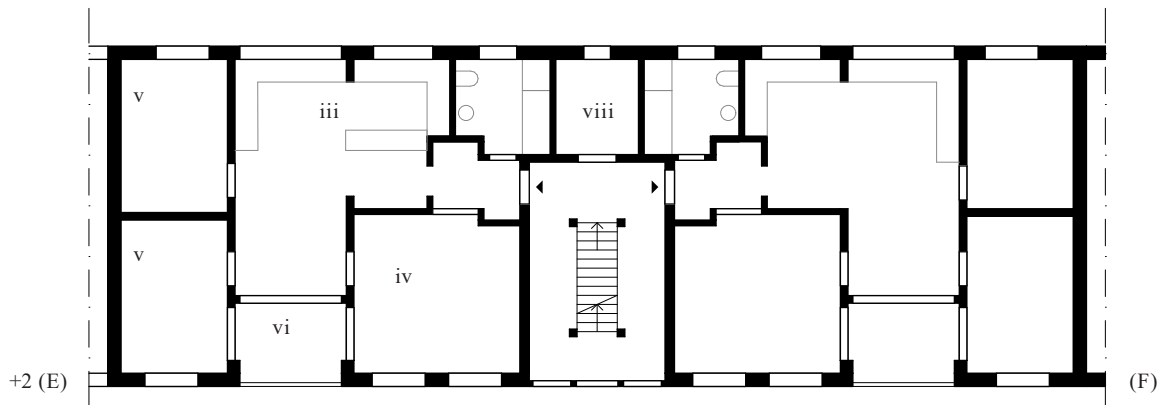
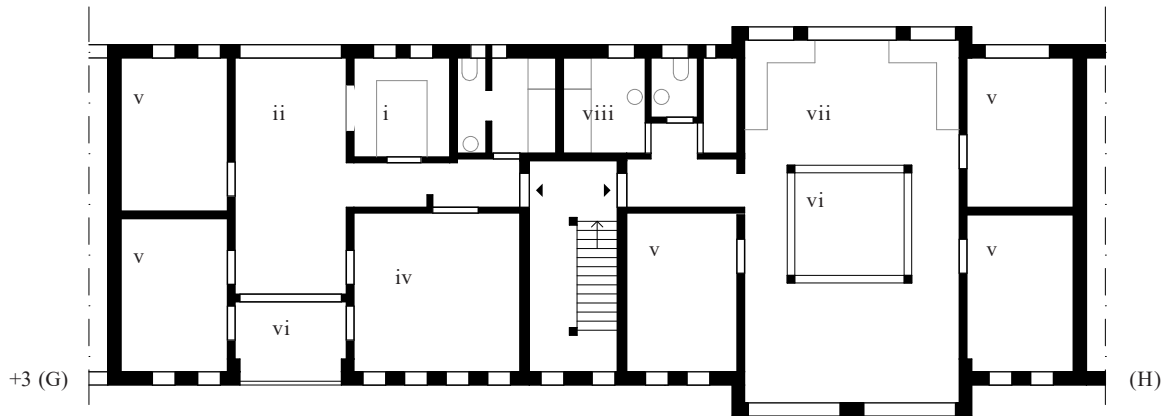
36 Gerda R. Wekerle and Sylvia Novac, "Developing Two Women's Housing Cooperatives", 233.

The Toronto Women's Housing Co-operative, known as the Beguinage Co-operative, was built in 1985 by Philip Goldsmith as a turnkey project³², and its development process was informed by the first women's co-op.³³ It was projected as one solution to the serious housing problems faced by sole-support women of all ages, with and without children.³⁴ The 26-unit stacked townhouse co-op occupies two neighboring sites and offers unit types from one to three bedrooms. Since the Beguinage was planned to meet the needs of single women, the one-bedroom apartment type is the most represented, with thirteen units. Similar to Constance Hamilton, the small size of the unit appears to have led to a combination of the eating room and the living room (iii). However, in this case, the kitchen (i) was kept as a separate space, without being entirely disconnected thanks to the *passe-plats*, or serving opening. Keeping the kitchen enclosed, in a small apartment like this one, represents the attempt to spatially distinguish labor from leisure.

However, the kitchen is not relegated to an undesirable place or hidden at the back of the house, as was typical in the Victorian townhouse typology, rather it occupies a central position in the apartment, placed as the first visible and accessible space as one enters the apartment.³⁵ This unusual spatial relation between the kitchen and the entrance is found in most of the unit layouts of the co-operative.³⁶ However, the particularity of this apartment lies in the small room added at the other extremity of the kitchen (ii). Probably meant as a storage space or a pantry, this room would offer the possibility to hide away anything in the kitchen and by extension, the entrance. Consequently, the plan seems to negotiate well the ambivalent question of the kitchen as either open and visible or contained and hidden. Indeed, the pantry could be a possible answer to the dilemma of having a workplace entirely visible from the rest of the house since pending work can be easily put aside if felt necessary by the houseworker.

- i. kitchen
- ii. pantry
- iii. living-dining room
- iv. bedroom

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Selected unit plans of Emancipatory Living Lot 3. Drawn by the author, adapted from Sarah Gretsche, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., "Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bau-forscherin", 66.

37 FOPA was formed after an event where seven women planners and architects stormed an all-male expert hearing in the run-up to IBA. The group manifested again during an all-male panel on women's issues in housing.

38 ARCH+ et al., eds., *ARCH+ Contemporary Feminist Spatial Practices*, 1st ed. (Leipzig, 2023), 12.

39 Jachmann was assigned the Lot 3 and the overall planning of the block, meaning the relationship between the 6 lots, of which in the end, only two were dedicated to emancipatory forms of living - Jachmann's and Warhaftig's.

40 Christine Jachmann, "Der IBA-Block 2 in Berlin Kreuzberg, ein Architektinnenprojekt," *Frauen Kunst Wissenschaft: Architektur*, no. 13 (February 1, 1992): 37.

41 Ibid. 36.

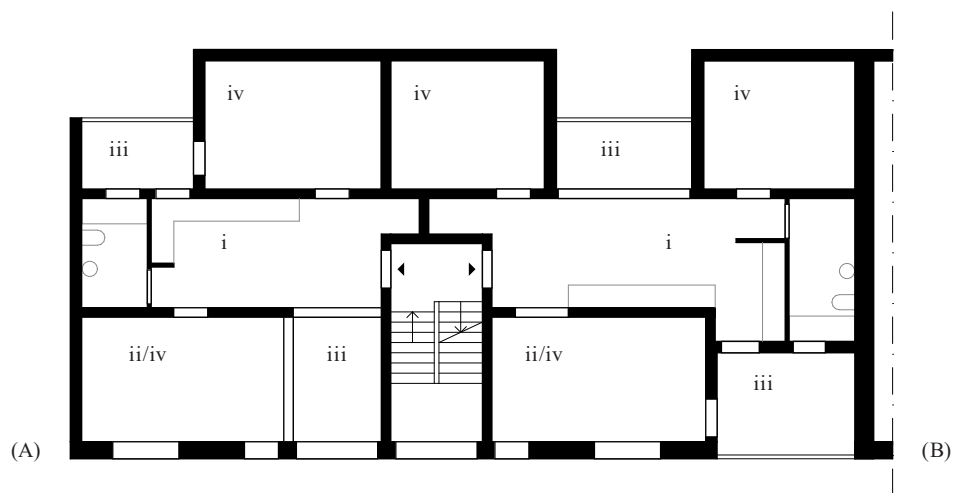
42 Ibid. 37.

Christine Jachmann's *Emanzipatorisches Wohnen* (Emancipatory Housing) for the International Building Exhibition (IBA) 1984-87 in Berlin is a gradient of attitudes and typological variations that almost exclusively happened around the kitchen. Only completed in 1993 due to multiple issues, the project was initially made possible in 1986 thanks to the *Feministische Organisation von Planerinnen und Architektinnen* (Feminist Organization of Women Planners and Architects or FOPA).³⁷ The group's pressure on the IBA committee led to a NEU IBA block for women's emancipatory living to be designed by women architects.³⁸ Christine Jachmann was one of the three women architects to be directly commissioned.³⁹ The 26 units of her project spread over four floors and show typological variations around the kitchen and its relationship to other spaces. Jachmann took the position of combining or separating the different functions that she associated with the kitchen such as cooking, eating, playing, working, and living throughout the building.⁴⁰ By playing with the traditional strict division between labor and leisure, the architect allows the tenants to decide on how the apartment is used, despite the 'family lifestyle' criteria for subsidized apartments.⁴¹

The analyzed unit plans focus on eight units, seven of which are two-bedroom apartments with same-size bedrooms. The apartments are complemented by three common *Hausarbeitsräume* (utility rooms) (viii) potentially for laundry, storage, or baby carriages.⁴² In most of the units (A, B, C, D, G), the kitchen (i) is contained but connected to the eating room (ii) by a *passe-plats*, and the living room (iv) remains apart. The eating room articulates the private rooms, as well as the room-sized loggia (vi), and thus spreads across the entire depth of the building. In the second-floor units (E, F), the wall between the kitchen and the eating space disappears and renders the resulting L-shaped space as an eat-in kitchen (iii). The ambiguity of the plan and its drawn-in fixtures presents either a kitchen counter that extends out of its former perimeter or its continuation is a banquette. The three-room apartment (H) on the third floor pushes the combination of the kitchen and living spaces to a further degree by including the living room for the first time. Conveniently placed on the last floor, this larger unit benefits from an internalized loggia which acts as a light shaft and is big enough to put a dining table. As the kitchen becomes a huge space, it can be used in multiple ways and is fully integrated into the daily life of the inhabitants.

- i. kitchen
- ii. dining room
- iii. eat-in kitchen
- iv. living room
- v. bedroom
- vi. loggia
- vii. living-dining-kitchen

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Selected unit plans of Emancipatory Living Lot 2. Drawn by the author, adapted from Sarah Gretsche, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., "Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bau-forscherin", 56.

Myra Warhaftig makes no physical separation between the space of labor and those of leisure by integrating the kitchen into the main living space of the dwelling. The architect's contribution to the *Frauenblock* (women's block) of IBA was the realization of her 1978 doctoral dissertation entitled *Die Behinderung der Emanzipation der Frau durch die Wohnung und die Möglichkeit zur Überwindung* (The hindrance of women's emancipation through the home and the possibility of overcoming it).⁴³ In this important work, Warhaftig criticized the fact that the required spatial separation of functions in domestic spaces resulted in unilaterally assigning housework to women. In response to this, Warhaftig introduced the notion of *Wohn-Raum-Küche* – a combined living and kitchen space. The project, completed in 1993 like Jachmann's, is a 24-unit apartment block, spread over four floors around three staircases. Despite the variety in the unit sizes, all apartments foster the same spatial relationships, where the *Wohn-Raum-Küche* (i) is a centrally located, large room, around which the bathroom, traditional living room (ii), individual rooms (iv), and balconies or loggias (iii) are articulated. This combination and distribution of space eliminates the need for a hallway – an indispensable economy in social housing which the author mastered.⁴⁴ By combining these functions, the resulting space is thus big enough to serve as a central meeting point for the household and take the function of the living room.⁴⁵ Warhaftig not only brought labor and leisure closer, but she also made the labor carried in the kitchen completely visible, since the space also acts as the main entrance to the dwelling. Housework is visible due to its proximity to the entrance, thus to the exterior, and due to its uncontained nature, thus to the household. For Warhaftig the kitchen should be a social space and housework should not be hidden, but visible and carried out by all residents.⁴⁶

This attitude led Warhaftig to project her *Wohn-Raum-Küche* in contrast to the 1926 Frankfurt kitchen by modernist architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, whose functional design offered only enough space for one person, the housewife.⁴⁷ Debated as a feminist project, this time-saving kitchen has been argued to reinforce the 'housewifification' of working-class women. In her essay "Blind Spot – Elisions in Early Accounts of Women in Architecture History," American historian and architect Mary Pepchinski highlights the ambivalence of Ernst May's claim on the usefulness of this innovative kitchen, designed "by a woman, for women" despite Schütte-Lihotzky was wholly unfamiliar with housework.⁴⁸ As a single parent herself, Warhaftig did not compromise the other tasks that needed to be performed simultaneously with cooking and still saw efficiency as a central concern. The *Wohn-Raum-Küche* thus allows the adult to pursue reproductive work without interrupting contact with the children or guests. In Ingo Kratisch and Jutta Sartory's short film on Warhaftig's career, the architect is filmed explaining the plan of her project to her daughter, with whom she lived in one of the apartments.⁴⁹ Warhaftig mentioned that by designing a kitchen large enough to act as living space, the separate living room required by the housing standards could be used as an additional bedroom. This meant that for the price of a two-bedroom apartment, one could get three bedrooms – her design cleverly manipulated building regulations to the advantage of single parents who are often financially disadvantaged in the housing market.

43 Sarah Gretsche, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., 'Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bauforscherin' (University Press of the TU Berlin, 2020), 49.

44 Anna Krüger, *Emanzipatorisches Wohnen: Myra Warhaftigs Beitrag Zur Internationalen Bauausstellung 1984/87*, 45.

45 Sarah Gretsche, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., "Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bauforscherin", 53.

46 Ibid. 53.

47 Ibid. 53.

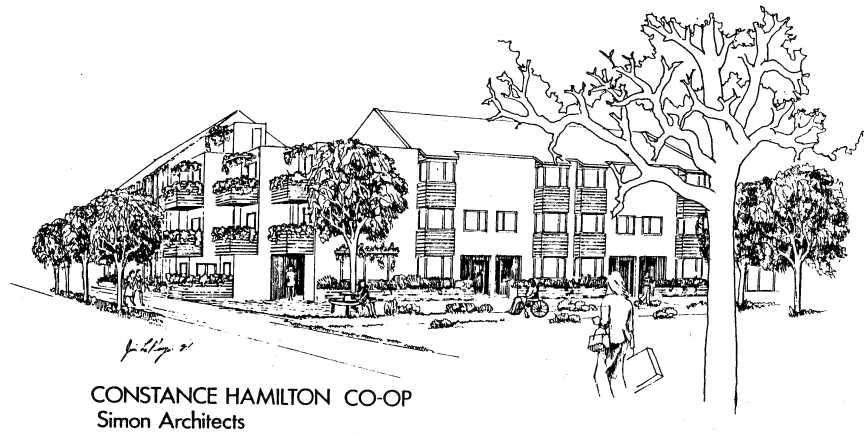
48 Pepchinski, 'Blind Spots: Elisions in Early Accounts of Women in Architectural History', in *Contemporary Feminist Spatial Practices*, ed. Anh-Linh Ngo, First edition, ARCH+ (Leipzig: Spector Books OHG, 2023), 46.

49 Myra Warhaftig: *Architektin, Historikerin Und Freundin*, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/270047265>.

i. Wohn-Raum-Küche
ii. living room
iii. loggia/balcony
iv. bedroom

A. one-bedroom unit
B. two-bedroom unit

ROOM FOR WOMEN

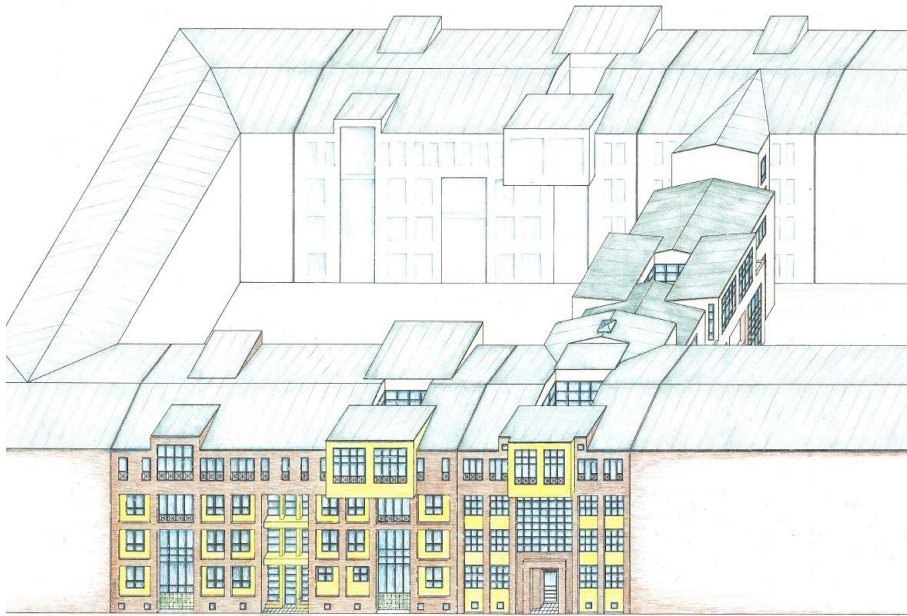


CONSTANCE HAMILTON CO-OP
Simon Architects

Exterior perspective of the Constance-Hamilton Co-op by Simon Architects. From Gerda R. Wekerle, *Women's Housing Projects in Eight Canadian Cities*, 15-16.



Photography of the Beguinage Co-op. From Gerda R. Wekerle and Sylvia Novac, "Developing Two Women's Housing Cooperatives", 227.



Axonometric view of Emancipatory Living Lot 3 – units A to H inside the courtyard. From Sarah Gretsch, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., “Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bauforscherin”, 67.



Street view of Emancipatory Living Lot 2 – unit A and B in the foreground. Photo by the author, 2023.



Photo of Myra Warhaftig in her Wohn-Raum-Küche. From Sarah Gretsch, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., "Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bauforscherin", 55.

Whether separated to provide a clear middle space not subordinated to the logic of labor, or opened to socialize the housework, the kitchen and its relationship to the social spaces of the house remain an open debate for feminists. The tension between these opposing attitudes shows the relative nature of what is considered ‘emancipatory’ when it comes to reproductive work. The different positions of the four examined projects not only confirm this tension but also represent the multitude of solutions that can be found between the two opposites. The two approaches in the Constance Hamilton Co-operative consider that the relationships between people, and between rooms, unfold differently according to the size of the household. The small unit (B) gathers the kitchen and the social functions in one space, whereas the large unit (A) separates the living room from the dining and kitchen to offer two distinct ones. The contained but central kitchen of the Beguinage Co-operative is complemented by a utility room, which allows some functions of the kitchen to be shifted to a smaller, hidden place. The typological variations around the kitchen in Jachmann’s IBA project represent the architect’s sensibility to the endless ways inhabitants’ lifestyles can unfold in and around the space of reproductive labor. On the contrary, Warhaftig’s apartments show a more radical stance by implementing a *Wohn-Raum-Küche* in all 24 units to socialize housework and render it visible.

One feature that is common to most plans is the central position of the kitchen, often paired with the entrance of the units. However, the centrality of the kitchen goes beyond its representation in the plan, it is manifested in the space given to it within domestic life. The apartments are thought of in a way that includes the kitchen, thus housework, as an integral part of domestic life. The women involved, users and architects, seem to have materialized their understanding of the house as a place of labor. The house is no longer disguised as a small heaven, as it was advertised in the post-war United States.



Pamphlet for Matrix's exhibition "Home Truths" - about women and the design of houses.
From Matrix Open Feminist Architecture Archive.

FRAME AND FUNCTION

50 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 46.

51 Federici, *Caliban et la sorcière*, 175.

52 Ibid. 177.

53 Aureli and Giudici, "Familiar Horror," 119.

54 Matrix, *Making Space*, 4.

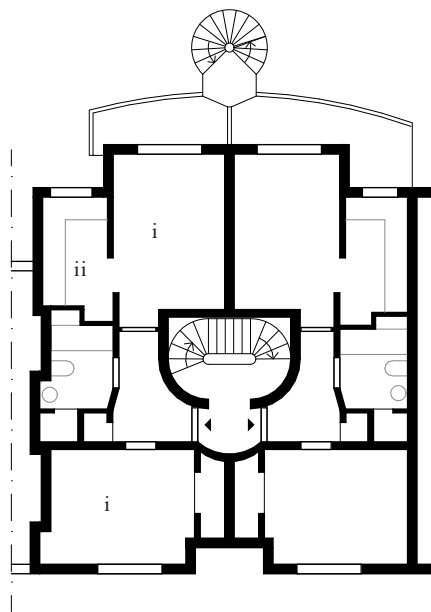
55 Karen A. Franck and Sherry Ahrentzen, eds., *New Households New Housing* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989).

56 Aureli and Giudici, "Familiar Horror," 120.

The domestic space and its spatial relations are inherently tied to the nuclear family and the hierarchies within. Mies places the family against the biological logic that has been applied to it. She asserts that the structure of the nuclear family institution is nothing but hierarchical and inequalitarian.⁵⁰ Accordingly, in the new bourgeois family which appeared in the period of the transition to capitalism, the man represented the State and was charged to subjugate the subordinate classes: the wife and then children.⁵¹ Through the 19th century, the notion had percolated down the class strata, the modern family was generalized in all working class and it relied on the full-time unpaid labor of the housewife.⁵² For the gender division of labor to be exploited by capitalist productivity, the roles within the family had to be accepted and the character of the rooms inside the house had to be just as defined and uncontested.⁵³ Spaces in the single-family house have been defined according to gender and age – the master bedroom as opposed to the children's room, that were divided between boys and girls. The division within the nuclear family house was also inscribed in a larger scale since modern cities were planned to segregate different aspects of life, particularly working away from living.⁵⁴

In the 1980s, the image of the typical household frozen as a young family did not fit the demographic of the time but the housing market did not represent this reality.⁵⁵ The following four projects respond to the strict program of nuclear family housing by introducing possibilities for appropriation rather than prescription. In a way, through the implementation of flexibility in their plans, the projects seem to echo the premodern house which showed fluidity and proximity between the different functions, both productive and reproductive.⁵⁶ The Grosvenor Terrace Housing (1991, London), two apartments from the Frauen-Werk-Stadt (1996, Vienna) the House of Meanings (1970-2008), and the Congregate House (1985, New Jersey).

ROOM FOR WOMEN



Typical plans of Grosvenor Terrace Housing. Drawn by the author from Matrix, *Grosvenor Terrace First and Second Floor Plans*, 1987, 1:100, Matrix Open Feminist Architecture Archives.

57 During the late 1970s and early 1980s in Britain, governmental funding was available for voluntary organizations in the form of technical aid, which could be used for advice on design issues. Operating as a Community Technical Aid Centre, Matrix's projects were all publicly funded social projects and technical advice, which enabled them to challenge the architects' ways of working. 'Matrix Feminist Design Cooperative – Making Difference: Architectures of Gender', accessed 25 December 2023, <https://blogs.ethz.ch/making-difference/2018/01/12/matrix-feminist-design-cooperative/>.

58 Anne Thorne to Camyl Vigneault, email communication, 2024

59 "Grosvenor Terrace Housing (1988 – 91)," Matrix Open Feminist Architecture Archives, accessed December 25, 2023, <http://www.matrixfeministarchitecturearchive.co.uk/grovesnor/>.

60 Ibid.

61 No information could be obtained at the time of the editorial deadline.

62 "Grosvenor Terrace Housing (1988 – 91)".

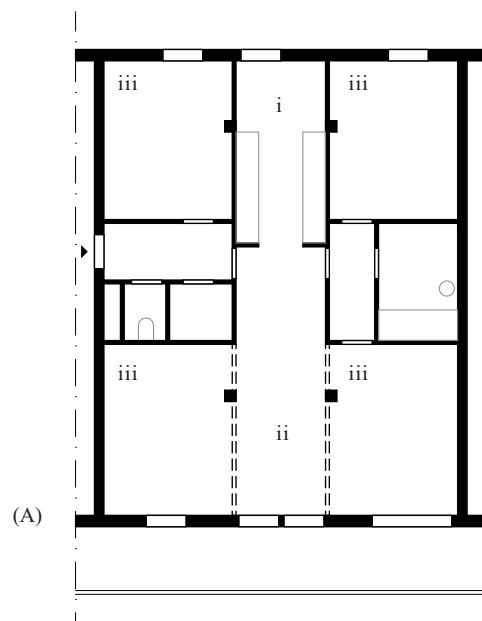
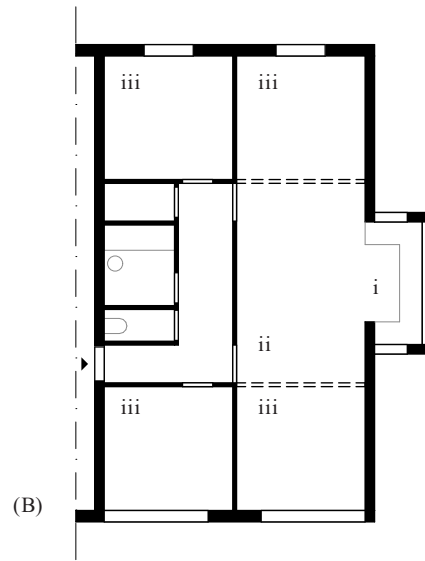
As a housing building exclusively for single women, Grosvenor Terrace housing maximizes flexibility in a two-room plan. The project, located in London, is a three-story apartment building of eighteen units grouped around three staircases. It was built by Matrix Design Group⁵⁷ in 1991, as a commission by a housing association that provided accommodation for single women coming out of institutional care. Architect and member of Matrix Anne Thorne recalls that this was a groundbreaking concept at the time.⁵⁸ This precise target group led Matrix to design one typology of a two-room apartment with minor differences throughout the floors. The unit has two main rooms of similar sizes, to allow residents to decide how they want to occupy them.⁵⁹ Rather than aiming for a single space including cooking, eating, and living functions like in the one-bedroom apartment of Constance Hamilton co-op, Matrix opted to keep the uses separated, resulting in a high number of rooms. The entrance is central to the apartment and also acts as the main distributive space. The bathroom faces the entrance door and on both sides are the two similar size rooms (i). The kitchen (ii) is accessible through the room at the back of the house, which is also equipped with a balcony.

Despite the conventional appearance of the floor plan and the fact that each room seems to be assigned a specific use, Matrix was clear in their intention to free the inhabitant from the normative apartment layout since their lifestyle does not conform to it anyway.⁶⁰ Flexibility is found in the possibilities of use. Even though the traditional way to occupy the apartment would be to set a bedroom in the front room, where the storage has been planned, and to have a living-eating room in the back connected to the kitchen, it is also imaginable for someone to use the back room for sleeping combined with day activities and to keep the front room for work-related activity. Since the entrance is adjacent to it, a client could be welcomed in complete separation from the reproductive labor areas, the kitchen, and the bedroom. This is an interpretation based on the plan since no post-occupancy studies seem to have been performed, and contacting the Matrix members who participated in the project was unsuccessful.⁶¹ This project enabled Matrix to explore ways in which housing spaces could be appropriated, particularly by people not taken into account by normative housing layouts designed for a specific idea of the family.⁶²

i. room

ii. kitchen

ROOM FOR WOMEN



Selected unit plan of Frauen-Werk-Stadt. Drawn by the author, adapted from Eva Kail, "Frauen-Werk-Stadt," Information booklet, 2001, 29-31.

63 The City of Vienna established the Women's Office in 1992, with authority in urban affairs.

Oliwia Jackowska and María Novas Ferradás, 'Who Owns Public Spaces? The Trailblazer Exhibition on Women's Everyday Life in the City of Vienna (1991)', *Planning Perspectives* 38, no. 2 (4 March 2023): 253.

64 The work of "The New Everyday Life" group, a decade-long transdisciplinary women's group active in the 1980s and 1990s, is an example of feminist perspectives for community planning. Kirsi Saarikangas and Liisa Horelli, "Modern Home, Environment, and Gender", 53.

65 To ensure a variety of living arrangements for different income levels, the project had two different property developers. Franziska Ullman and Lieselotte Peretti were granted the part developed by the City of Vienna and Elsa Prochazka and Gisela Podreka, the ones by the housing association GPA.

66 Gisela Podreka, interview by Camyl Vigneault, 22 December 2023.

67 Ibid.

68 Stadt Wien, Magistratsdirektion and Geschäftsbereich Bauten und Technik, "Frauen-Werk-Stadt I – Alltagsgerechtes Planen und Bauen," n.d., 6, accessed November 3, 2023.

69 Eva Kail, "Frauen-Werk-Stadt," 2001, 30–31.

70 Podreka, interview.

71 Stadt Wien, Magistratsdirektion and Geschäftsbereich Bauten und Technik, "Frauen-Werk-Stadt I – Alltagsgerechtes Planen und Bauen," 6.

In the case of Frauen-Werk-Stadt (Women-Work-City), a 350-unit social housing project in Vienna built in 1997, a very different notion of flexibility can be observed. The housing competition for Frauen-Werk-Stadt was initiated by Eva Kail, head of Vienna's *Frauenburo*⁶³, in 1993 and had roots in *The New Everyday Life* principle developed in the 1980s by research groups in the Nordic Countries.⁶⁴ Although the project as a whole includes a variety of dwelling layouts as well as common facilities including a kindergarten, this section will focus on two apartments designed by architects Elsa Prochazka (B) and Gisela Podreka (A).⁶⁵ Podreka's flexible apartments are repeated on three levels of her five-floor linear building. Some are directly accessible from one of the five staircases, as shown on the plan, and others from the exterior walkway that also served as a balcony. In a discussion with the architect, she emphasized that the most important aspect of her layout is the possibility of having four rooms with the same spatial quality, that the inhabitants can use in multiple ways in different periods of their family life.⁶⁶ This includes keeping only the two rooms around the kitchen to create a larger living room. This attitude was novel for that time and was a response to the programmed obsolescence of the traditional single-family house.⁶⁷ The rooms are planned to occupy the four corners of the apartment, leaving a room spanning the entire depth of the apartment for the eat-in kitchen and social area, with a service block on each side for the entrance and the bathroom. The hierarchy of rooms was reduced by balancing room sizes, thereby improving their suitability for different forms of living together.⁶⁸

The architect recalled the exchanges that she had with the future inhabitants, where they could decide the layout and especially where she could share with them how to use the peculiar apartment concept. Podreka notes that, as this was her first solo project, she learned a lot from Elsa Prochazka, the architect who designed the western part of the plot. While going through the project's booklet⁶⁹ published by the city of Vienna at the time, Podreka remarked that "She [Prochazka] had made these drawings showing the flexibility of her plan and I learned from her to do drawings like this about how to use my floor plan."⁷⁰ Indeed, Prochazka received recognition for the clarity of her concept, which shared the same principle of a flexible number of private rooms.⁷¹ Although similar to Podreka's in its distribution, one major difference is that all the wet rooms and common spaces are concentrated in the center of the apartment, which means that when all four rooms are built, the common area loses its view on both sides. In this case, the bay window kitchen (i) thus serves as the only source of daylight and natural ventilation for the entire space. Despite the differences, Frauen-Werk-Stadt shows two interpretations of a plan that can evolve according to the changing family structure and occupation of the inhabitants.

i. eat-in kitchen

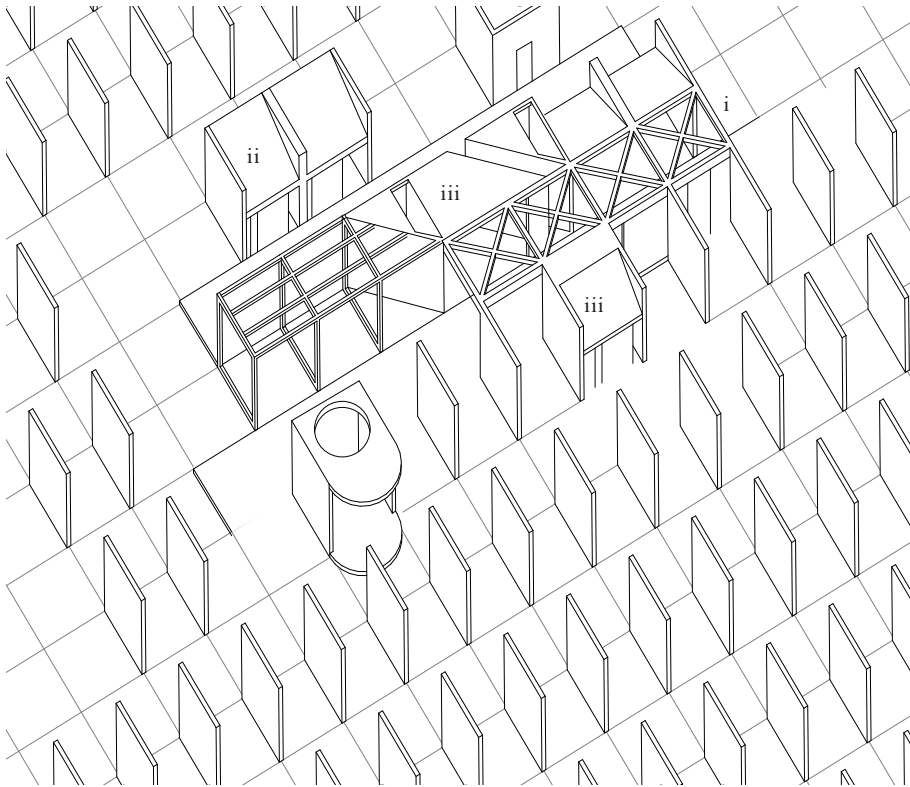
ii. living room

iii. room

A. unit by Podreka

B. unit by Prochazka

ROOM FOR WOMEN



Axonometric view of the House of Meanings – Puerto Rico. Drawn by the author, adapted from Susana Torre's archives.

72 Susana Torre, *The House of Meanings*, n.d., Susana Torre, accessed November 19, 2023.

73 Heresies, "Making Room - Women and Architecture," *Heresies 11* 3, no. 3 (1981), <http://heresiesfilmproject.org/archive/>.

74 Torre advances that "possibly they found in the ideal of the project many affinities with the changing patterns of their own lives". *Heresies*, 51.

75 Geraldine Tedder, ed., *Space as Matrix* (GTA Exhibitions, ETH Zurich, 2022), 1.

76 Susana Torre to Camyl Vigneault, email communication, 2023

77 Ibid.

78 Susana Torre, "Dwelling as Manifesto," Blog | Susana Torre, August 6, 2021, <https://www.susanatorre.net/blog/>.

79 Susana Torre to Camyl Vigneault.

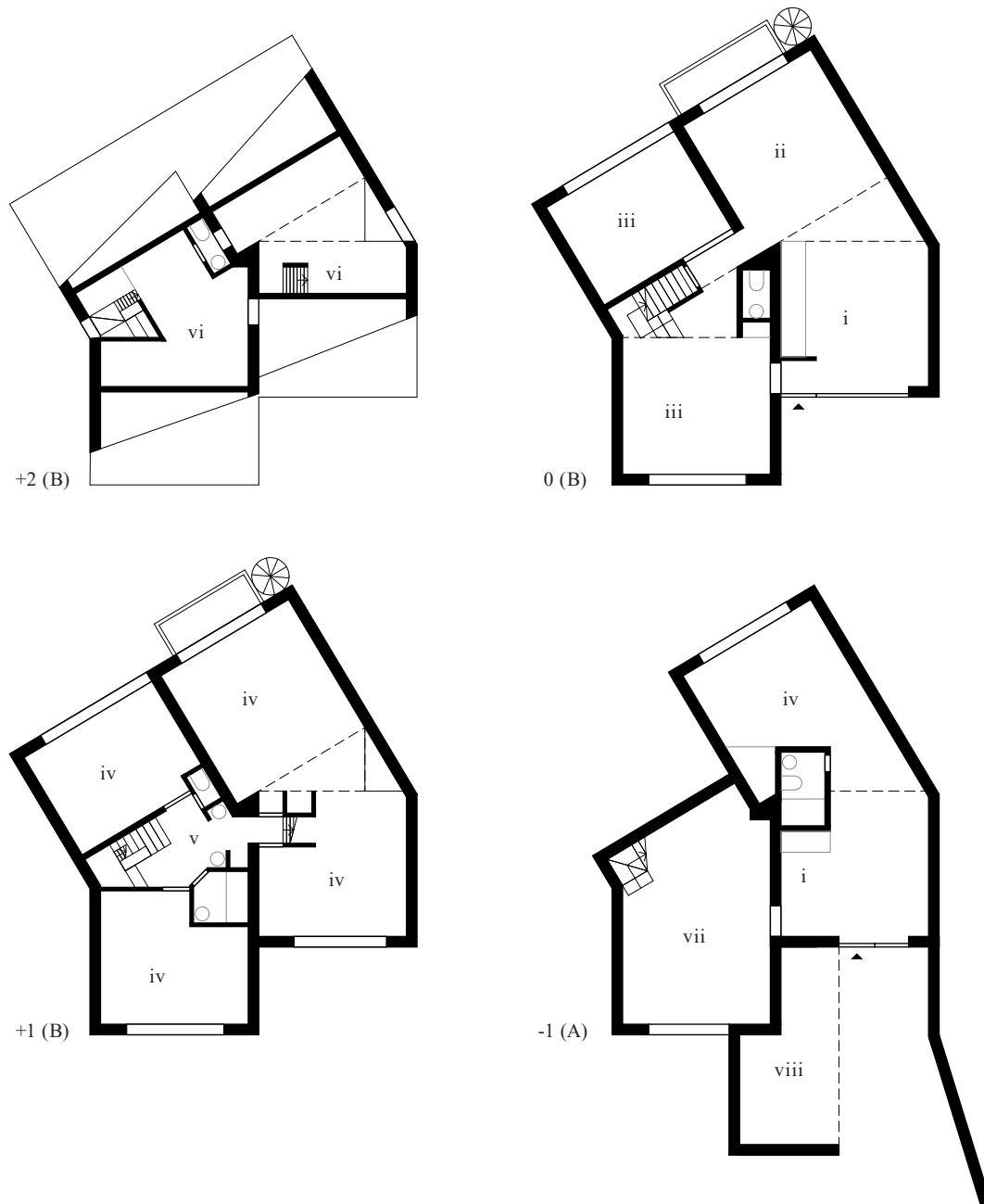
80 Heresies, 'Making Room - Women and Architecture', *Heresies 11* 3, no. 3 (1981), 51.

The House of Meanings, designed by Argentinian-American architect Susana Torre between 1970-72, is a project that explores the limits of multifunctionality within domestic architecture. The project was not site-specific, but theoretical: an elementary structure that had the ability to respond to change thanks to its modular design. The project was developed as a written and sketched proposal addressing what Torre describes as "the unresolved tension between the ever-changing process of dwelling and the finite condition of the architectural object that contains that process."⁷² In exchanges with the architect, Torre clarified that for this very reason, she preferred not to represent the project through plans. Even though different versions of the project have been drawn, they remain only possible examples of the House of Meanings which applies the principle of a 'matrix of space'. In an article entitled "Space as Matrix" published for the first time in 1981, in the feminist magazine *Heresies*, Torre lays out the ideas behind the House of Meanings.⁷³ She presents the two versions she had sketched in the 1970s for private clients – both women.⁷⁴ These proposals, known as the 'Puerto Rico' and the 'Santo Domingo' projects were not meant as strict single-family houses, but were both planned to allow for extended visits by friends and family – sometimes resulting in two households sharing the same house. In the article, Torre criticizes the blind reproduction of a fixed set of functions for each room, and the relations that are implicit within them.⁷⁵ Her critique stems from questioning the typology of the nuclear family home that had often brought with it a gendered division of labor.

By designing multifunctional dwellings with large sliding doors instead of walls, Torre also reacted to the hierarchy of uses and fixed functions imposed by minimal housing standards through specific measurements tied to standard furniture arrangement.⁷⁶ Consequently, the dimensions of the square grid inherent to the two house projects, where modules are occupied by rooms could be three to four meters.⁷⁷ However, these dimensions would change according to the place and program. The scalability of the principle can be seen in the Carboneras project, the only built version of House of Meanings, in 2008, by Torre herself.⁷⁸ There the modules are not rooms, but entire dwellings. The 'covered interior street' (i) connecting the rooms in the Puerto Rico project becomes the space connecting the different units in the Carboneras project.⁷⁹ This spatial relationship between the modules illustrates Torre's critique of the distinction between enclosed rooms for private activities and corridors strictly for circulation.⁸⁰ By making the corridor the same size as a room, this spatial setup – originally designed to separate the household members from their hired servants – is now large enough to bring people together. Hence in the case of Torre's designs, the notion of multifunctionality is expanded, responding not only to the changing needs over a lifetime but also over the course of one day.

- i. covered interior street
- ii. guests living quarters
- iii. multifunctional room

ROOM FOR WOMEN



Plans of the Congregate House. Drawn by the author, adapted from Jacqueline Leavitt, "Two Prototypical Designs for Single Parents", 168-169.

81 Jacqueline Leavitt, 'Two Prototypical Designs for Single Parents', in *New Households, New Housing*, ed. Karen A. Franck and Sherry Ahrentzen (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989), 160.

82 Ibid. 164.

83 Ibid. 162.

84 Jacqueline Leavitt, 'The Shelter-Service Crisis and Single Parents', in *The Unsheltered Woman: Women and Housing*, ed. Randall Hinshaw, 1st ed. (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 1985), 161.

85 Ibid. 163.

86 Jacqueline Leavitt, "Two Prototypical Designs for Single Parents", 162.

87 Ibid. 164.

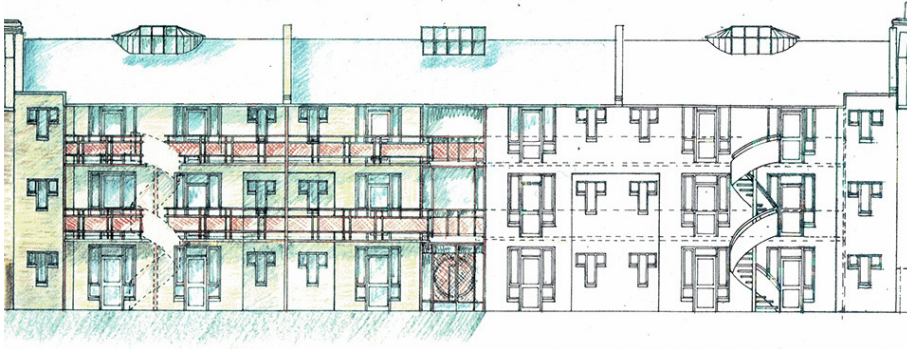
88 Ibid. 169.

The Congregate House was designed in 1982 by American architects Jacqueline Leavitt and Troy West as a prototype house in Bergen County, New Jersey. In exploring solutions to the lack of mobility faced both by single parents and the elderly, the project developed into a multi-family house adapted for both living and working.⁸¹ The case study was requested by the League of Women Voters who became increasingly aware of the developing housing problems faced by two primarily female groups: single parents and the elderly.⁸² Indeed, Leavitt highlights that the lives of the majority of single parents were in stark contrast to those of nuclear families, but shared a lack of mobility with elderly people.⁸³ The half basement hosts an autonomous one-bedroom apartment (A) with a full bath and kitchen – convenient for elderly people who wish to share their child-raising experience with the single-parents, while also maintaining a place of their own.⁸⁴ The ground floor is entirely shared by the residents and includes an eat-in kitchen (i), a living room (ii), and work-related spaces (iii) anticipated to be used for more than one activity.

The plan of the Congregate House is characterized by two pairs of similar size rooms, and the non-orthogonal orientation of these main rooms creates interstices in which the bathroom amenities (v) are conveniently placed. The angled geometry of the open plan also served to enhance privacy since it creates little nooks.⁸⁵ The size of the rooms is proportional to the size of the household. For example, the kitchen is spacious enough for everyone to eat together or for meetings. Two of the rooms are equipped with individual entrances (iii). They were thought of as spaces where inhabitants could work from home and receive clients during the day, and double up as individual or household recreation the rest of the time. Allowing a closer relationship between residence and workplace came from seeing mobility, defined as the degree of freedom in moving between residence, workplace, public facilities, and commercial settings as a point of departure in the design.⁸⁶ The same logic of the four main rooms appears on the second floor where they are used as bedrooms (iv). They are designed large enough to be shared by children or for a parent and a crib. Privacy was a key component in the design of such multi-family houses and Leavitt stresses this as the only way the common spaces can work.⁸⁷ For instance, on the private floor, bathrooms (v) have split facilities to maximize individual use.⁸⁸ The uppermost floor features sleeping lofts (vi) under the pitched roof, which enhances the flexibility of the house in terms of sleeping arrangements. The case of the Congregate House displays a notion of flexibility that is generated by acknowledging and considering the needs of multiple households living together and is made possible thanks to the size of the rooms and the balance between shared and private spaces.

- i. kitchen
- ii. living room
- iii. work / multi. space
- iv. bedroom
- v. hallway lavatory & separate toilet room
- vi. sleeping loft
- vii. garage / multi. space
- viii. storage

ROOM FOR WOMEN

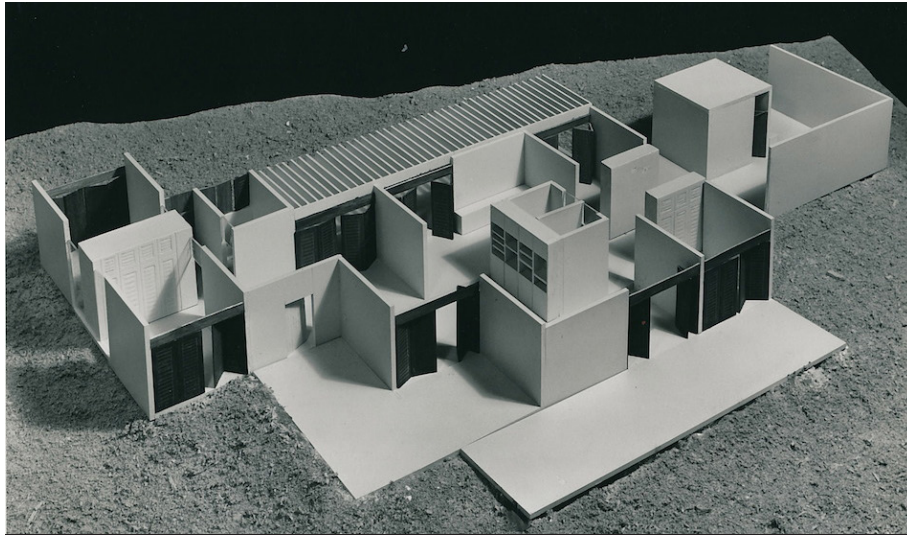


Hand drawn back elevation of Grosvenor Terrace Housing. From Matrix Open Feminist Architecture Archive.



Site view of Frauen-Werk-Stadt – unit B in the foreground and unit A in the background.
Photo by the author, 2023.

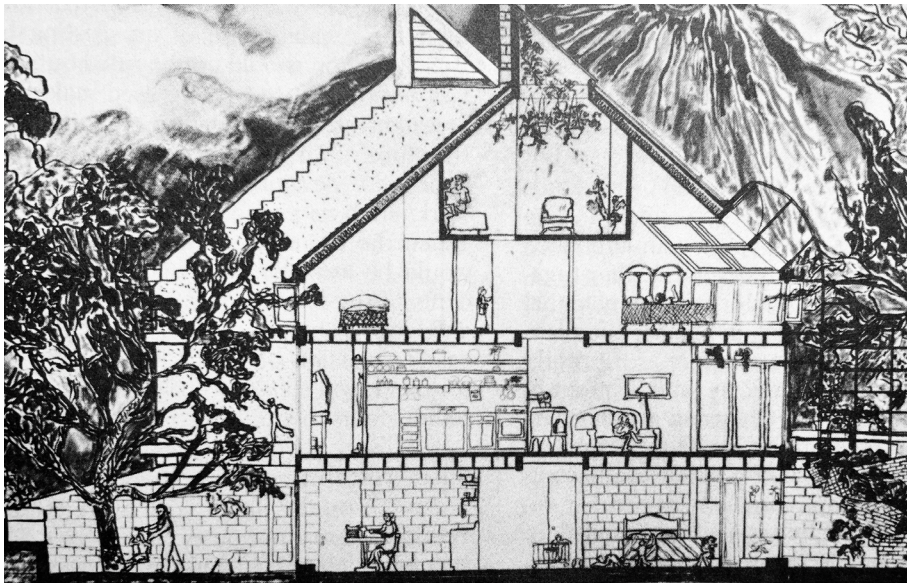
FRAME AND FUNCTION



Model photo of the House of Meaning – Santo Domingo. From Susana Torre's archives.



Photo of the connecting space between the units of House of Meanings – Carboneras. From Susana Torre's archives.

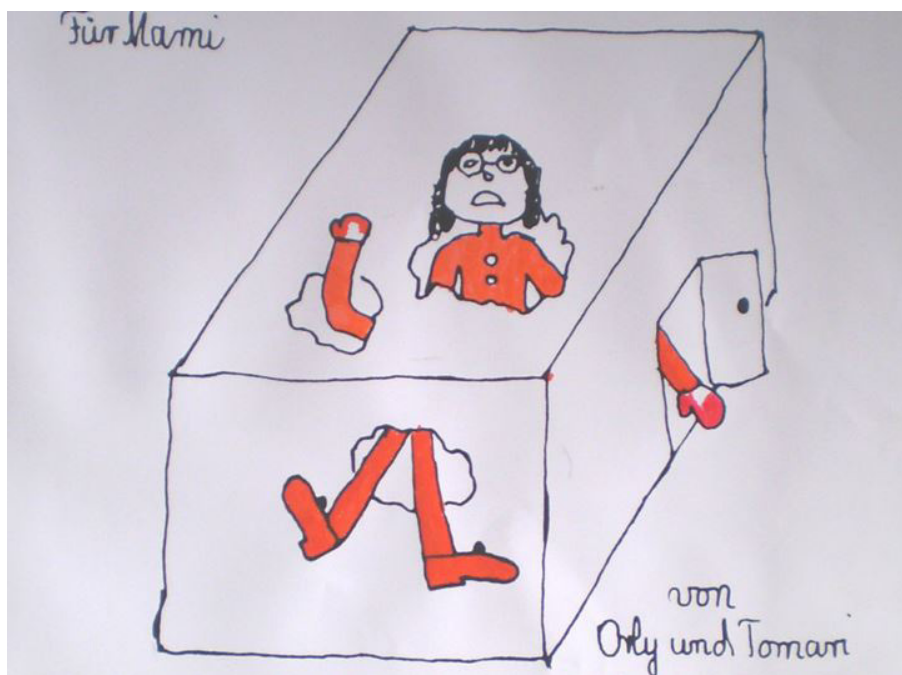


Section of the Congregate House. From Jacqueline Leavitt, "Two Prototypical Designs for Single Parents", 166.

The strict domestic program tailored to the nuclear family as an institution upholding gender division of labor was challenged by these four projects. They show alternative takes on the functions given to the house and therefore challenge its contained hierarchies. Rather than framing behaviors within rooms, the apartments are all planned for flexibility with the concern that all constellations of households can find their place. Grosvenor Terrace Housing meets the needs of single women by offering them two rooms of similar quality, that can be used according to their wishes. The two apartment layouts of Frauen-Werk-Stadt propose a flexible frame that can respond to the evolution of family life and the various forms it can take. Similarly, the House of Meanings proposes a modular system composed of multifunctional square rooms that do not assume a set of pre-established functions. The Congregate House, planned for single-parent families to live together, maximizes the uses possible within one house and brings working closer to living. Flexibility is thus either integrated into the plan, with adaptable units or it is manifested in the plan through the lack of specified functions.

As American researchers Karen A. Franck and Sherry Ahrentzen put forward in their co-edited book *New Households New Housing*, the image of the “married couple with young children, with an employed husband and a homemaker wife” did not match the late nineteen-eighties demographic realities.⁸⁹ The notion of family that these projects refer to thus includes a much wider definition than the modern nuclear family as a patriarchal institution. The Frauen-Werk-Stadt apartments intended for family life were especially clear in their acknowledgment that family life is not a constant fixed on two parents and children and that family life cannot fit within a single strict frame. Others treated family life as outside the nuclear boundaries, including friends and family like the House of Meanings, but also other people, or family units who however share similar lifestyles and with whom a new balance in terms of housework can be achieved.

89 Franck and Ahrentzen, *New Households New Housing*, xi.



Drawing by Orly Warhaftig for her mom Myra Warhaftig, 1982. From Sarah Gretsch, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., "Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bauforscherin", 43.

90 Silvia Federici, Preface to *Family, Welfare, and the State: Between Progressivism and the New Deal*, by Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Common Notions (Common Notions, 2015), V.

91 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 31.

92 Aureli and Giudici, "Familiar Horror," 109.

93 Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1981), 13.

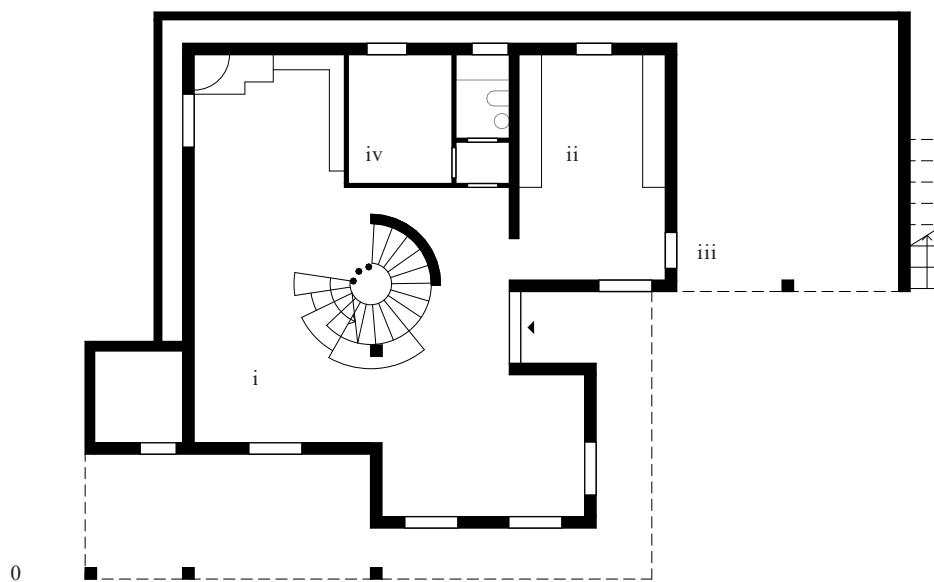
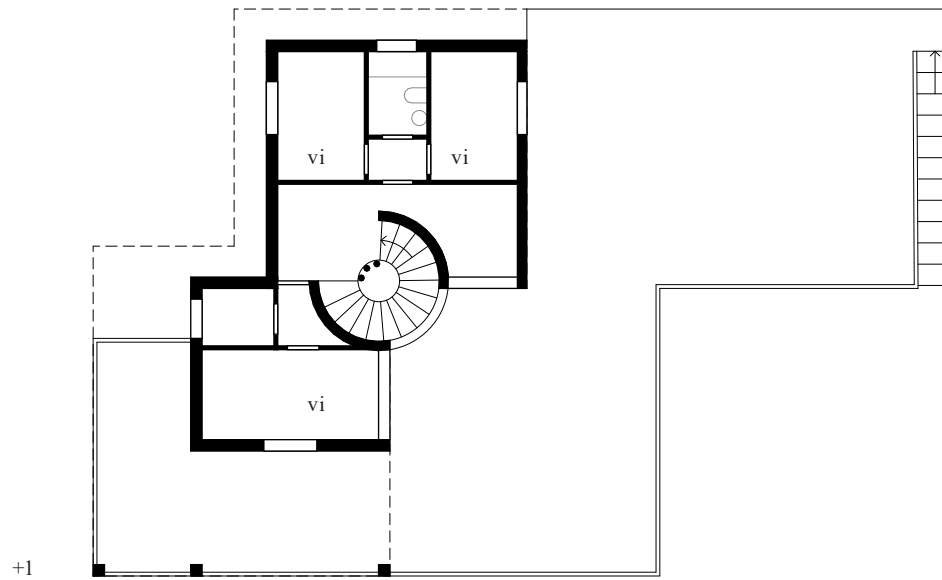
94 Ibid. 5.

95 Federici, *Caliban et la sorcière*, 174.

Even if, historically, women have been taking care of reproductive labor, it was only with the transition to capitalism, where the working class lost its means of reproduction, that this labor became truly exploited.⁹⁰ The women's reproductive work could be defined as non-productive by being socially invisible. This was made possible by shutting up women in the isolated nuclear family.⁹¹ The architects and authors Maria Shéhérazade Giudici and Pier Vittorio Aureli argued in their essay "Familiar Horror": "Privacy exists as a condition of the household to safeguard it as an integral economic property rooted in the inner sphere of the family."⁹² Important in this regard, I believe, is the relation between the interior of the house and what is exterior to it, both in terms of property and people. The private home has a strict boundary and this boundary, Hayden ties to the economic boundary of the women's sphere.⁹³

Material Feminists had identified the isolation of women as a major issue of their role as housewives. They proposed to socialize housework as a solution and advocated for "women's control over women's sphere, as women's control over reproduction."⁹⁴ Although with this claim Material Feminists did not seem to challenge the private sphere as the women's sphere, their aim to socialize reproductive work can be seen as a direct attack on the institution of the family since, as Federici noted, the family is an instrument in the privatization of social relations.⁹⁵ Material Feminists did not however challenge the notion of privacy itself. In socializing the housework in their projects, they were careful to retain individual family privacy. By overcoming what had to be performed in the privacy of a home, the isolation suffered by women can be challenged. By rendering reproductive work as visible work, its value can be reassessed. Although they represent change on a small scale, the projects in the following section are attempts at challenging the isolation women faced via the private sphere of the house: Casa Giudice (1978, Varese), Prästgårdshagen (1983, Stockholm), Stacken (1981, Gotheborg) and the HOMES revitalization (1981, U.S.).

ROOM FOR WOMEN



Plans of Casa Giudice – the first floor is a non-confirmed reconstruction. Drawn by the author, adapted from Mariagrazia Sironi's archives.

96 Galimberti, *Images of Class*, 289.

97 Mariagrazia Sironi to Jacopo Galimberti, translated from Italian by the author

98 Galimberti argued that this feature of Casa Giudice is the architectural form of the drive towards the exterior space that had characterized the *Mum Has Gone Out* exhibition. Galimberti, *Images of Class*, 289.

99 Mariagrazia Sironi to Jacopo Galimberti, translated from Italian by the author

100 The particular shape of the staircase comes from it being also a bench, a countertop, and a container.

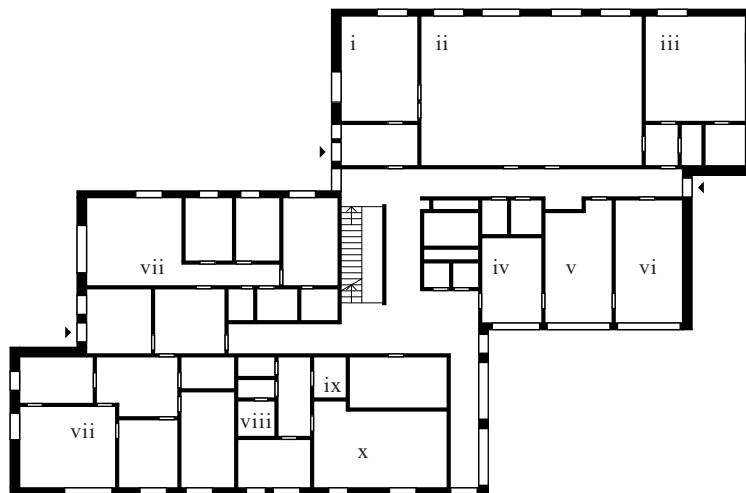
101 Galimberti, *Images of Class*, 290.

Casa Giudice is a detached single-family house designed by Italian architect Mariagrazia Sironi, one of the members of the *Gruppo Femminista Immagine*. The project was built in 1977-78 in the periphery of Varese, in Northern Italy. It is part of a series of single-family houses that the architect designed in the late 1970s, on which the workshops and research carried out by the *Gruppo Femminista Immagine* had a strong influence.⁹⁶ As Sironi has stated, the house opens and does not enclose the inhabitants in a cage.⁹⁷ The boundaries of private property are challenged by bringing the inside and the outside closer together.⁹⁸ Indeed, even though the house is partly underground due to its location on the slope of a hilly area, the many French doors allow the interior spaces to open up to the garden outside.⁹⁹ As such, the kitchen (ii) is directly connected to the portico (iii), and the large common space (i) opens to the garden in three directions. Connected to a small cloister including a pantry (iv) and the toilet (v), the common area is characterized by two fixed elements: the fireplace and integrated banquette in the deeper part and the prominent circular staircase in the center.¹⁰⁰ Since the staircase is encased in glass on the second floor, Sironi advances that it brings outside whoever transitions between the private and the common sphere.¹⁰¹ It forces the household, especially the housewife, to go out. The boundaries of the property are blurred metaphorically through increased visibility to and from the exterior.

The second-floor plan is a non-confirmed reconstruction based on a written description by the author, as well as an axonometric drawing. It is where three small bedrooms (vi) are located. Via this plan, we understand that it is because the pitched roof only covers half of the house from the reduced size of the second floor, that Sironi could encase the staircase in glass. This staircase is the main feature that distinguishes Casa Giudice from a traditional detached single-family house which typically also groups the bedrooms above the common spaces but connected with an 'interior' staircase. The fact that this is the only project examined in this thesis that features an independent single-family house might be surprising considering Sironi's proximity to the radical 'Wages for Housework' campaign via the collective. However, such a privately financed commission might have been the only way to put forward any type of feminist proposal in the Italian context, considering that - unlike North America and the Nordic countries - Italy had a complete lack of institutional gender politics, welfare or care services.

- i. living area
- ii. kitchen
- iii. portico
- iv. pantry
- v. bedroom

ROOM FOR WOMEN



Common ground floor plan of Prästgårdshagen. Drawn by the author, adapted from Alison Woodward, "Communal Housing in Sweden", 83.

102 The 'little community house' was spread through BiG's book *Det Lilla Kollektivhuset* (The Little Community House)

103 Alison Woodward, 'Communal Housing in Sweden', in *New Households, New Housing*, ed. Karen A. Franck and Sherry Ahrentzen (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989), 81.

104 *The Berlage Sessions: "The Cohousing Movement's Stockholm"* by Helena Mattsson, accessed October 13, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqb1W-gLtWA>.

105 Dick Urban Vestbro, ed., *Living Together - Cohousing Ideas and Realities around the World*, (Stockholm: Division of Urban and Regional Studies. Royal Inst. of Technology [u.a.], 2010), 23.

106 Familjebostäder, "Prästgårdshagen i Älvsjö," accessed January 5, 2024, <https://familjebostader.com/uthyres/bostader/kollektivboende/prastgardshagen/>.

107 Vestbro and Liisa Horelli, 'Design for Gender Equality: The History of Co-Housing Ideas and Realities', 327.

108 Ibid. 325.

109 Ibid. 327.

110 Ibid. 330.

111 *The Berlage Sessions*.

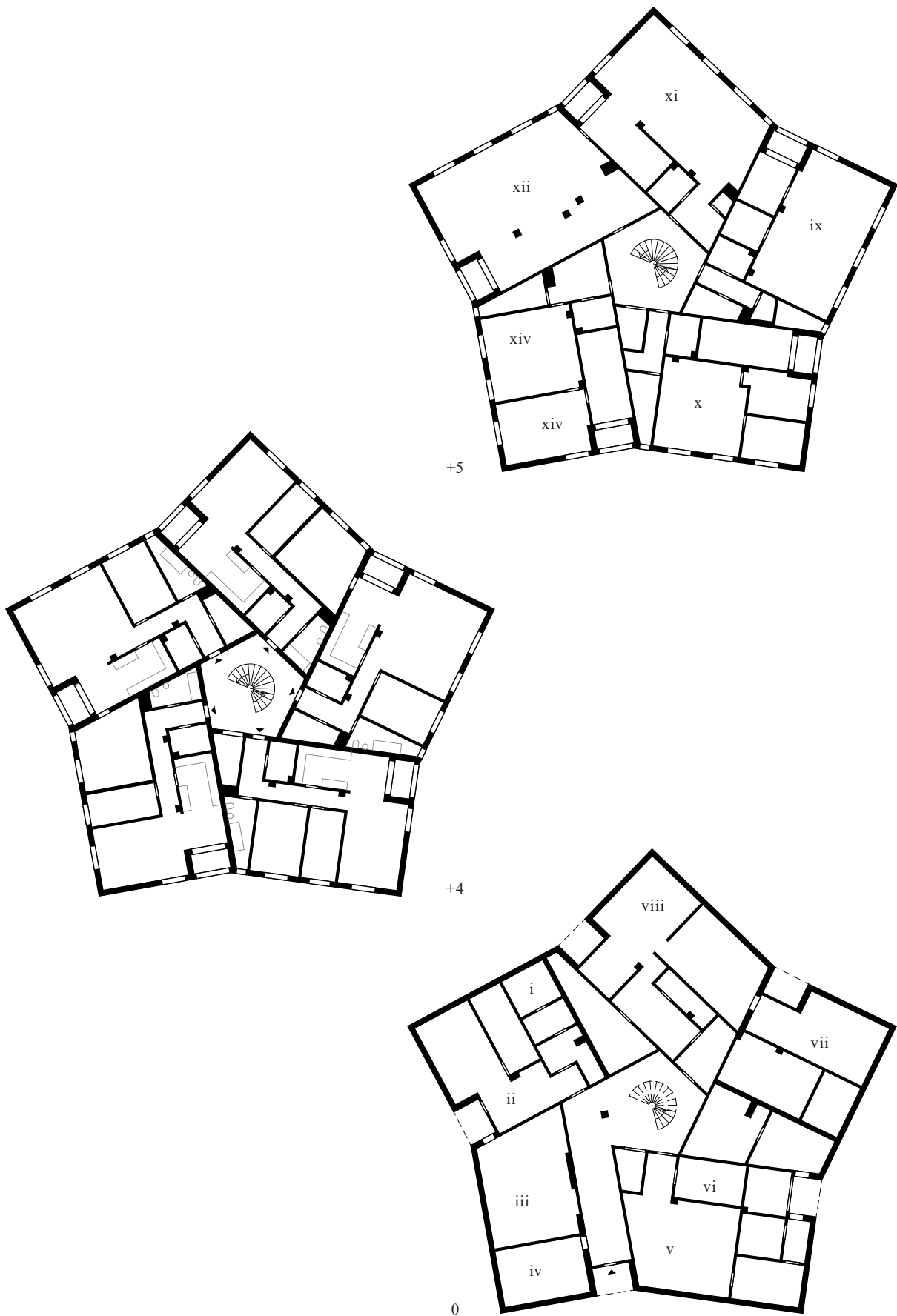
112 The rejection of housework was the position of the 'Wages for Housework' campaign. Ibid.

- i. TV & coffee room
- ii. dining room
- iii. kitchen
- iv. carpentry workshop
- v. playroom
- vi. laundry
- vii. kindergarten
- viii. sauna
- ix. photography lab
- x. ceramic workshop

Prästgårdshagen, following the philosophy of 'the little community house'¹⁰² by the Swedish women's group *Bo i Gemenskap* (Live in Community, BiG), challenges the limits of the individual dwelling and what activities must be performed in the privacy of the household. Specifically designed as a communal housing based on self-help by the tenants, Prästgårdshagen was the first of its kind to be built in Stockholm in 1983.¹⁰³ The project was initiated by the municipal housing company and designed by the coordinator's architects. As a prominent characteristic of BiG's model, several care and household functions are moved from the little family to the 'intermediary level' of the living community.¹⁰⁴ This community is constituted of 12 to 50 households that do not form a specific category, and where shared work with daily activities was coupled with living.¹⁰⁵ Despite unsuccessful attempts to obtain the upper floor plans from the company Familjebostäder, who owns the building, it is known that the four-and-a-half levels above the common floor include 33 apartments ranging from one- to four bedrooms.¹⁰⁶ As a common feature of tenant-managed projects, units are reduced in size by approximately 10% to provide common facilities. In the case of Prästgårdshagen, only the dining space in the kitchen of each unit was eliminated, which was later regretted by some residents.¹⁰⁷ On each of the dwelling floors is a common room that acts as an extension of the tenant's living room. This room can be seen as an intermediate space, shared among a group of households, in comparison to the ground floor spaces, which are common to all.

These common spaces are mostly related to reproductive work, such as kindergarten (vii), laundry room (vi), and kitchen (iii). BiG argued that the disadvantage of traditional housework was it being carried out in isolation.¹⁰⁸ The collective kitchen and the tenant's involvement resulting in collective dinners is an image of the socialization of reproductive labor and rendering housework visible. The eating room (ii), the largest space, is situated between the large kitchen and the TV and coffee room (i). On the other side of the plan, but connected via a central hallway, is the municipality-run kindergarten. Adult supervision over spaces dedicated to children seem to have been planned. For example, the playroom opens onto the carpentry workshop and the laundry room. Moreover, several of the common rooms are provided with glass walls, a fact that facilitates general overview.¹⁰⁹ The collectivization of square meters also offered rooms for leisure and work-related activities, and additional functions to the standard single-family house such as the sauna (viii), photography lab (ix), and ceramic workshop (x). The organization of the communal house testifies to an important reduction of housework and especially an equal share of responsibilities for work at home.¹¹⁰ As part of her research on the co-housing movement in Stockholm, Helena Mattsson clarifies that BiG's model was a search for reorganizing the way of treating social services.¹¹¹ The members of BiG rethought social reproduction concerning the home, they saw housework and care as a potential social resource rather than a burden, as something to reject.¹¹² Prästgårdshagen thus exists as an example of collective housing, where the comfort and security of co-residence are offered without sacrificing the privacy and independence created by complete individual dwelling units. Nevertheless, the boundaries of those private dwellings are stretched since the household spills out and socializes reproductive work with the 'little community'.

ROOM FOR WOMEN



Common ground floor, residential floor, common fifth floor plans of Stacken. Drawn by the author, adapted from Claes Caldenby, "Kollektivhus: The Swedish Model," *Housing for All*, no. 65 (2021): 96.

Stacken is an example of the potential of transforming a large structure made of a single dwelling type into a collective form of living. Stacken is a tenant management project in Bergsjön a suburb of the city of Gothenburg and is the first building made from BiG's model. The renovation project from 1980 was initiated by Lars Ågren, the original architect of the row of nine star-shaped houses in 1968. The project was a reaction to the saturated housing market of the mid-1970s, which left many apartments in the suburbs vacant.¹¹³

Parallels can be found with the model of a refurbished modernist building that BiG presented for the 1980 exhibition *Boplads 80* (Place of residence)¹¹⁴ in Stockholm in which they demonstrate that with little structural change the ground floor of a traditional residential building could be turned into common places and services.¹¹⁵ Proportionally to its eight stories, two floors of Stacken were converted to common spaces: the ground and the fifth floor. The kitchen (xi) and the dining room (xii) for the daily common meals prepared by the inhabitants were planned in the middle of the tower so that no resident would be more than four floors away from it.¹¹⁶ Among other housework activities, cooking was to be performed by both men and women. Its shared responsibility among the various households was intended to reduce the collective burden of housework.¹¹⁷ The fifth floor also includes the kindergarten (ix) and a cluster of rooms for crafts, including sewing (xiv), weaving, and ceramics. The common rooms on the ground floor are more oriented towards leisure as they include a sauna (i), table tennis (viii), music (vii), photography lab (vi), and carpentry (v). However, the laundry room (ii) and a space for baby carriages (iv) frame a youth room (iii) that bring together housework and child-rearing.

Beyond the addition of shared services, the dwelling floorplans were reconfigured by opening up and closing walls resulted in an increased number of apartment layouts. Before the renovations, the tower block had 35 identical two-bedroom apartments – a layout convenient for the traditional young families.¹¹⁸ After the renovation, the remaining six floors dedicated to the private dwellings featured layouts with two to seven bedrooms. While the initial desire was to design for a varied group of residents, the people who eventually moved into Stacken were mostly women and single-parent households, which may indicate that this kind of project was an interesting solution for groups that faced the greatest challenges in balancing household work, jobs, and childcare.¹¹⁹

113 Woodward, 'Communal Housing in Sweden', 76.

114 The exhibition took place for the 50th anniversary of the *Stockholm Utställningen 1930* (Stockholm Exhibition 1930) which introduced modernism in the Swedish context.

115 *The Berlage Sessions*.

116 Woodward, 'Communal Housing in Sweden', 78.

117 Vestbro and Horelli, "Design for Gender Equality," 331.

118 Paula Femenías, Sanja Peter, and Mattias Legnér, "Modern Heritage and Housing Renovation: Policy Development and Practical Experiences from Gothenburg, Sweden," *In Situ. Revue Des Patri-moines*, no. 49 (February 15, 2023): 12.

119 Woodward, 'Communal Housing in Sweden', 84.

- i. sauna
- ii. laundry
- iii. youth room
- iv. baby carriage
- v. carpentry
- vi. photography lab
- vii. music
- viii. table tennis
- ix. kindergarten
- x. staff
- xi. kitchen
- xii. dining room
- xiii. batic
- xiv. sewing

ROOM FOR WOMEN

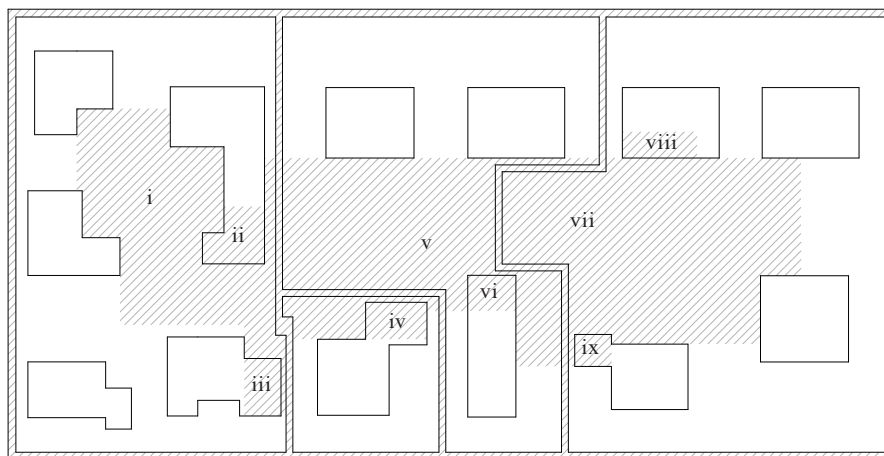
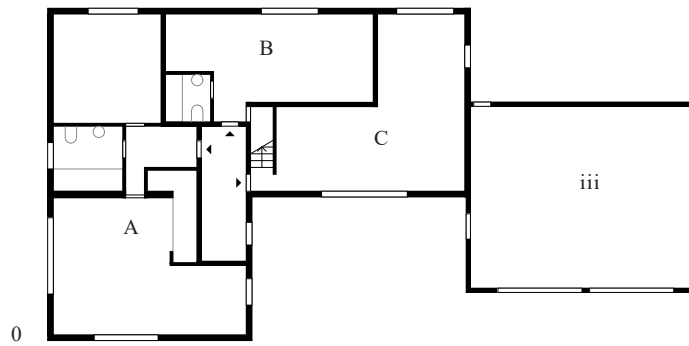
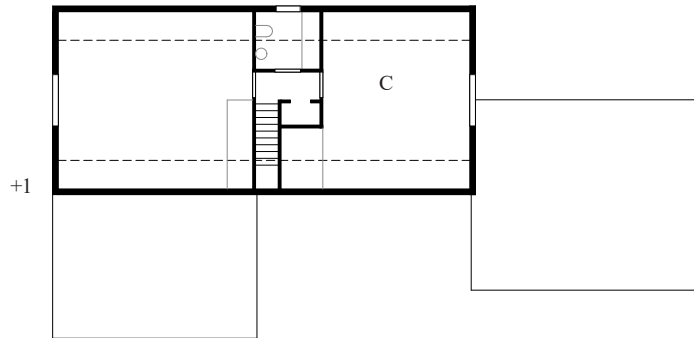


Diagram of remodeled neighborhood block and plans of remodeled single family house of HOMES. Drawn by the author, adapted from Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): S184-185.

120 Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design and Human Work," in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. Iain Rendell, Barbara Borden, and Jane Penner (London: Routledge, 1999), 266, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203449127>.

121 Ibid. 274.

122 Ibid. 270.

123 Susana Torre, "Expanding the Urban Design Agenda: A Critique of the New Urbanism," in *Design and Feminism: Re-Visioning Spaces, Places and Everyday Things*, ed. Joan Rothschild (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 38.

124 Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design and Human Work," 273.

125 Hayden states the importance of avoiding traditional sex stereotyping in the filing of these jobs and not creating a two-class society with the residents outside the project.

126 Torre, "Expanding the Urban Design Agenda: A Critique of the New Urbanism," 39.

HOMES revitalization is part of Dolores Hayden's proposal for a 'non-sexist city' from 1980 with which she calls for a new paradigm of the home that would support employed women rather than restrict them.¹²⁰ Transcending traditional definitions of homes, neighborhoods, cities, and workplaces, Hayden's blueprint encompasses an architectural design proposal and an economic program. The proposal is a hypothetical 40-unit street block that relies on the remodeling of thirteen single-family houses, as an example of her 'experimental centers' which could be new constructions or renovations. Nevertheless, the author sets at a higher priority the remodeling of the existing suburb.¹²¹ Forty households, representing the social structure of the American population, would form a group that Hayden calls HOMES (Homemakers Organization for a More Egalitarian Society) where both women and men would take the task of reorganizing both the home and work to make changes in the negotiations between private life and public responsibilities.

As the author remarked, a program to achieve economic and environmental justice for women requires, by definition, a solution that overcomes the traditional division between the household and the market economy, the private dwelling and the workplace.¹²² Hayden's proposal consists of the conversion of a whole residential neighborhood block into more efficient and sociable uses by incorporating collective spaces and activities, as well as workplaces. Such remodeling would require a change in zoning.¹²³ The collective services would exist in addition to private dwelling units and private gardens: day-care center (ii), laundromat (viii), kitchen providing lunch for day-care center take-out evening meals and meals-on-wheels for elderly (vi), grocery depot (ix), a dial-a-ride garage (iii), allotment (vii), a home-help office (iv).¹²⁴ These collective activities would generate 37 jobs in proximity to the homes.¹²⁵ Her proposal also includes the remodeling of a large single-family house to a triplex with a two-bedroom unit (C), a one-bedroom unit (A), and an efficiency unit (B) – all of which have private enclosed gardens but two-fifths of the original lot is given to the community. The proposal thus assumes private ownership of the homes and private yards in conjunction with cooperative ownership and use of the land.¹²⁶ To achieve a transformation of housework, housing, and neighborhoods, HOMES is not intended as an isolated experiment but as a service available to the neighborhood.

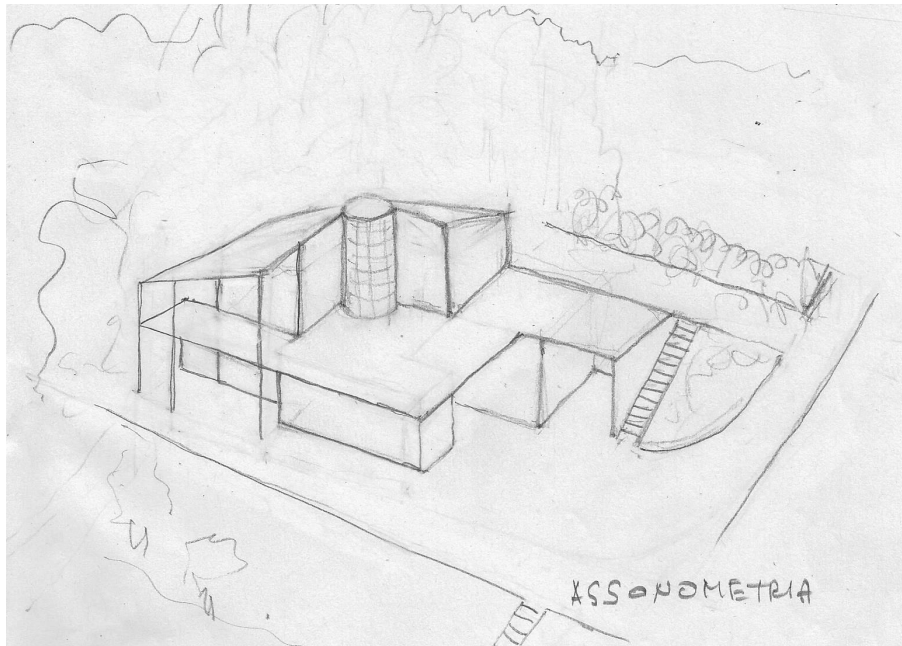
 collective space
 private space

- i. outdoor play area
- ii. daycare
- iii. dial-a-ride garage
- iv. offices
- v. outdoor tables
- vi. kitchen
- vii. vegetable garden
- viii. laundromat
- ix. grocery depot

- A. one-bedroom unit
- B. efficiency unit
- C. two-bedroom unit

5m & 25m

ROOM FOR WOMEN



Axonometric view of Casa Giudice, by Mariagrazia Sironi. From Mariagrazia Sironi's archives.



Interior photograph of Casa Giudice. From Mariagrazia Sironi's archives.



Photo of the common dining room of Prästgårdshagen. From Dick Urban Vestbro, "Collective Housing in Scandinavia — How Feminism Revised a Modernist Experiment," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 14, no. 4 (1997): 339.

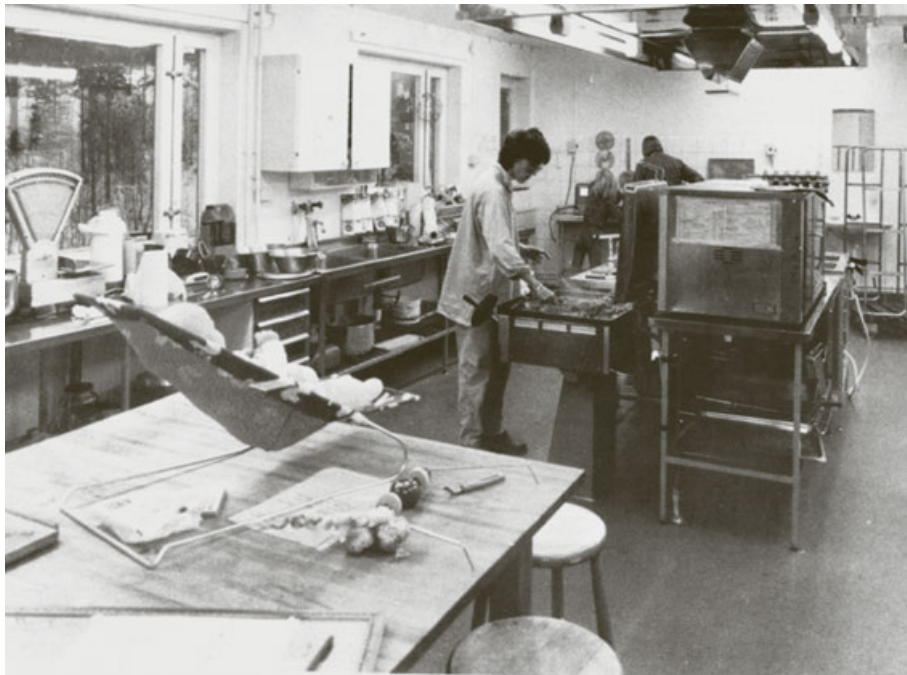
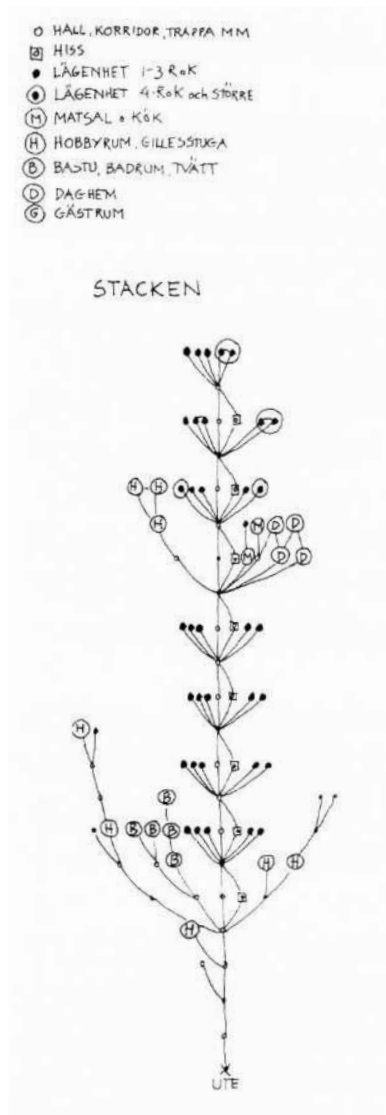


Photo of Stacken's common kitchen on the fifth floor. From Susanne Schmid, "A History of Collective Living: Models of Shared Living," in *A History of Collective Living* (Birkhäuser, 2019), 180.

ROOM FOR WOMEN



Program diagram of Stacken. From Karin Palm Lindén, "Kollektivhusets Rumsliga Struktur - Stöd Eller Tvångströja," *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning*, 1989, 39.

What unites the four projects examined is firstly the attempt to ‘stretch’ the boundaries of individual households. In doing so, they challenge and explore in different ways the notion of privacy. Casa Giudice challenges it metaphorically by exposing the interior of the house, and the nuclear family, to the outside. Reduced in size, the private units in both Prästgårdshagen and Stacken are complemented by common rooms for leisure activities but especially to perform housework. Usually done in the privacy or rather in the isolation of the home, housework thus becomes visible and socialized which in return, reduces the burden on the individual households. Similarly, the HOMES revitalization proposes services related to reproductive work which Hayden located in the common spaces created in and around the former single-family houses. By remodeling the interior of the single-family house to fit three independent units, the author also plays with the boundaries of the different households within the established boundary of the detached nuclear family house. The main difference between the three proposals involving a community lies in the strategy used for taking care of the housework now out of the private sphere. Prästgårdshagen and Stacken count on the involvement of the residents and project housework as a resource rather than a burden, whereas the HOMES proposal turns housework into services provided by paid people. Indeed, HOMES revitalization not only illustrates how housework can be extracted from the private sphere of the home, but it also translates the unpaid labor that would be carried by housewives into an equivalent number of paid jobs. Hayden thus renders reproductive labor as productive.

None of these projects go against privacy per se. On the contrary, the architects and planners were careful in keeping enough privacy so that the combination of ‘individual’ and ‘common’ reaches a sustainable balance. The Congregate House was also negotiating this balance but at the scale of one house with private and common rooms rather than private units and common spaces. In my opinion, by extracting some of the reproductive work from the private units to have it shared by different households, their boundaries are blurred and so is the notion of the family. If the family exists as an institution to maintain the exploitation of women’s unpaid work, and if the unpaid work is shifted outside the nuclear family, then the gender division of labor is challenged and so is the ‘housewife’ as a role.

PRAGMATIC BUT RADICAL

In light of this analysis with theme-specific chapters, attempts at expanding the paradigm of the house were projected respectively at the scale of the room, the dwelling unit, and the community. “Labor and Leisure” examined how the housework deployed in the individual kitchen was taken out of its seclusion either by combining this space with other functions or by being given a central position within the house. Designing the kitchen as such comes from seeing housework as integral to everyday life rather than trying to hide it. “Frame and Function” demonstrated how contemplating rooms, and ultimately entire dwellings as multifunctional spaces allows to better respond to the ever-changing needs of inhabitation. This perspective challenges the framework in which hierarchical relations are typically maintained and reproduced between inhabitants. “Privacy and Property” analyzed how the boundaries of the private sphere were blurred. The projects dealing with multiple households also illustrate the benefit of having both community and privacy, with spaces designed for both spheres, and with housework being shifted to the community level.

Beyond the focus of each chapter, the concepts they brought forward also overlapped and tinted each other. This comes from the intricate interdependence between the concepts of the Marxist Feminist theories. As such, the notion of privacy within one unit is tackled when analyzing the position of the kitchen to the other rooms and the entrance. Privacy is also a concern for the cohabitation of unrelated people where multifunctionality is incorporated in a dwelling. Yet, privacy is tackled especially around the boundaries of a housing unit – one’s ‘property’. Most importantly, in their spatial reconsideration of the home, the projects all tackle the definition of the family. Family is an overarching concept in both the Marxist feminist theory and these feminist architectural projects. It is by acknowledging the infinite constellations of people living together, as well as the increased number of single-parent households that the architects could reassess the home. For example, the needs of single mothers were at the forefront of the design concerns in multiple projects such as the two Canadian women’s coop, Emancipatory Living Lot 2, Grosvenor Terrace Housing, and the Congregate House. Post-occupancy studies also highlighted that even if it was not intended, single mothers were overrepresented in the Swedish ‘little community houses’.¹²⁷ It was an attempt to better represent the demographics of the time but also not to cap a limit to what ‘family’ could become.

As Mies has remarked, the gender division of labor is not a problem related to the family only, but rather a structural problem of a whole society.¹²⁸ The Marxist feminist’s stance reflects a radical one, and its feasibility is questionable, especially when considering the challenging prospect of a revolution against capitalism in the foreseeable future. The more ‘pragmatic’ projects examined in this paper gain significance, as they address the ‘here and now’ by looking at everyday life issues. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that these were inspired by radical thinkers, even though the Marxist feminist critique is not easily deployable or translatable to a design problem. Yet, if the Marxist feminists did not address the spatial condition of the home, it is because they saw alternative design of the home as a palliative to women’s liberation at best.¹²⁹

127 Alison Woodward, “Communal Housing in Sweden”, 84.

128 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 49.

129 Galimberti, *Images of Class*, 290.

In this regard, in appreciating the relevance of the projects presented, it is important to not forget the proper scale of the issue at stake.

These twelve housing projects were attempts to address specific challenges of their time and can't be seen as blueprints for feminist projects today. They also don't claim to embody a 'feminist architecture'. Instead, they emerged amid a movement where women architects gained consciousness about the built environment being shaped without women in mind but also with the increase of women clients, and them defining their own housing needs. Nevertheless, the established buying power of feminists and more inclusive architectural education and practices could potentially lead to a rise in consciousness.

Despite the seemingly pragmatic approach of this facet of second-wave feminism, the analysis of the project's plans demonstrated how radical they actually are in their spatial relationships. This is evident when considering most of the large-scale housing built today, where, for instance, pairing the entrance with the kitchen is almost unthinkable, and having a 'master bedroom' is still common practice. Housing was and remains a strict and standardized domain. Exploring why the echo of these projects does not appear to have survived the nineties warrants further analysis. There is potential to draw inspiration from the experiences of the 1980s to address contemporary challenges in the built environment. Moreover, considering that the issues tied to 'housewifization' and the misrepresentation of women's needs and everyday life in domestic designs are deeply rooted in the very structure of capitalist society, these pragmatic projects could serve as an inspiration for architectural responses to the other forms of violence perpetrated by this all-encompassing economic force—violence that has persisted and shows no signs of abating.¹³⁰

130 Federici, *Caliban et la sorcière*, 22.

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This theoretical statement is part of a research project on Domesticity within the TPOD laboratory consisting of the following works:

Beyond the Closet, Klea Ott
Staging Movement, Ada Massarente
Destination Home, Vanesa Santillan Messina
First Struggle Then Housing, Antoine Ricard-Gauthier
Pretending to Take the Country's Side, Karl-August Valfells
Housewifization, Meryl Louise Barthe
Round Table, Jian Lin Wong
Persistent Community, Melchior Dechancé
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