

Room for Women

An Atlas of Feminist Housing Projects from the 1980s

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

While much attention has been given to feminist scholarship and theory produced in the 1970s, less known is its influence on the architectural debate and projects involving women as planners, architects, or users designed and built between the late 1970s and early 1990s. These projects, located in Italy, Sweden, Germany, the USA, and Canada, are all highly diverse yet share a radical questioning and rethinking of Western domestic paradigms. Through the analysis of nine case studies, this essay 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 for first time addressed architecturally through projects that sought to challenge conventional domestic designs. The aim of this essay is to foreground this lesser-known phenomenon and acknowledge and learn from the daring architectural legacy of this decade.

The selected projects are all deeply rooted in the theoretical debates that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. While first-wave feminism had mostly focused on granting women access to the public and political sphere,¹ second-wave feminism, which unfolded between the 1960s and the 1980s, expanded this struggle to encompass the private sphere for the first time in history. During this period, women began to challenge the notion of the private sphere as one removed from politics and to share their experiences with their own bodies, intimate relationships with men, sexuality, pregnancy, child-rearing, and contraception.² Within this evolution of the struggle, the ethos and understanding of “feminism” changed, and models of femininity and family and the issue of housework were fundamen-

1 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. See Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022 [1986]), 19.

2 Mies, 24.

tally questioned.³

In this context, most radical critiques were launched by Marxist feminist activists. In 1972, the sociologist and author Mariarosa Dalla Costa became the first feminist to challenge the notion that care giving and domestic housework—or “reproductive work” in Marxist terminology—constitute non-productive labor.⁴ For activists such as Maria Mies and Dalla Costa, this unwaged work performed by women was the very pre-condition that made male waged productivity possible, thus setting patriarchy as the necessary basis of capitalism.⁵ Thus, it became essential to demystify the idea of housework as a “natural” task assigned to women and instead to acknowledge the historical and political process that progressively confined and privatized domestic labor within the home, a process that sociologist and activist Maria Mies termed “housewifization.”⁶ Within this critique, it followed that women’s liberation was attainable only through revolution and, more precisely, through the abolition of capitalism. Beyond theoretical discourse, the Marxist feminist critique manifested in other forms, such as the Wages for Housework campaign or the Italian artists collective Gruppo Femminista Immagine.⁷



Milli Gandini (a member of Gruppo Femminista Immagine) photographs of a woman tracing female symbols and ‘salario’ (salary) in accumulated dust and dirt, exhibited at *Mum Has Gone Out* (La mamma è uscita), 1975. From Milli Gandini’s archives.

- 3 Anna Krüger, *Emanzipatorisches Wohnen: Myra Warhaftigs Beitrag Zur Internationalen Bauausstellung 1984/87* (KIT Scientific Publishing, 2022), 75.
- 4 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 31, referring to Mariarosa Dalla Costa, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, 1972.
- 5 Mies, 58,
Mies identifies the other non-wage laborers exploited by the capitalist system as slaves, contract workers, and peasants in the colonies. Mies, 48.
- 6 Marxist feminism highlighted an essential shortcoming of Marxist theory. What Marx defined as “productive labor” was narrowed to mean only the production of surplus value, and thus automatically excluded the production of life by women. Mies, 47;
Mies, 69.
- 7 This innovative transatlantic campaign was proposed around 1974 by Dalla Costa and like-minded activists in Europe and North America. It called for the remuneration of all women for their commodified housework and care for the family. For Dalla Costa, the function of this demand was essentially to link female oppression, subordination, and isolation to female exploitation as their material foundation. Welfare in the U.S. was strategically defined as “income without work” by the State. However, when considering housework as work, then welfare is 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. See Mariarosa Dalla Costa, “A proposito del Welfare...,” *Primo Maggio - Saggi e documenti per una storia di classe*, no. N. 9-10 (1977): 76–77. See also Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, “The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community,” in *Class: The Anthropology*, ed. Stanley Aronowitz and Michael J. Roberts, 1st ed. (Wiley, 2017), 20;
Gruppo Femminista Immagine was associated with the Wages for Housework campaign and masterminded by artist Mili Gandini. The group formed around 1974–75. The collective also included four artists: Mariuccia Secol, Silvia Cibaldi, Mili Gandini, and Clemen Parrocchetti. All women were based between Milan and Varese. It dissolved around the mid-1980s. The group’s work 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*] as an instance where Gandini played with subversiveness to highlight the creativity found in the refusal of housework. For more see Jacopo Galimberti, *Images of Class: Operaismo, Autonomia and the Visual Arts (1962-1988)* (London: Verso, 2022), 270.

Yet, activists in the second wave of feminism did not form a monolithic group, and the social apparatus of reproduction was challenged by different perspectives in varying degrees of radicality. Notably, a conflict emerged between the Marxist feminists and those advocating for a reformist rather than revolutionary approach.⁸ As such, this reformist perspective followed the footsteps of the American Material Feminists of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century who sought to reform spatial design, recognizing that the built environment was one of the key factors responsible in reinforcing and reproducing gender segregation and division of labor.⁹

The nine selected case studies are paradigmatic instances of this “reformist” approach. These architectural projects addressed feminist concerns by critiquing domestic space and challenging the naturalized ideas of the family and the position of the women within it. Against the backdrop of Marxist feminist theoretical discourse, the case studies will be analyzed through the lens of three main themes that are both political and spatial. This close reading aims to uncover the various ways in which architects challenged inherited domestic architectures by questioning the spatial conditions of the house and proposing alternative forms of domesticity.

LABOR AND LEISURE

Through gender division of labor, women were not only 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 work.¹⁰ Once the individual kitchen emerged in the eighteenth century, it was gradually established as a distinct room within the dwelling, enforcing and organizing the economic asymmetry within the family.¹¹ The specific function of this room is an example of the division of activities within the house aimed at institutionalizing domestic labor.

In his groundbreaking 1988 essay “First the Kitchen, Then the Façade,” Nicholas Bullock situates “domestic science” and “scientific housekeeping” as innovations of the 1920s that were to secure the housewife’s position at the center of the family in the private sphere. He shows how the traditional *Wohnküche* [living-kitchen], where family activities took place alongside cooking, was condemned as inappropriate for the urban working class, while the *Kochküche* [cooking-kitchen] gained prominence after WWI.¹² Reduced to a minimum size for the sake of efficiency, the cooking-kitchen was supported by the agenda of household scientific management by the now “professional housewives.” This dream-house culture had at its heart Victorian programming, which had separated the kitchen, a space for the labor of servants, from the living room, a space for the leisure and hospitality of the owners. 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 shifted to the women, the housewives.¹³ When it comes to women’s emancipation, the question of whether the kitchen should be contained and designated as a space of “work,” or whether it should be integrated back into the other common areas of the house, was debated. The following projects illustrate divergent perspectives on how reproductive work should be spatialized within the home.

8 The activities of the Material Feminists have been uncovered by architect and researcher Dolores Hayden in her 1981 book *The Grand Domestic Revolution*.

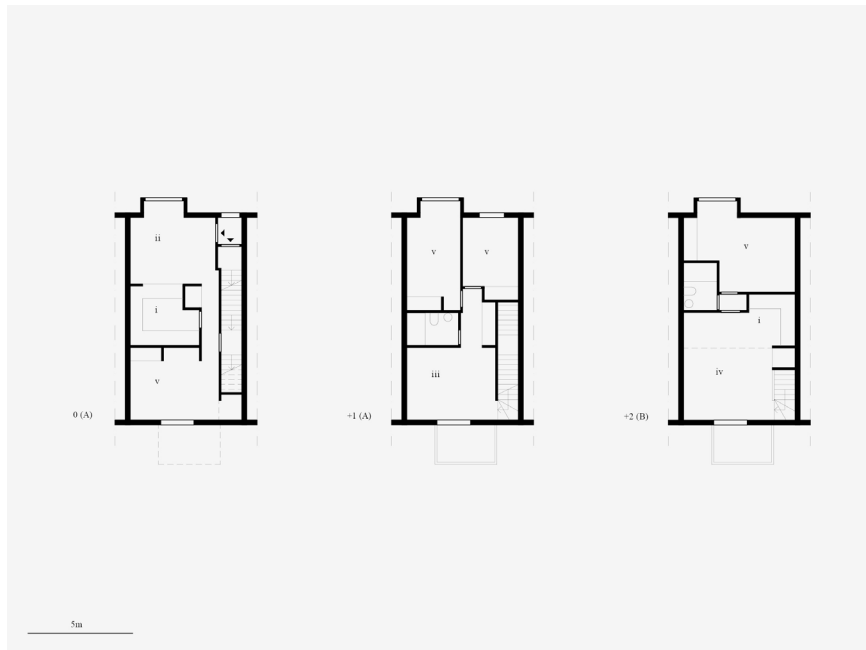
9 Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 72.

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

11 Aureli and Giudici, 121.

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

13 Matrix, *Making Space: Women and the Manmade Environment* (New York: Verso Books, 2022), 78.



Selected unit plans of Constance Hamilton Co-operative.

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

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

Drawn by the author, adapted from Gerda R. Wekerle and Sylvia Novac, "Developing Two Women's Housing Cooperatives," 232.



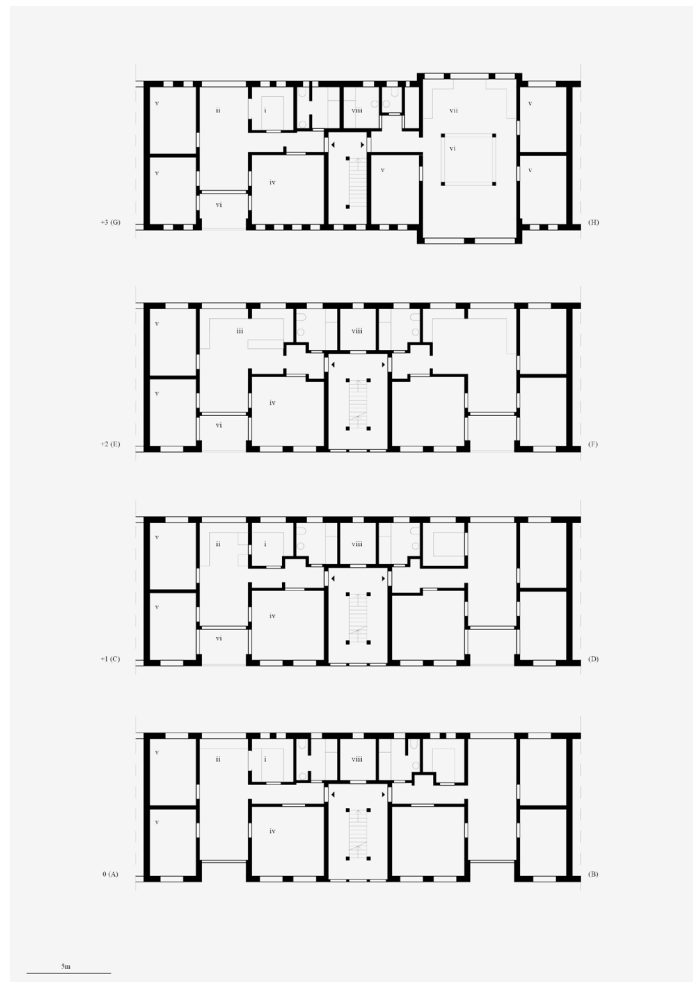
Exterior perspective of the Constance-Hamilton Co-op by Simon Architects. From Gerda R. Wekerle, *Women's Housing Projects in Eight Canadian Cities*, 15–16.

The Constance Hamilton Co-op, built in 1982, was the first apartment complex in Toronto, Canada, designed specifically for women. Initiated by a community-based group of low-to-moderate-income women, the co-op consists of 30 stacked townhouse units.¹⁴, Architect Joan Simon was

14 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; The project also included an attached six-bedroom transitional house for women.

selected to lead the project due to her expertise in engaging future residents in the decision-making process and for her thoughtful focus on kitchen design as it relates to the overall living space.¹⁵

Of the six-unit types in the complex, the largest (A) and the smallest (B) units are the most relevant to this discussion. In a traditional single-family duplex, common living areas are typically located on the lower floors, with private rooms stacked above. However, in Simon's three-bedroom duplex (A), the living room (iii) is located on the uppermost floor, while the kitchen (i) and dining room (ii) are on the lower level. Thus, Simon intentionally separates the spaces of labor and leisure by separating the kitchen from the living area by a staircase, with the intent of having the living room as a neutral space, not subordinated to the logic of labor. Although this separation may appear as a way to ensure women would not always be reminded of domestic duties, 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.¹⁶ Moreover, while the kitchen is contained, it is well-connected to the dining room, which also serves as the main entrance to the unit, a design choice that challenges formality in favor of more functional concerns.

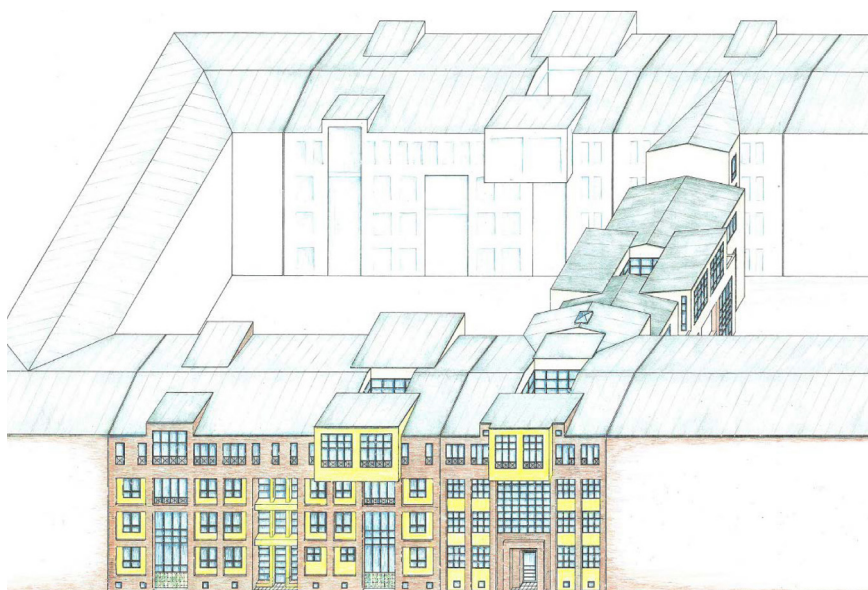


Selected unit plans of Emancipatory Living Lot 3.

i. kitchen ii. dining room iii. eat-in kitchen iv. living room v. bedroom vi. loggja vii. living-dining-kitchen.
 Drawn by the author, adapted from Sarah Gretsch, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds.,
Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bau forscherin, 66.

15 "Joan Simon: In Memoriam," *Women & Environments Magazine* 9, no. 1 (1987): 4.

16 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.



Axonometric view of Emancipatory Living Lot 3, units A to H. From Sarah Gretsch, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., *Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bau forscherin*, 67.

This approach of separating spaces for labor and leisure is manifested differently in the one-bedroom apartment (B) on the top floor. Here, one single large space acts as the living-dining room (iv) which also includes the kitchen (i). Such eat-in kitchens were not common at the time; they were implemented in response to the boards' demands.¹⁷ Overall, despite variation in unit layouts, the kitchen was generally brought forward within the house and positioned closer to the entrance. Simon noted that this decision was met with resistance by almost all the men involved in the financing of the project, whereas all women who looked at the plan found it sensible.¹⁸

Christine Jachmann's emancipatory apartments for the International Building Exhibition Berlin (IBA) reflect a range of attitudes toward the kitchen. Completed in 1993 after several delays, the project was initiated in 1986 thanks to the Feministische Organisation von Planerinnen und Architektinnen (FOPA), whose pressure on the IBA committee led them to plan a new block for women's emancipatory living designed by women architects.¹⁹ The 26 units, spread across four floors, offer a diverse number of typological variations, since Jachmann's design approach was to either combining or separating different functions that she associated with the kitchen such as cooking, eating, playing, working, and living.²⁰ By challenging the traditional rigid division between labor and leisure, the architect empowers tenants to determine how they use their apartments, even within the constraints of the "family lifestyle" criteria for subsidized housing.²¹

The analyzed plans focus on eight units, seven of which are two-bedroom apartments with same-size bedrooms. The apartments are complemented by three common utility rooms (viii) potentially used for laundry, storage, or baby carriages.²² In most units (A, B, C, D, G), the kitchen (i) is enclosed but connected to the eating room (ii) via a *passe-plats*

17 Wekerle and Novac, 230.

18 Wekerle and Novac, 230.

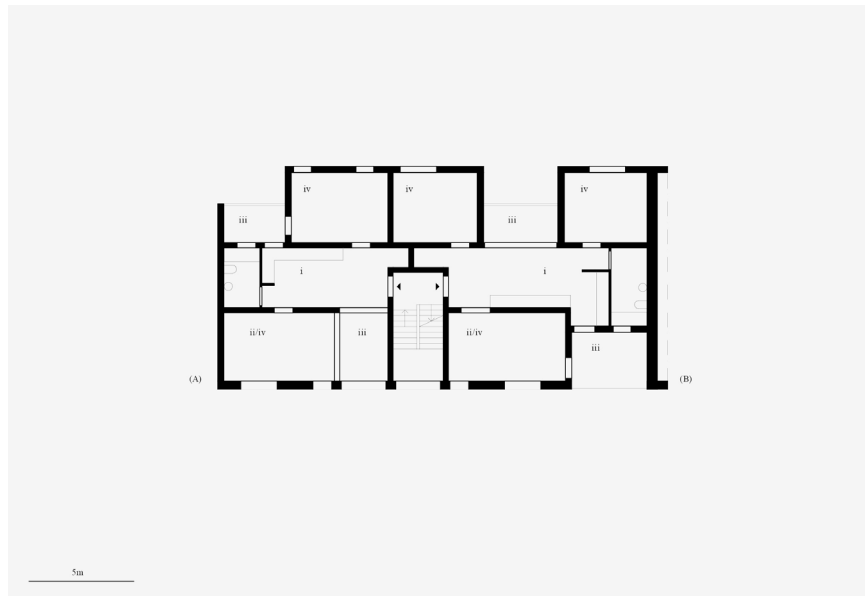
19 FOPA (Feminist Organization of Women Planners and Architects) was formed after an event where seven women planners and architects stormed an all-male expert hearing in the run-up to IBA. The group manifested again during an all-male panel on women's issues in housing; ARCH+ et al., eds., *ARCH+ Contemporary Feminist Spatial Practices*, 1st ed. (Leipzig, 2023), 12.

20 Christine Jachmann, "Der IBA-Block 2 in Berlin Kreuzberg, ein Architektinnenprojekt," *Frauen Kunst Wissenschaft: Architektur*, no. 13 (February 1, 1992): 37, <https://doi.org/10.57871/fkw131992271>.

21 Jachmann, 36.

22 Jachmann, 37.

[passthrough], while the traditional living room (iv) remains separate. The eating room spans across the full depth of the building, connecting most of the private rooms, as well as the room-sized loggia (vi). In the second-floor units (E, F), the wall between the kitchen and the eating space is removed, creating an L-shaped space that functions as an eat-in kitchen (iii). The ambiguity of the plan and its drawn-in fixtures present either a kitchen counter that extends out of its former perimeter or a built-in banquette. The three-room apartment (H) pushes the integration of the kitchen and living spaces even further by including the living room for the first time. Conveniently located on the top floor, this larger unit benefits from an internalized loggia that acts as a light shaft and is spacious enough to accommodate a dining table. As the kitchen expands into a huge space, it can be used in multiple ways and is fully integrated into the daily life of the inhabitants.



Selected unit plans of Emancipatory Living Lot 2.

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

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

Drawn by the author, adapted from Sarah Gretsche, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., *Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bau forscherin*, 56.



Street view of Emancipatory Living Lot 2, unit A and B on the third floor.

Photo by the author, 2023.

Myra Warhaftig's contribution to the IBA's *Frauenblock* was the realization of her 1978 doctoral dissertation, in which she argued that the required spatial separation of functions in domestic spaces resulted in unilaterally assigning housework to women.²³ In response, Warhaftig introduced the notion of *Wohn-Raum-Küche* [kitchen-living room], 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 maintain similar spatial relationships, with the *Wohn-Raum-Küche* (i) serving as 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 rooms eliminates the need for a hallway—an indispensable economy of space in social housing which the author mastered.²⁴ Warhaftig not only brought labor and leisure closer, but also socialized the labor carried out in the kitchen, since it also acts as the main entrance to the dwelling. This design illustrates Warhaftig's vision of the kitchen as a social space, where housework is made visible and shared by all residents.²⁵

This perspective led Warhaftig to position her *Wohn-Raum-Küche* in contrast to the 1926 Frankfurt kitchen by modernist architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky: a kitchen, whose functional time-saving design, as has been argued above, reinforced the “housewifization” of working-class women by offering only enough workspace for one person, the housewife.²⁶ Warhaftig also saw efficiency as a central concern, but as a single parent, she recognized the need to accommodate other tasks that needed to be performed simultaneously with cooking. The *Wohn-Raum-Küche* thus allows people to pursue reproductive work without interrupting contact with others, such as 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.²⁷ Warhaftig noted that by designing a kitchen large enough to act as living space, the separate living room required by the housing standards could instead be used as an additional bedroom. This innovative approach meant that for the price of a two-bedroom apartment, residents effectively 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.

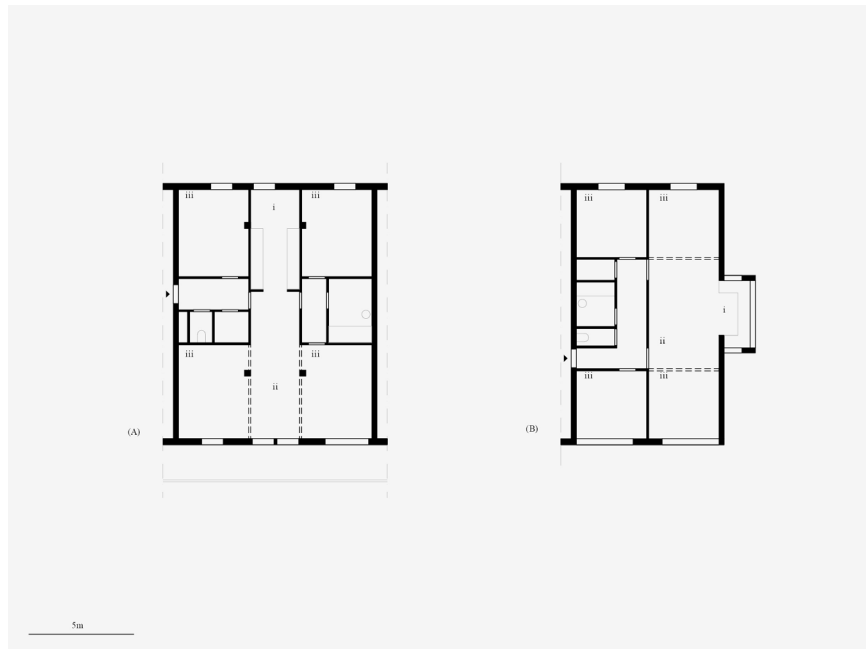
Whether separated to provide a neutral space not subordinated to the logic of labor, or opened up to socialize housework, the kitchen and its relationship to the social spaces of the house remain an ongoing debate for feminists. The tension between these opposing attitudes highlights the relative nature of what is considered “emancipatory” when it comes to reproductive work. The different positions represented in the three examined projects not only confirm this tension but also illustrate the multitude of solutions that can be found between the two extremes. A shared feature in most plans is the central position of the kitchen, often paired with the entrance to the units. Beyond its representation in plan, the kitchen is thought of as an integral part of domestic life, as is reproductive work. The women involved—both users and architects—seem to have materialized their understanding of the house as a site of labor as opposed to a small “heaven” as advertised in post-war United States.

- 23 Warhaftig's doctoral dissertation is 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) and was a determinant body of work and an argument toward making her non-conventional floorplan accepted by authorities. Sarah Gretsch, Ines Sonder, and Günter Schlusche, eds., *Myra Warhaftig. Architektin Und Bauforscherin* (University Press of the TU Berlin, 2020), 49.
- 24 Anna Krüger, *Emanzipatorisches Wohnen: Myra Warhaftigs Beitrag Zur Internationalen Bauausstellung 1984/87*, KIT Scientific Publishing (KIT Scientific Publishing, 2022), 45.
- 25 Gretsch, Sonder, and Schlusche, eds., *Myra Warhaftig*.
- 26 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); Gretsch, Sonder, and Schlusche, *Myra Warhaftig*, 53.
- 27 *Myra Warhaftig: Architektin, Historikerin Und Freundin*, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/270047265>.

FRAME AND FUNCTION

The domestic space and its spatial relations are inherently tied to the family and the hierarchies within. Maria Mies critiques the nuclear family against the biological logic that has been applied to it as she asserts that this institution is nothing but hierarchical and inequitable.²⁸ 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 the children.²⁹ Through the nineteenth century, the notion had percolated down the class strata: the modern family was generalized throughout the working class and it relied on the full-time unpaid labor of the housewife.³⁰ For the gender division of labor to be exploited by capitalist productivity, the roles in the family had to be accepted and the character of the rooms inside the house had to be equally fixed and uncontestable.³¹ Thus, spaces in the single-family house have been defined by gender and age—the master bedroom as opposed to the children’s room, in turn divided between boys and girls. This division was also inscribed on a larger scale since modern cities were planned to segregate different aspects of life, particularly working from living.³²

However, by the 1980s, this image of the typical household as a young nuclear family no longer aligned with the demographic realities of the time, and the housing market did not reflect this reality.³³ The following projects respond to the rigid paradigm of nuclear family housing by introducing possibilities for appropriation and flexibility rather than prescription. In doing so, the projects seem to echo forms of premodern dwellings, which often exhibited fluidity and proximity between the different functions, both productive and reproductive.³⁴



Selected unit plan of Frauen-Werk-Stadt.

A. unit by Podreka B. unit by Prochazka.

i. eat-in kitchen ii. living room iii. room.

Drawn by the author, adapted from Eva Kail, “Frauen-Werk-Stadt” Information booklet, 2001, 29–31.

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

29 Silvia Federici, *Caliban et la sorcière: femmes, corps et accumulation primitive*, trans. Julien Guazzini and Senonevero, 2e édition, La rupture (Genève: Entremonde, 2017), 175.

30 Federici, 177.

31 Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, “Familiar Horror: Toward a Critique Of Domestic Space,” *Log*, no. 38 (2016): 119.

32 Matrix, *Making Space*, 4.

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

34 Aureli and Giudici, “Familiar Horror,” 120.



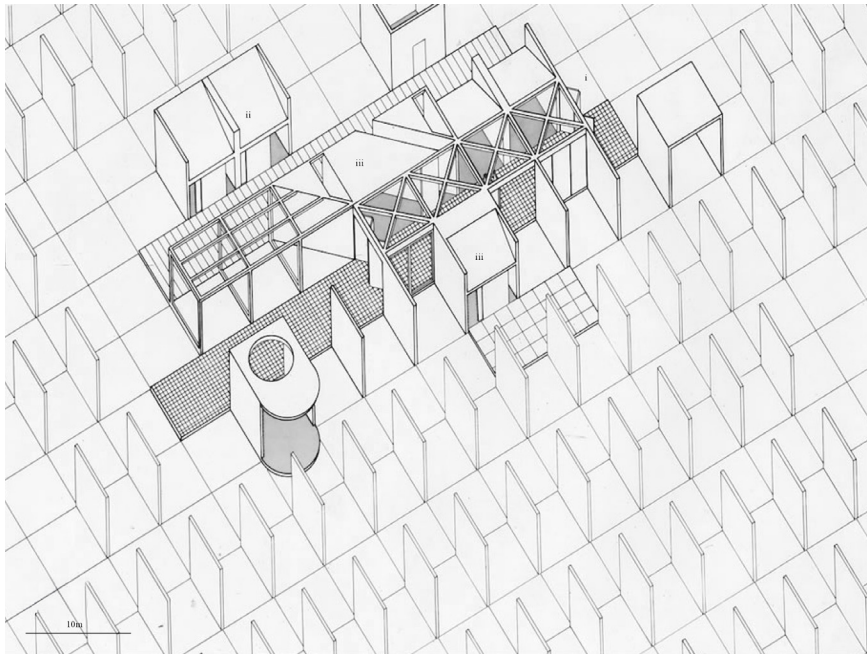
Site view of Frauen-Werk-Stadt, unit B in the foreground and unit A in the background.
Photo by the author, 2023.

The *Frauen-Werk-Stadt* [Women Work City] is a 350-unit social housing project built in 1997, in Vienna. The architectural competition was initiated by Eva Kail, head of Vienna's Frauenbüro,³⁵ in 1993 and is rooted in The New Everyday Life principle developed in the 1980s by research groups in the Nordic Countries.³⁶ While the project as a whole includes a variety of dwelling layouts as well as common facilities, this section focuses on two apartment layouts, one by Elsa Prochazka and one by Gisela Podreka.³⁷ Podreka's flexible apartments (A) are repeated on three levels of her five-story linear building. In a discussion with the architect, she emphasized that the most important aspect of her layout is the possibility of having four rooms (iii) with the same spatial quality that the inhabitants can use in multiple ways throughout different stages of their family life.³⁸ The rooms are positioned at the four corners of the apartment, leaving a central space spanning the entire depth of the apartment for the eat-in kitchen (i) and social area, with a service block on each side for the entrance and the bathroom. This approach was novel for that time and was a response to the programmed obsolescence of the traditional single-family house.³⁹ Moreover, the hierarchy of rooms was reduced by equalizing the room sizes, thereby improving their suitability for different forms of living together.⁴⁰

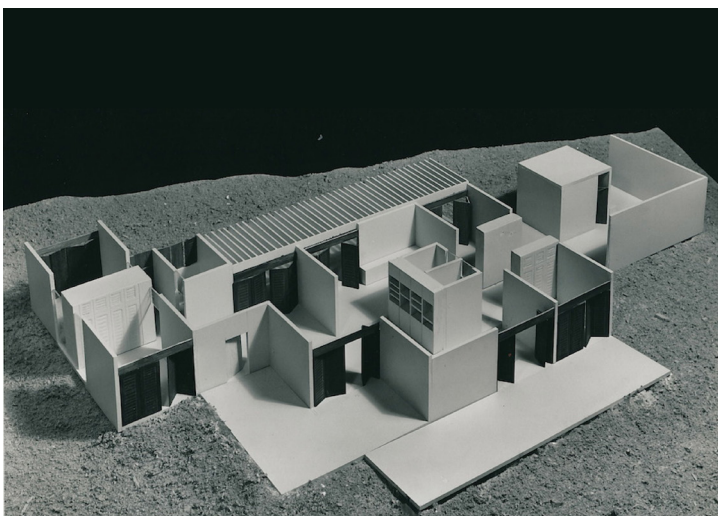
The architect recalled her exchanges with the future inhabitants, during which they would learn how to use the unique apartment concept and

- 35 In 1992, the City of Vienna established the Women's Office, with authority in urban affairs. This competition can be seen as one of the consequences of the exhibition *Who Owns Public Spaces? Women's Everyday Life in the City*, which was a turning point for Vienna's conceptualization of gender mainstreaming as the urban planning approach for which it is known. See 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.
- 36 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. See Kirsi Saarikangas and Liisa Horelli, "Modern Home, Environment, and Gender," in *The Routledge Companion to Modernity, Space and Gender*, ed. Alexandra Staub, 2018, 53.
- 37 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 portion developed by the City of Vienna and Elsa Prochazka and Gisela Podreka, the portions by the housing association GPA.
- 38 Gisela Podreka, interview by Camyl Vigneault, 22 December 2023.
- 39 Gisela Podreka, interview by Camyl Vigneault, 22 December, 2023.
- 40 Stadt Wien, Magistratsdirektion and Geschäftsbereich Bauten und Technik, "Frauen-Werk-Stadt I – Alltagsgerechtes Planen und Bauen," n.d., 6, accessed November 3, 2023.

configure their layouts. Podreka noted that, as this was her first solo project, she learned a lot from Prochazka, who designed the western part of the plot. While going through the project's booklet published by the city of Vienna at the time, Podreka remarked that 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.”⁴¹ Indeed, Prochazka received recognition for the clarity of her concept, which shared the same principle of a flexible number of private rooms.⁴² One difference lies in the arrangement of the wet rooms and common spaces at the center of the plan, which meant that when all four rooms were built, the common area lost its view on both sides, leaving the bay window kitchen as the only source of daylight and natural ventilation. Despite the differences, the *Frauen-Werk-Stadt* shows two interpretations of a plan that can evolve and adapt to the changing family structures and needs of its inhabitants.



Axonometric view of the House of Meanings—Puerto Rico.
 i. covered interior street ii. guests living quarters iii. multifunctional room.
 From Susana Torre's archives. Annotations added by the author.

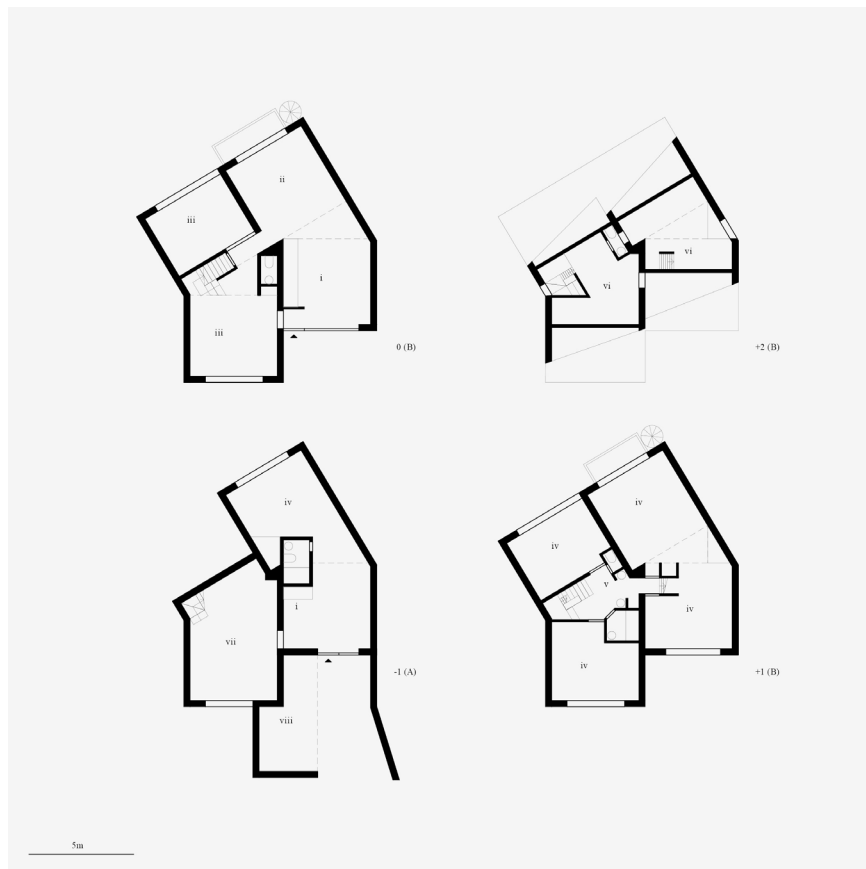


Left: Model photo of the House of Meaning—Santo Domingo. From Susana Torre's archives.
 Right: Photo of the connecting space between the units of House of Meanings—Carboneras. From Susana Torre's archives.

41 Eva Kail, “Frauen-Werk-Stadt,” 2001, 30–31; Podreka, interview.

42 Stadt Wien, Magistratsdirektion and Geschäftsbereich Bauten und Technik, “Frauen-Werk-Stadt I – Alltagsgerechtes Planen und Bauen,” 6.

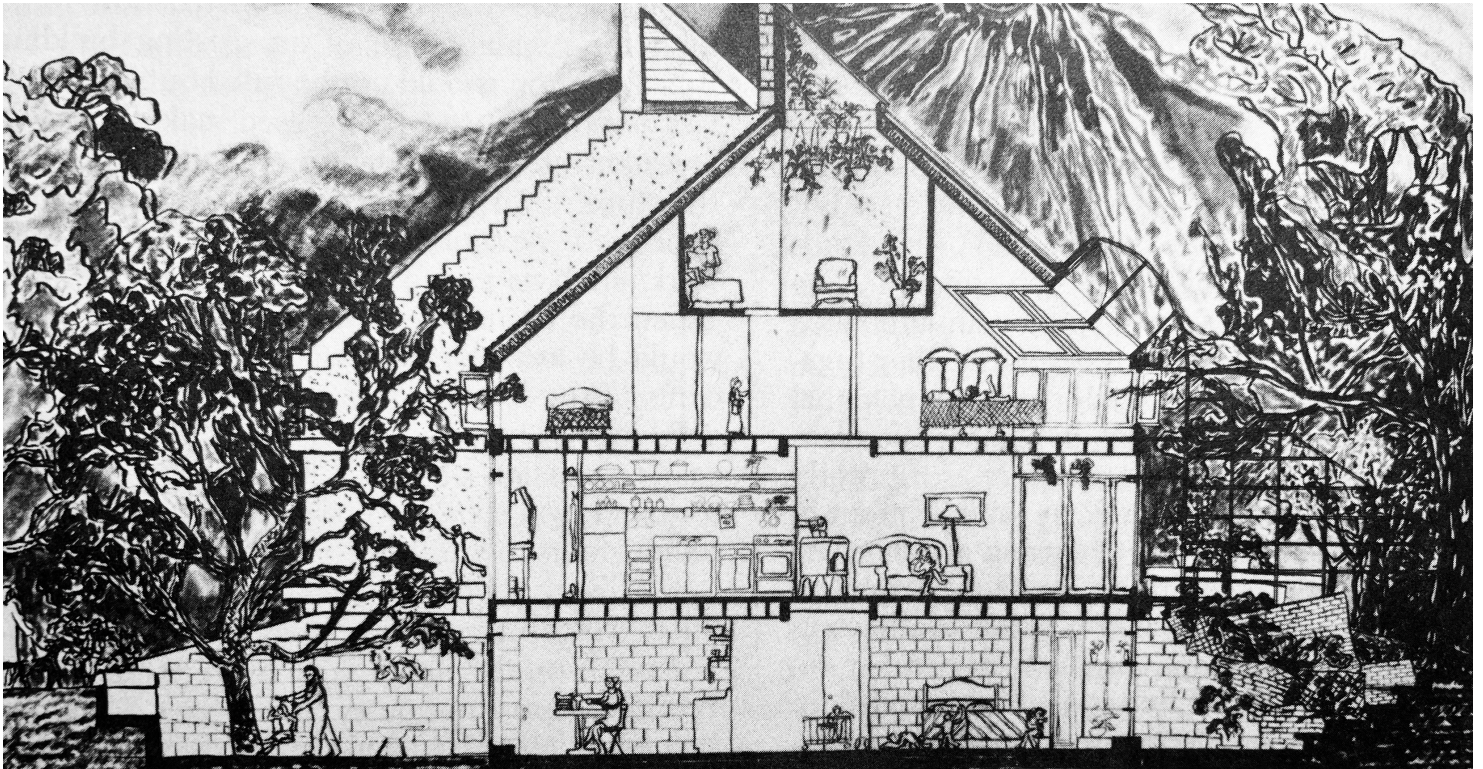
The House of Meanings, designed by Argentinian-American architect Susana Torre between 1970 and 1972, is a project that explores the limits of multifunctionality within domestic architecture. This non-site-specific and theoretical project consists of an elementary structure, a “matrix of space” able to respond to change thanks to its modular design. It 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.”⁴³ In exchanges with the architect, Torre explained that for this very reason, she preferred not to represent the project through architectural plans. Although different iterations have been drawn, they serve only as possible examples of the House of Meanings.



Plans of the Congregate House.

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

Drawn by the author, adapted from Jacqueline Leavitt, “Two Prototypical Designs for Single Parents,” in *New Households, New Housing*, ed. Karen A. Franck and Sherry Ahrentzen (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989), 168-169.



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

In an article entitled “Space as Matrix,” first published in 1981 in the feminist magazine *Heresies*, Torre outlines the ideas behind two versions sketched in the 1970s for private clients—both women.⁴⁴ The Puerto Rico and the Santo Domingo projects were not intended as strict single-family houses; rather, they were designed to accommodate extended visits from friends and family, sometimes resulting in two households sharing the same house. In her article, Torre criticizes the blind reproduction of a fixed set of functions for each room type and, thus, of the behaviors implicit within them.⁴⁵ 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 responds to the hierarchy of uses and fixed functions imposed by minimal housing standards by means of prescriptive dimensions tied to standard furniture arrangements.⁴⁶

The square grid inherent to both proposals is three-to-four meters, but these dimensions would change according to the place and program.⁴⁷ The Carboneras project, the only version of House of Meanings realized by Torre herself, in 2008, illustrates the scalability of the principle.⁴⁸ There, the modules are not rooms but entire dwellings. The “covered interior street” (i) connecting the rooms in Puerto Rico becomes the space connecting the different units in Carboneras.⁴⁹ This spatial relationship between the modules illustrates Torre’s critique of the distinction between enclosed rooms for private activities and corridors strictly for circulation.⁵⁰ By making the corridor the same size as a room, this spatial arrangement—

44 Torre advances that “possibly they found in the ideal of the project many affinities with the changing patterns of their own lives.” *Heresies*, “Making Room - Women and Architecture,” *Heresies* 11 3, no. 3 (1981): 51, <http://heresiesfilmproject.org/archive/>.

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

46 Susana Torre to Camyl Vigneault, email communication, 2023

47 Susana Torre to Camyl Vigneault, email communication, 2023

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

49 Susana Torre to Camyl Vigneault, email communication, 2023

50 *Heresies*, “Making Room—Women and Architecture,” *Heresies* 11 3, no. 3 (1981), 51.

originally designed to separate the household members from their hired servants—is now large enough to bring people together. Torre tackled the notion of multifunctionality not only in response to the changing needs over a lifetime, but also over the course of one day.

The Congregate House is a prototype designed in 1982 by American architects Jacqueline Leavitt and Troy West for the Bergen County, New Jersey.⁵¹ The multi-household “commune” explores solutions to the lack of mobility shared by single parents and the elderly—two primarily female groups—and brings closer living and working.⁵² The half-basement of the four-story house 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 maintaining a place of their own.⁵³

Shared by all residents, the ground floor is characterized by two pairs of similar size rooms. Their non-orthogonal arrangement creates interstices for the bathroom amenities (v), and the resulting small nooks also offer privacy despite the open plan.⁵⁴ The size of the rooms is proportional to the size of the household as seen in the eat-in kitchen (i), which is spacious enough for everyone to eat together or for meetings. Two of the rooms are equipped with individual entrances (iii), designed 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. This design decision to allow for a closer relationship between residence and workplace came from identifying the issue of 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.⁵⁵ The same logic of the four main rooms is echoed on the second floor, with private rooms (iv) 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 essential for the common spaces to work.⁵⁶ For instance, on the private floor, bathrooms (v) have split facilities to maximize individual use.⁵⁷ The uppermost floor includes 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.

These three projects challenge the rigid domestic program designed for the nuclear family, which upholds a gendered division of labor. Together they present alternative takes on the functions assigned to the house, moving away from inherited hierarchies. Rather than framing behaviors within rooms, the apartments integrate flexibility into their layouts, with adaptable units or 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 demographic realities of the late 1980s.⁵⁸ The notion of family addressed by these projects thus includes a much wider definition than the modern nuclear family as a patriarchal institution by transcending the narrow confines of the single-family house, these designs expand the notion of “family life” to potentially include friends, extended family members, and even other family units sharing similar lifestyles.

51 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.

52 The study was requested by the League of Women Voters, which became increasingly aware of the developing housing problems faced by these two primarily female groups. Leavitt, 164.

53 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.

54 Leavitt, 163.

55 Jacqueline Leavitt, “Two Prototypical Designs for Single Parents,” in *New Households, New Housing*, ed. Karen A. Franck and Sherry Ahrentzen (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989), 162.

56 Leavitt, 164.

57 Leavitt, 169.

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

PRIVACY AND PROPERTY

While historically women have taken care of reproductive labor, it was only with the transition to capitalism—when the working class lost its means of reproduction—that this labor became truly exploited.⁵⁹ Women’s reproductive work could be deemed non-productive by being made socially invisible, a situation made possible by women’s confinement within the isolated single-family house.⁶⁰ As architects Maria Shéhérazade Giudici and Pier Vittorio Aureli argue 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.”⁶¹ Important in this regard, I believe, is the relation between the interior of the house and what is exterior to it. The private home has a strict boundary, which, as Dolores Hayden notes, corresponds to the economic boundary of the women’s sphere.⁶²

The Material Feminists of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century had identified the isolation of women as a major issue in their role as housewives. They proposed socializing housework as a solution and advocated for “women’s control over women’s sphere, as women’s control over reproduction.”⁶³ Although the Material Feminists did not challenge the notion of the private sphere as inherently female, their goal to socialize reproductive work can be seen as a direct attack on the institution of the family which, as political theorist and activist Silvia Federici notes, ultimately serves as an instrument for the privatization of social relations.⁶⁴ ⁶⁵ Although they represent change on a small scale, the following projects, reminiscent of the Material Feminists, are attempts at challenging the isolation of women in the private sphere. They move beyond the assumptions about reproductive work as private non-work, rendering it visible to reassess its value and have it shared by all.

Casa Giudice is a detached single-family house designed by Italian architect Mariagrazia Sironi, a member of the Gruppo Femminista Immagine. Built in 1977–78 on 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 women’s collective had a strong influence.⁶⁶ As stated by Sironi, the house is designed to open rather than enclose the inhabitants in a “cage.”⁶⁷ The boundaries of private property are challenged by fostering a closer relationship between interior and exterior spaces.⁶⁸ The kitchen (ii) is directly connected to the portico (iii), while the large living area (i) opens up to the garden in three directions despite the house being partly underground due to its location on the slope of a hilly area.⁶⁹ Connected to a small cluster including a pantry (iv) and the toilet (v), the living area is characterized by two fixed elements: the fireplace and the prominent central circular staircase.⁷⁰

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

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

61 Aureli and Giudici, “Familiar Horror,” 109.

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

63 Hayden, 5.

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

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

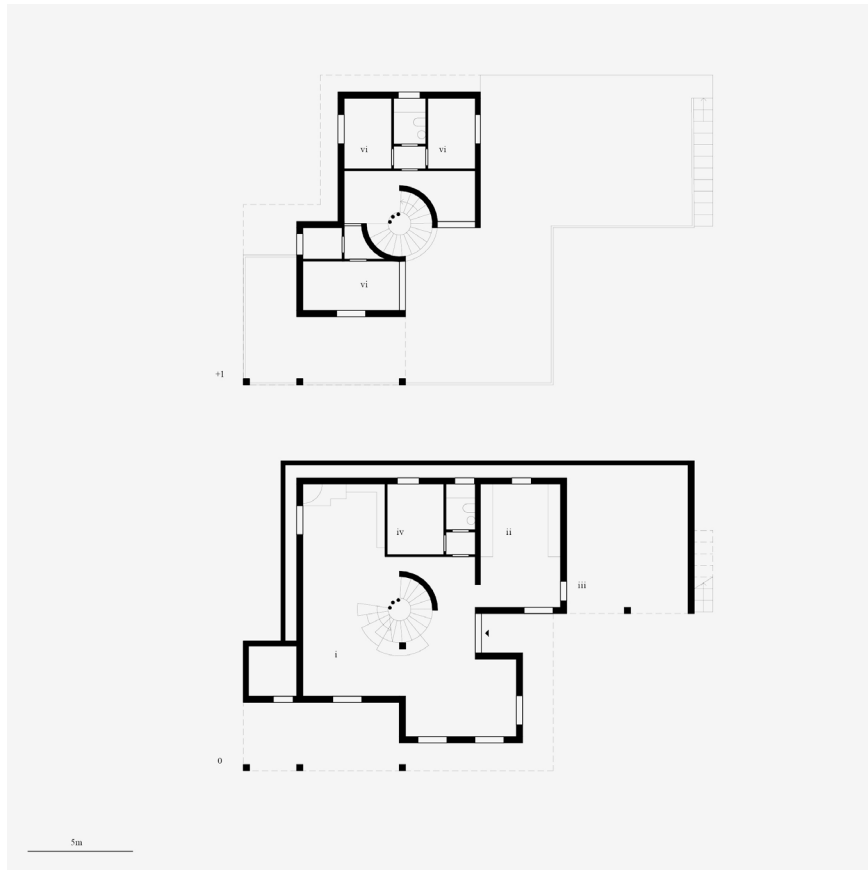
66 Jacopo Galimberti, *Images of Class: Operaismo, Autonomia and the Visual Arts (1962-1988)* (London: Verso, 2022), 289.

67 Mariagrazia Sironi to Jacopo Galimberti, translation from Italian by author

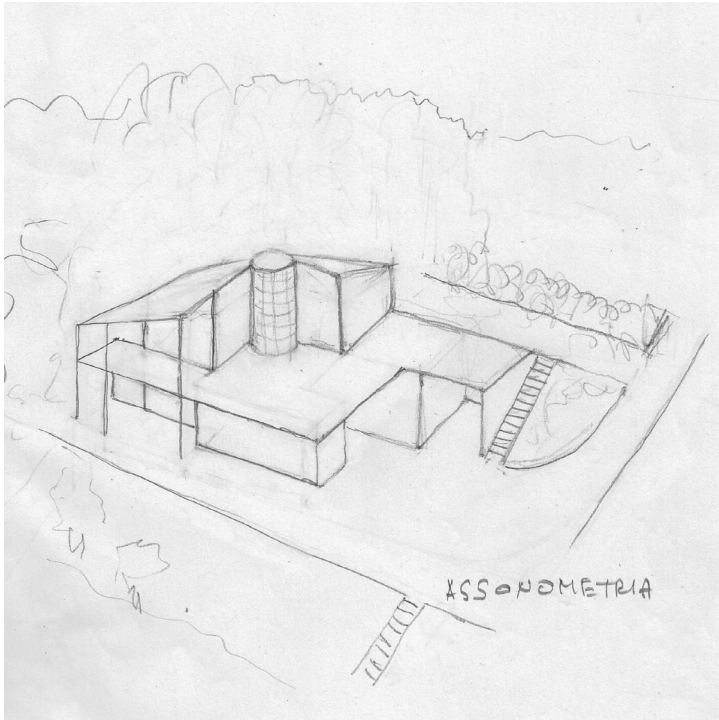
68 Galimberti argues that this feature of Casa Giudice is the architectural expression of the drive towards exterior space that had characterized the 1975 exhibition *La Mamma è Uscita [Mum Has Gone Out]*, solo exhibition by Milli Gandini, a member Gruppo Femminista Immagine. The title of the exhibition refers to Dalla Costa and James’ injunctions “we must get out of the house.” Galimberti, *Images of Class*, 270-289.

69 Mariagrazia Sironi to Jacopo Galimberti, translation from Italian by author

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

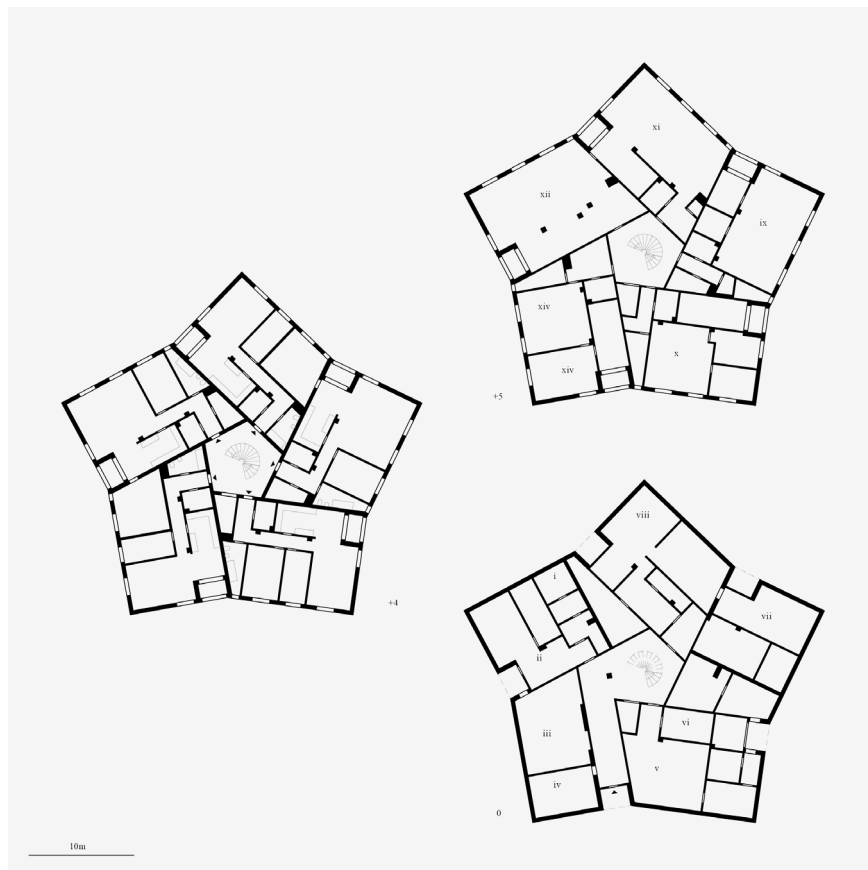


Plans of Casa Giudice—the first floor is an unverified reconstruction.
 i. living area ii. kitchen iii. portico iv. pantry v. bedroom.
 Drawn by the author, adapted from Mariagrazia Sironi's archives.



Left: Axonometric view of Casa Giudice by Mariagrazia Sironi. From Mariagrazia Sironi's archives.
 Right: Interior photograph of Casa Giudice. From Mariagrazia Sironi's archives.

The second floor of Casa Giudice houses three small bedrooms (vi). The plan of this level is a non-confirmed reconstruction based on a written description by the author and an axonometric drawing. This archival document was key in understanding that it is by reducing the area of the second floor that Sironi could encase the staircase in a glass shaft. This feature distinguishes Casa Giudice from the traditional detached single-family house which typically connects the “intimate” upper floor to the common floor via an enclosed interior staircase. Sironi advances that the glazed staircase forces the household—especially the housewife—to step outside as they transition between the private and common floor.⁷¹ Thanks to this increased visibility to and from the exterior, the boundaries of the property are metaphorically blurred. The inclusion of an independent single-family house in this analysis may seem surprising, given Sironi’s proximity to the radical Wages for Housework campaign and her feminist agenda. However, privately financed commission like this were likely among the few avenues to put forward any type of feminist proposal in the Italian context, considering that—unlike North America and the Nordic countries—Italy completely lacked institutional gender politics, welfare or care services.



Common ground floor, residential floor, common fifth floor plans of Stacken.

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.
Drawn by the author, adapted from Claes Caldenby, “Kollektivhus: The Swedish Model,”
Housing for All, no. 65 (2021): 96.



Left: Photo of Stacken's common kitchen on the fifth floor.

Right: Photo of Stacken's public daycare 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.

The Stacken project is the first built project based on the philosophy of the Little Community House developed by the Swedish women's group BiG.⁷² Completed in 1980, in Bergsjön, a suburb of Gothenburg, the tenant management tower was a renovation of a row of nine star-shaped towers initiated by Lars Ågren, the architect who had originally designed the towers in 1968. The initiative was a reaction to the saturated housing market of the mid-1970s, which left many apartments in the suburbs vacant.⁷³

Parallels can be found between Stacken and the model of a refurbished modernist building that BiG presented for the 1980 exhibition *Boplads 80* [Place of residence] in Stockholm,⁷⁴ where they demonstrated that with little structural change the ground floor of a traditional residential building could be turned into shared spaces and services.⁷⁵ In Stacken, two of its eight floors were converted into shared community spaces—forming the intermediary level of the living community made up of 12 to 50 diverse households.⁷⁶ The collectivization of square meters allowed for additional functions such as a sauna (i), a photography lab (vi), and a carpentry workshop (v), located on the ground floor,⁷⁷ while the kindergarten (ix), kitchen (xi), and the dining room (xii) were planned on the fifth floor so that no resident would be more than four floors away from these facilities.⁷⁸ Cooking was to be performed by both men and women and its responsibility was shared among the various households to reduce the collective burden

72 The Little Community House was spread through BiG's book *Det Lilla Kollektivhuset (The Little Community House)* which became a model for the 88 collective houses built in Sweden in the 1980s.

73 Woodward, "Communal Housing in Sweden," 76.

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

75 *The Berlage Sessions: "The Cohousing Movement's Stockholm"* by Helena Mattsson, accessed 13 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qb1W-gLtWA>.

76 Dick Urban Vestbro, ed., *Living Together—Cohousing Ideas and Realities around the World: Proceedings from the International Collaborative Housing Conference in Stockholm 5–9 May 2010*, TRITA-SoM, 2010, 9 (Stockholm: Division of Urban and Regional Studies. Royal Inst. of Technology [u.a.], 2010), 23.

77 As a common feature of tenant-managed projects, units are reduced in size by approximately 10% to provide common facilities.

78 Woodward, "Communal Housing in Sweden," 78.

of housework.⁷⁹ As part of her research on Stockholm's co-housing movement, Helena Mattsson explains that BiG's model sought to reorganize the treatment of social services.⁸⁰ BiG offered a new way of approaching social reproduction within the home and saw house and care work as a potential social resource rather than a burden or as something to reject.⁸¹

Beyond the addition of shared services, Stacken's renovation involved reconfiguring apartment layouts by opening up and closing walls, resulting in an increased number of apartment types. With the renovations, the previous 35 identical two-bedroom units—convenient for the traditional young family—were transformed into units ranging from two-to-seven-bedroom units.⁸² While the initial desire was to design for a diverse 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.⁸³

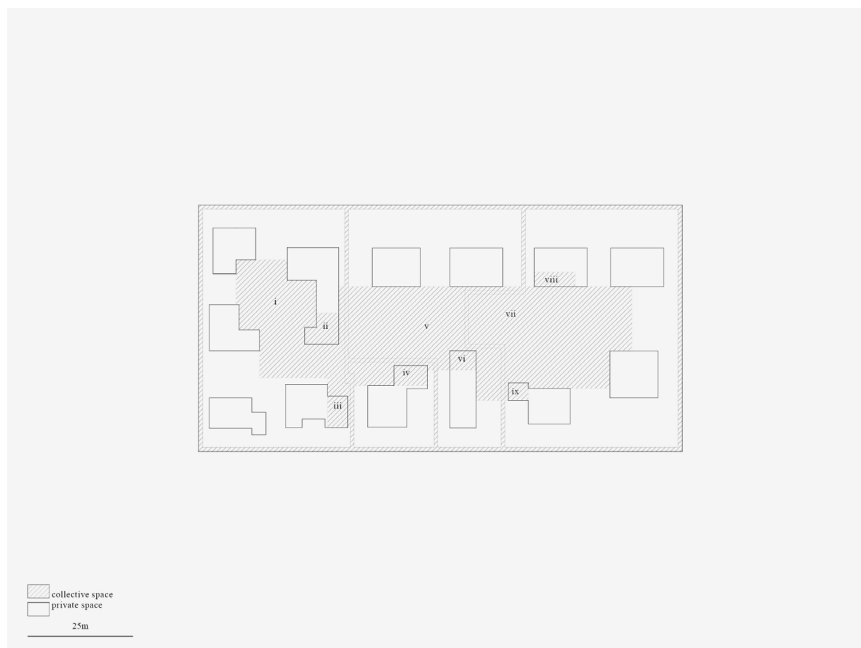


Diagram of remodeled neighborhood block for HOMES Revitalization.

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.

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.

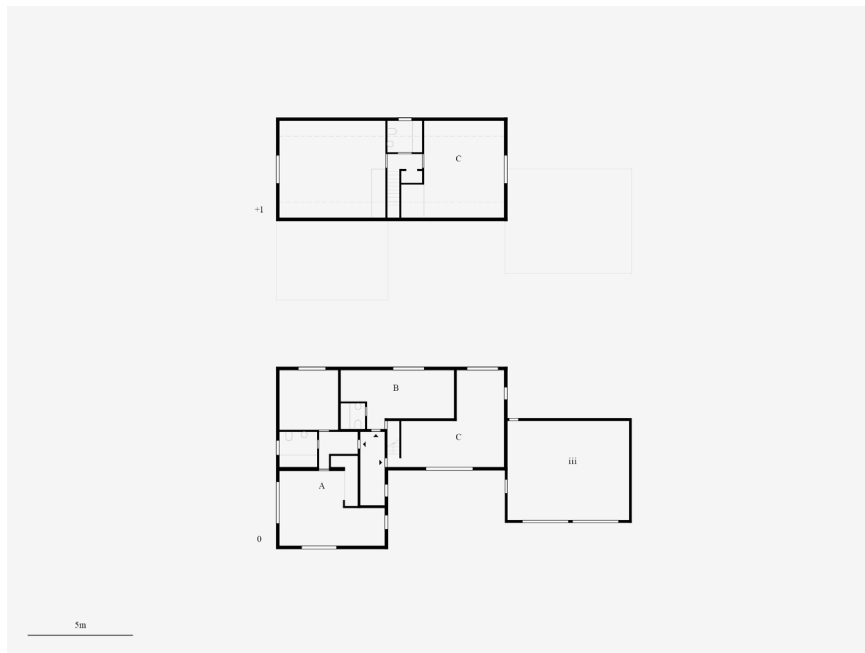
79 Dick Urban Vestbro and Liisa Horelli, "Design for Gender Equality: The History of Co-Housing Ideas and Realities," *Built Environment* (1978–) 38, no. 3 (2012): 331. called co-housing, has been influenced by utopian visions, practical proposals and implemented projects far back in the past. This article traces the driving forces behind the various models of communitarian settlements, cooperative housekeeping, central kitchen buildings, collective housing and collaborative residential experiments, while focusing specifically on the design and gender aspects of these models. Emphasis is given to feminist arguments for co-housing, as well as a discussion of the patriarchal resistance to various forms of housing and living based on equality and neighbourly cooperation. The article includes an analysis of the relief from housework burdens and of the possibility for men to share more of the domestic tasks through this type of housing. The main research methods comprise analyses of literature and our own practical experiences of co-housing. We claim that co-housing in Scandinavia and some other countries has contributed to a more equal distribution of responsibilities for housework. However, the number of people living in co-housing is still too small to influence the gender segregation of labour markets. Furthermore it is concluded that design factors, such as the quality of shared spaces, easy access to common rooms and indoor communication, are important for the smooth functioning of co-housing."

80 *The Berlage Sessions: "The Cohousing Movement's Stockholm"* by Helena Mattsson.

81 The rejection of housework was the position of the Wages for Housework campaign. Mattsson argues that it was probably because Sweden had the highest number of women in the paid labor force in the late seventies that BiG adopted this opposite perspective on the struggle for Wages for housework. This phenomenon was due to the country's establishment of welfare and care institutions. Mattsson also highlights an important shift that occurred in the seventies, where more women worked in the service sector than in unpaid labor, which corresponded to a decrease in investment from the public sector into services. See *The Berlage Sessions*.

82 Paula Femenías, Sanja Peter, and Mattias Legnér, "Modern Heritage and Housing Renovation: Policy Development and Practical Experiences from Gothenburg, Sweden," *In Situ. Revue Des Patrimoines*, no. 49 (February 15, 2023): 12, <https://doi.org/10.4000/insitu.37415.Sweden,\uc0\u8221{\i}In Situ. Revue Des Patrimoines>, no. 49 (February 15, 2023).

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



Plans of a remodeled single-family house for the HOMES Revitalization. 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.

HOMES Revitalization was part of Dolores Hayden’s proposal for a “non-sexist city” in 1980, with which she calls for a new paradigm of the home that would support, rather than restrict, employed women.⁸⁴ Transcending traditional definitions of homes, neighborhoods, cities, and workplaces, Hayden’s blueprint encompasses an architectural design proposal and an economic program. The proposal envisioned 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 on the remodeling of the existing suburb.⁸⁵ 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 on the task of reorganizing the home and the workplace to make changes in the negotiations between private life and public responsibilities.

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.⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷ The collective services would exist in addition to private dwelling units and private gardens including a daycare center (ii), a laundromat (viii), a kitchen providing lunch for daycare center, take-out evening meals, and meals-on-wheels for elderly (vi), a grocery depot (ix), a dial-a-ride garage (iii), allotments (vii),

84 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>.

85 Hayden, 274.

86 Hayden, 270.

87 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.

and a home-help office (iv).⁸⁸ These collective activities would generate 37 jobs in proximity to the homes.⁸⁹ The proposal calls for the remodeling of a large single-family house into 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 with two-fifths of the original lot reserved for the community. The proposal thus assumes private ownership of the homes and private yards in conjunction with cooperative ownership and use of the land.⁹⁰ To achieve a transformation of housework, housing, and neighborhoods, HOMES was not intended as an isolated experiment but as a service available to the neighborhood.

What unites the three projects examined is the attempt to stretch the boundaries of individual households. In doing so, they challenge and explore the notion of privacy in different ways. The main difference between the two community-based proposals lies in their approach to managing housework once it is removed from the private sphere. Stacken relied on the participation of the residents and on framing housework as a resource rather than a burden, whereas HOMES translated the unpaid labor that would be carried by the housewives into an equivalent number of paid jobs, redefining reproductive labor as productive work. Importantly, none of these projects go against privacy per se, since privacy is necessary to reach a sustainable balance between the individual and the commons. In my view, by extracting elements of reproductive work from the private sphere and sharing them across multiple households, these projects blur the boundaries of the traditional household unit and the notion of what defines a family. Since the family, as an institution, has historically been instrumental in sustaining the exploitation of women's unpaid labor, questioning its structure inherently disrupts the gendered division of labor and the roles traditionally assigned to women within it.

PRAGMATIC BUT RADICAL

This analysis has shed light on various attempts from the 1980s aimed at expanding the traditional paradigm of the house explored at three distinct scales: the room, the dwelling unit, and the community. In the first section, the Constance Hamilton Co-op, Jachmann's emancipatory apartment and Warhaftig's IBA Frauenblock all sought to extract the housework deployed in the individual kitchen from its seclusion, whether by combining the kitchen with other functions or by giving it a central position within the house. By emphasizing the design of the kitchen, they reframed housework as an integral part of everyday life rather than something to be hidden. In the second section, Prochazka and Podreka's Frauen-Werk-Stadt units, Torre's House of Meanings, and the Congregate House explored the idea of rooms, and ultimately entire dwellings, as non-prescriptive multifunctional spaces, to allow dwellings to better adapt to the ever-changing needs of their inhabitants, thus challenging the frameworks that traditionally maintain and reproduce hierarchical relations and asymmetries within households. Finally, in the third section, Sironi's Casa Giudice, the Stacken project, and Hayden's HOMES Revitalization sought to stretch and ultimately blur the boundaries of the private sphere and also illustrated how shifting reproductive labor to a community level could reduce the collective burden of housework.

Beyond the focus of each section, all of the examined projects challenged the traditional definition of the family through their spatial reconsideration of the home. This overarching theme derived from its prominence in the Marxist feminist theory, even though its adherents did not

88 Hayden, 273.

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

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

view the gender division of labor as a problem strictly related to the family but rather as a structural problem of society as a whole.⁹¹ This Marxist feminist perspective offers a radical critique, but its feasibility remains uncertain, particularly given the unlikely prospect of a revolution against capitalism in the foreseeable future. In this context, the more pragmatic projects examined in this essay gain significance, as they address the here and now by looking at everyday life issues. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that these projects were inspired by radical thinkers, even though Marxist feminists' critiques were not translatable into a design problem. From their perspective, alternative domestic designs were a palliative to women's liberation at best.⁹² Still, it is crucial to not forget the broader scale of the issue at stake in appreciating the relevance of the projects presented.

Despite the seemingly pragmatic approach of this facet of second-wave feminism, an analysis of the projects' plans revealed how radical they were in their conceptions of domestic space. This becomes particularly evident when compared to much of the large-scale housing built today, where, for instance, pairing the entrance with the kitchen remains almost unthinkable, and the concept of a "master bedroom" is still widespread. Housing was and remains a strict and standardized domain, but there is potential to draw inspiration from the experiences of the 1980s to address contemporary challenges in the built environment. Considering that the issues tied to "housewifization" and the misrepresentation in domestic design of women's needs and everyday lives 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 asymmetry perpetrated by this all-encompassing economic force—inequalities that have persisted and show no signs of abating.⁹³

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

92 Galimberti, *Images of Class*, 290.

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

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