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### Housing the Single Woman: The Frankfurt Experiment

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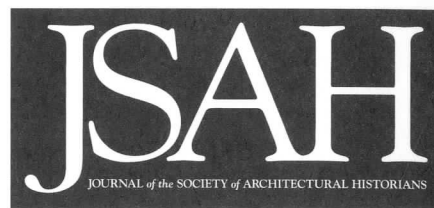
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# Housing the Single Woman

## The Frankfurt Experiment

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I probably don't need to tell you about the poor wages women make; I will only point out that the workers living in boarding houses earn between 17 and 24 marks per week. And yet, such women couldn't rent the worst unheated garret for 30. . . . [T]hese women are independent; they don't want to be forever under the eye of landlady. We are asking that units with small kitchenettes be built for them.<sup>1</sup>

—Social Democrat Elsa Bauer  
to the Frankfurt city council, 1926

[S]ometimes they'll make a cup of tea, perhaps do some laundry . . .<sup>2</sup>

—Social Democrat Sophie Ennenbach,  
to the Frankfurt city council, 1927

A key effort on the behalf of women's emancipation in Weimar Germany, and one of the most overlooked and least successful, was to create affordable housing for the vast and growing ranks of single women. As a result of war casualties, by 1925 German women outnumbered men between the ages of twenty-five and forty by 1.25 million. Altogether, 2.8 million "surplus" women—widows and unmarried women—comprised nearly 75 percent of Germany's single-person households.<sup>3</sup> Anxious to "re-domesticate" working women, the state propagandized a motherly ideal of womanhood. Still, one-third of women remained full-time wage laborers. During the war, women had found highly desirable skilled jobs in industry, making steel and

machinery and even mining coal. With the return of peace, most women were let go, but they did not make the expected retreat home. They needed to work and were first among the ranks of those who benefited when the postwar rationalization of labor replaced skilled male workers with the unskilled, the highly paid with the low.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the country, but especially in Frankfurt am Main's vibrant industrial center, women constituted a vital part of the workforce. By 1924 there were 8,000 women among the city's 10,000 clothing industry workers, and by 1926 they were 20 percent of the city's electro-technical workers.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, white-collar professions were opening to women in social welfare work and the vocations associated with a woman's sphere—housekeeping, nursing, nursemaid, and teaching. Women made the biggest gains in clerical work, where they held 39 percent of the jobs by 1925. Postal and telegraph positions proved to be among the more prestigious and better paid.<sup>6</sup> Women also increasingly worked in retail sales; in Frankfurt they numbered 25 percent by 1924. By 1925, 20 percent of all full-time workers in the city were women.

In 1926, Ernst May (1886–1970) returned from designing rural settlements in Silesia to his hometown, Frankfurt. Hired by the reforming mayor Ludwig Landmann (1868–1945), his task was to build housing settlements (*Siedlungen*) as part of the municipal economic and cultural project that Landmann dubbed "The New Era." May's tenure would last only five years, but during that time his

program, the New Frankfurt, rehoused over 10 percent of the city's population, some 60,000 people, in fourteen new settlements that comprised 15,000 units. In all Europe, only Berlin built more. The program was a crucible for Landmann's social reform initiatives; the settlements embodied a new mode of daily life. New schools, new housing types, standardized allotment gardens, electric laundries, and kitchens were some of their innovations.

Only weeks after his appointment in June 1925, May, together with Herbert Boehm, presented an expansion plan for the city; construction of new settlements began immediately. Swathed in parks and gardens, provided with electricity and central heating, strikingly modern in appearance, the settlements gained the New Frankfurt initiative immediate renown. Less well-known were the New Frankfurt projects that addressed the needs of people living outside the structure of the nuclear family, such as the elderly, homeless youth and the huge "surplus" of single women "fathered" by the war, as one author put it.<sup>7</sup>

Women formed the most powerful lobby for the underprivileged, and a loose coalition of women's groups, politicians, and architects brought the question of women's housing to the fore in cities across the country. Like the needs of other neglected constituencies, housing for women posed unique social and economic questions. Given the strong social stigma against female independence, coupled with routinely poor wages, many working women still lived with relatives. Others lived in rental barracks (*Mietskaserne*) or were *Schlafgänger*, boarders who rented a bed—or a tabletop used as a bed—on a day-to-day basis. White-collar women might locate a room in one of the overcrowded boarding houses, mostly middle-class homes converted by owners who had lost their savings in the hyperinflation of the early 1920s.<sup>8</sup> These "Angestellte" maintained the illusion of middle-class status in low-paying but genteel jobs. In the boarding-house setting, they compromised their privacy but maintained their respectability through the vigilance of a watchful landlady, often a widow who leased out rooms to make ends meet.<sup>9</sup> The most privileged women—the very few professional women and the rich—could afford independent accommodations, and some, like the architect Grete Lihotzky, defied traditional mores and lived independently and modishly.<sup>10</sup> Most, however, were confined by poverty and social strictures, and the single woman abroad in society remained an anomaly.

An established solution for both men and women was the *Ledigenheim*, a single-occupancy residence or hostel that was a familiar sight in the industrial landscape of prewar Germany. These ungainly but profitable hostels responded to the constant flux in the ranks of young, single workers in

industrial centers. Women could pay only a fraction of the fee afforded by men, and their barracks were much sordid—often overcrowded, with several sharing a bed. At best, these speculative projects, unregulated until late in the nineteenth century, provided a happenstance response to the persistent housing shortage. The state stepped in only to deal with shortages, when it sometimes commandeered schools, dance halls, or guesthouses as emergency shelters. Only slowly did the state establish housing regulations to monitor facilities and fees in the hostels, and, after the war, municipal housing agencies began building their own, such as the men's Berlin *Ledigenheim* designed by Bruno Taut in 1919.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1920s municipal *Ledigenheim* offered a kind of middle ground between residential seclusion and independence. Munich's 1927 *Ledigenheim*, designed by Theodor Fischer, offered men tiny rooms of six square meters, intended to suffice until they moved out to start their own families. A community room, restaurant, public bath, reading room, and a shared kitchen comprised the amenities. The rent, an affordable 25 marks per month, which included cleaning services, heat, and light, allowed men to save for the future. There was an implicit acceptance of an itinerant male subculture, yet single women were seen to be at risk and in need of encouragement in the domestic direction. In the adjacent women's block in Munich, the rooms were a capacious twelve square meters. Each had the amenities of an apartment, with private bath and kitchen, so that the tenant could practice her homemaking skills; women were expected to personalize their apartments with private belongings and mementoes. But the privileges came dear; for the apartment plus breakfast and one other meal per day, the female tenant paid 88 marks, well beyond the means of all but the highest-paid workers.<sup>12</sup> Still, in 1929 Frankfurt city councilor Christine Lill of the Center Party cited the Munich hostel as an important model for women's housing. In contrast, Frankfurt had been "negligent and backward" so that "women are forced to find housing in dives and immorality is virtually forced on them."<sup>13</sup>

The sheer numbers of women would inevitably make themselves felt on the housing market; the only question was how. How could the city accommodate so many single women without threatening the notion of separate spheres and social mores? More pragmatically, how could it provide housing for the thousands of single women who earned only meager wages? Managers maintained separate spheres in the workplace by job sex-stereotyping and segregation. In housing for single women, most architects pursued similar strategies and researched new types that would suit woman's nature. Cognizant of the numbers of permanently single women, and fearful of their potential to challenge social

norms in everything from their sexual to their political lives, reformers focused on security, modesty, the development of wifely habits, and the exertion of social control *in loco familiae*. The state also persisted in viewing the single woman as a temporary phenomenon, and focused on making her marriageable rather than on accommodating her single life; it thus gave relatively scant attention to the women's housing question.

Following the war, women, chafing under the ministrations of the state and society, complained that the available housing solutions hampered their independence, cast them as social oddities, and were, in any case, too expensive. Women's clubs and the women's movement argued that women deserved a place in the social and economic life of the new democracy. Research by the Union of German Women (Bund deutscher Frauen) and its government counterparts, the Women's Labor Office (Frauenarbeitzentrale) exposed the severe housing shortage for single women, the disparity between their needs and their reality. It reported that the vast majority of single women wanted their own accommodation, yet a 1926 survey found that even among relatively prosperous social service workers, only 28 percent lived on their own. Another 40 percent boarded, and 23 percent lived with their parents. Most of the apartment dwellers were over fifty years of age. Only 5 percent of all working women under thirty had their own apartments, although postal and telegraph workers fared better.<sup>14</sup>

The standard response in the Frankfurt city council was that "with evictions on the rise and winter on the way," women's housing was far less important than housing for families.<sup>15</sup> Men on both the far left and the right wanted women to live at home—the conservatives for reasons of morality, the communists, as a sacrifice for the sake of family housing. Still, women city councilors from a variety of party affiliations persisted in their call for women's housing. Their party allegiances predicted the specifics: women on the right favored cloistered solutions, the communists argued for collective housing, and those in the center left and center favored individual apartments. All lamented the sorry conditions of the poor. In 1927 city councilor Elsa Bauer (Social Democratic Party), the most persistent spokesperson, brought the issue to the floor, speaking of girls who made poor wages and had few safe housing options, and she decried the paucity of agencies prepared to deal with the venereal disease and unwanted pregnancies that resulted from these circumstances.<sup>16</sup> In response, the council discussed a proposition to build housing for women of little means.<sup>17</sup> After a second debate, the council shifted course and approved a proposal for housing single professional women—not the poor. Even this measure lingered unfunded.<sup>18</sup>

At the Hochbauamt, however, women's housing was high on May's agenda, part of the larger project for the woman's sphere that included the construction of kindergartens, crèches, and electric laundries and the creation of women's vocational schools. Indeed, the 1927 debate in the city council was occasioned by the inclusion of women's housing within May's 1926 annual report. He affirmed that the Hochbauamt "foresaw a great number" of housing units for women in Praunheim and in other Nidda settlements.<sup>19</sup> He entrusted this, as most women's projects, to staff members Grete Lihotzky, the designer of the highly efficient Frankfurt Kitchen (*Frankfurter Küche*); Eugen Kaufmann, who specialized in unit design; and the young Viennese, Anton Brenner, who had experience designing small apartments with built-in furnishings. Over the next five years the Hochbauamt produced several models for women's housing, and some 150 units were integrated into the housing settlements.

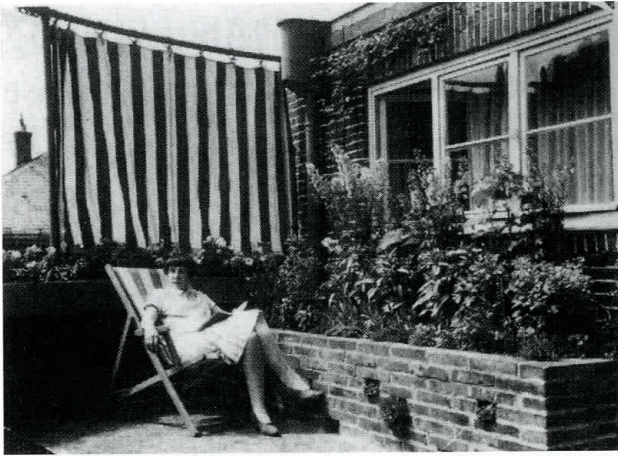
### Lihotzky Has a Plan

I thought it a terrible idea to pen women up together in a home. So I suggested creating housing integrated into family communities where the single [women] would not be so isolated.<sup>20</sup>

—Grete Lihotzky, 1997

Moving to Frankfurt in 1926, Grete Lihotzky (1897–2000) secured a unique apartment in a housing block then under renovation by the Hochbauamt. The Kranicherstrasse block was the first project completed under May's supervision, and the first equipped with Lihotzky's Frankfurt Kitchen. Though designed to house large families, it had a handful of small apartments. Lihotzky's was on the upper floor of a round bastion, where she had the building's sole terrace to herself. It is possible that she collaborated with Frankfurt architect Ernst Balser, who renovated this segment of the building (Figure 1).<sup>21</sup>

Lihotzky was soon at work on a study of housing for single women, commissioned by influential members of women's groups and sanctioned by the Siedlungsamt. It is not clear how this research came about, although records show that Lihotzky was its principal instigator.<sup>22</sup> Looking for something more than transitional housing, she proposed an *Einliegerwohnung*. The term *Einlieger* (lodger) commonly referred to a farm laborer who boarded with a farmer. Farmhouses often had a special room or apartment, an *Einliegerwohnung*, for the purpose.<sup>23</sup> Lihotzky's adoption of the term may have been suggested by Ernst May, who had worked for years in rural Silesia, where the term was in common usage. Her physical model was not unlike her own



**Figure 1** Ernst Balsler, Kranicherstrasse apartment block, Frankfurt, 1927, with Grete Schütte Lihotzky sitting on her terrace, ca. 1927 (from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1927)

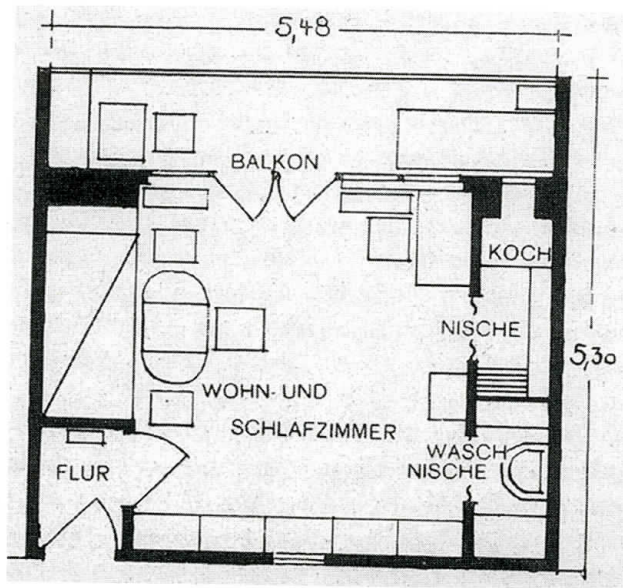
apartment, an independent dwelling attached to a house or group of flats for families. Most women, she said, should be settled in apartments that were small and cheap, but not specifically designed for them, and not cloistered in women-only blocks. She had a financial rationale as well. With the exception of housing for poor women, women's housing was ineligible for public monies, principally the House Equity Tax Fund. Without such subsidies, rents would rise far beyond the reach of most women. Her *Einliegerwohnungen* could be incorporated in any settlement and, by piggyback-

ing women's housing onto units for families, they could take advantage of federal funding. While conventional apartments could cost as much as 200 to 300 marks rent per month, three times the rent of a single-family house in the new settlements, Lihotzky estimated that the *Einliegerwohnung* would rent for only 18 to 30 marks per month.<sup>24</sup> It would also bring women into a normative social setting. The construction of such single women's housing as part of the row house and apartment blocks foreseen in the Frankfurt ten-year plan would have accommodated several thousand women, going far to solve the city's immediate problem.

In 1927 Lihotzky presented four of her *Einliegerwohnung* models to the women on the city council. Each type fitted into a base plan with a breadth of 16.50 meters and a central stair, the dimensions of the apartment blocks in the famous "zig-zag" section of the Bruchfeldstrasse Siedlung, the first major settlement built by the New Frankfurt program (Figure 2). The units would sit on the top floor. She designed four types correlating to the incomes of women workers, students, and professionals. The most modest apartments, Types I and II, were essentially dormitory rooms with shared bath and kitchen facilities, intended for the ranks of factory workers and the growing numbers of clerical staff, particularly the masses of typists.<sup>25</sup> The smaller Type I unit suited women with a minimum income of 80 marks per month, with rent set at 13 marks. Type II, with a rent of 18 marks, was for students, sales girls, and clerks with an income of 100 marks or more. Both were for



**Figure 2** Frankfurt am Main Housing Authority, Siedlung Bruchfeldstrasse, Frankfurt, 1927. Rooftop view of the zig-zag block (from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1928)

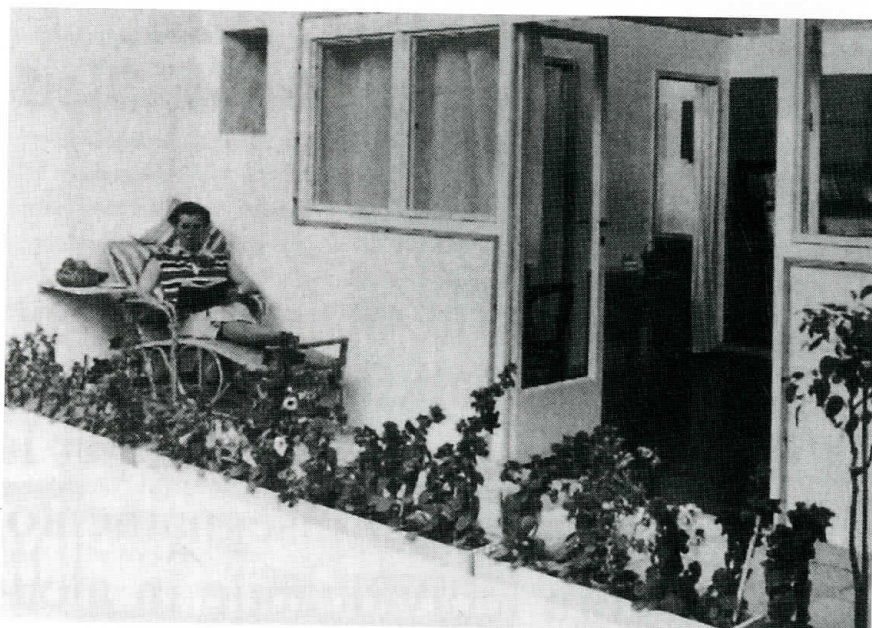


**Figure 3** Grete Schütte Lihotzky, dwelling for a professional woman exhibited at *Heim und Technik*, 1928, plan (from *Baumeister*, 1928)

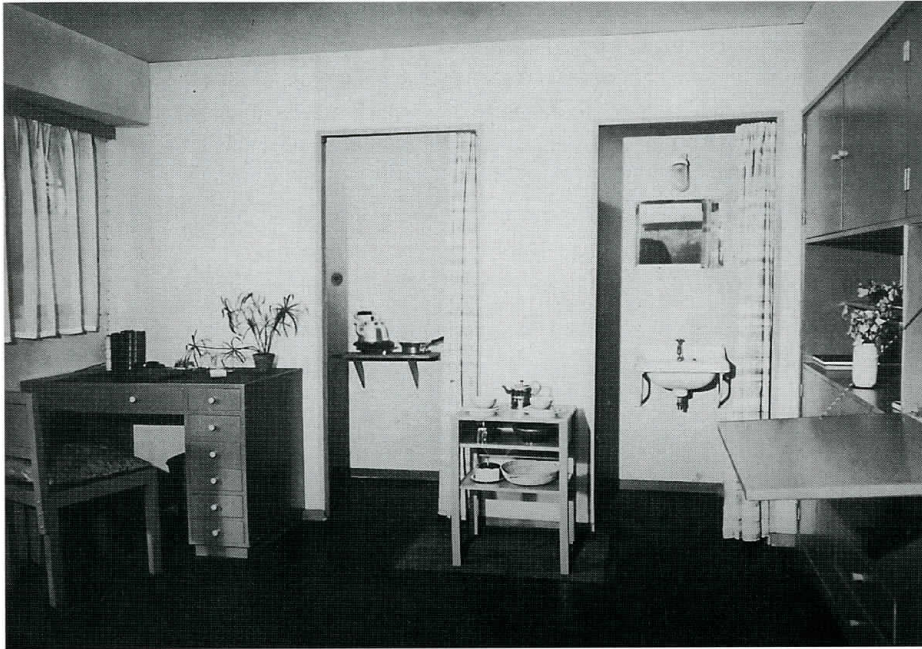
Lihotzky produced a version of Type III for exhibition at the Congress of Women's Groups (Generalversammlung des Hausfrauenvereines) held in Essen in March 1927. The display embodied a modern way of life that was orderly, clean, and frugal and showed how one room could make a comfortable and spacious dwelling. "It is mistaken to think that comfort . . . depends on the number of rooms. Quite the contrary, the more rooms there are, the smaller they must be and therefore require greater upkeep. The correct arrangement and division of one space, designed for unconstrained movement in a manner as simple as can be, increases contentment much more than pride in having such-and-such many rooms."<sup>26</sup> "Through the openness afforded by a glass wall and by some free-standing furniture, the space appears roomy and large."<sup>27</sup> The interior of the apartment was opened up by a long windowed wall and balcony beyond, a luxury demonstrated in a published photograph in which a New Woman relaxed outdoors on a chaise (Figures 3, 4).

Her design was distinguished by the formal geometry of its plan. The central space was three meters square. Flanking it, two niches contained the bed and vestibule on one side, and the kitchen and washroom on the other. The wall opposite the balcony held built-in storage. Lihotzky's interest in built-in furniture culminated in the famous Frankfurt Kitchen, but it extended back to a 1917 design for a fold-out dressing table and extended to numerous other projects such as her 1926 competition entry for a train sleeping compartment.<sup>28</sup> She conceived of movement as a series of hypothet-

younger women and were intended as temporary housing comparable to men's barracks. She designed Type III for white-collar women—nurses, secretaries, and teachers—who earned 160 marks or more per month, and Type IV for middle-class women with a monthly income of 300 marks. Type IV had a separate bedroom, kitchenette, bath, and private terrace, with no built-in furnishings.



**Figure 4** Lihotzky, dwelling for a professional woman, terrace view, from *Die kleine Wohnung, Katalog zur Ausstellung 'Heim und Technik'* (Munich: Callwey, 1928)



**Figure 5** Lihotzky, dwelling for a professional woman (from *Baumeister*, 1928)

ical, linked actions that she translated into furnishings that facilitated action. In the model *Einliegerwohnung*, the sleeping niche doubled as a seating alcove. Its wood paneling served as the head- and footboards of a bed, and also as the backrest of a sofa. A pad fitted with a loose cover substituted for a mattress and spring. Brooms were stored in a cove underneath. Lihotzky aimed to anticipate and shape every task. She provided a special airing cupboard for the bedding so the tenant would not be tempted to hang it from the balcony. Next to the daybed a small cupboard served as an armrest. Its upper surface folded out as a work surface and revealed a compartment divided to hold small necessities such as needles, thread, and silk; beneath this was a sewing drawer, and below that was a cupboard for mending. A table fronting the daybed folded out for entertaining, as did the tea table opposite. The kitchen niche and washroom were small and modest. The latter contained only a sink and toilet, the former had space for a few kitchen things and a hotplate, with the cooling and airing closet connected to the outside wall. The long wall with built-in cupboards contained five tall compartments, variously assigned to clothes, shoes (a ventilated cupboard), dishes, and food, with a pass-through for deliveries, books, and linens. Opposite, the desk provided a black linoleum work surface and more drawers, with the windowed wall to the left to provide good light for working. All the furnishings were lacquered for easy cleaning; the carpets, covers, and curtains were washable. Lihotzky estimated that with rationalized production, the

rent, utilities, and cleaning service would amount to only 50 marks per month (Figure 5).

At the Essen Congress in 1927 the Type III model was part of an exhibition dedicated to “the lifestyle of the professional woman.” One section addressed her physical appearance; the working woman, it was asserted, could dress appropriately but still express her individuality. The second section presented a “new world” in women’s dwellings. There were three model rooms on display. Lihotzky was alone in suggesting that women’s units be integrated into new housing.<sup>29</sup> The other two showed how single women could adapt to older buildings, creating “a home both practical and attractive in what is often unappealing room.”<sup>30</sup>

In 1928, at the important *Heim und Technik* exhibition at the Münchner Messe, Lihotzky’s was one of twenty-one model apartments, but the only one specifically designed for the working woman.<sup>31</sup> Yet in the same year, she revised her concept of the *Einliegerwohnung* and enlarged its target group of users to include all singles, young married couples, and elderly couples of limited means. Although the puzzling switch was likely a response to pressure exerted by the Frankfurt mayor’s office, it did accord with her personal view. Even while Lihotzky responded sympathetically to calls for women’s housing, she bristled at the notion that women needed to be cloistered and cosseted, or alternatively, banished to barracks. Like the *Frankfurter Küche*, her *Einliegerwohnung* was shaped by exigency. Like her own



atelier, the *Einliegerwohnung* stood as a model of the independent life of the New Woman.

### Housing for Women in Frankfurt

This year we made allowance for women and girls by building a number of one-room units into the settlement of Praunheim. In planning the expansion of Praunheim, as well as the other settlements of the Nidda, we foresee a great number of these apartments.<sup>32</sup>

—Ernst May, 1927

In 1927 May adopted Lihotzky's proposal for *Einliegerwohnungen* as the city's solution for women's housing. A year later, it had gained professional recognition through the Essen exhibition and was made part of a municipal campaign by the Bund Deutscher Frauen (League of German Women's Clubs) or BDF. In the city council, women members lobbied for an ordinance to build four thousand single women's units.<sup>33</sup> The proposal was supported by an unusually broad political spectrum, including the Communists, the Center, and the SPD.

Although Lihotzky's Bruchfeldstrasse units remained unbuilt, her principal idea—to append specialized units to ordi-

nary family housing—was realized at Praunheim, where in 1927 some 128 such units were built on the rooftops of privately-owned row houses (Figures 6, 7).<sup>34</sup> However, these were not now designated as women's housing because the city administration had objected that the units "must have some larger purpose."<sup>35</sup> The accepted categories of tenants for these small apartments at Praunheim were war widows, small families, and elderly couples. Between inception and construction, pressure

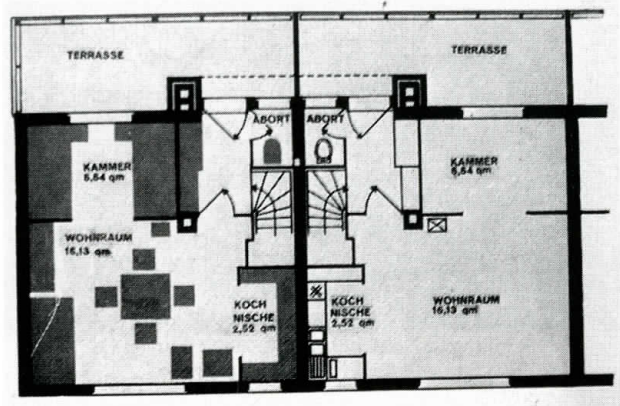
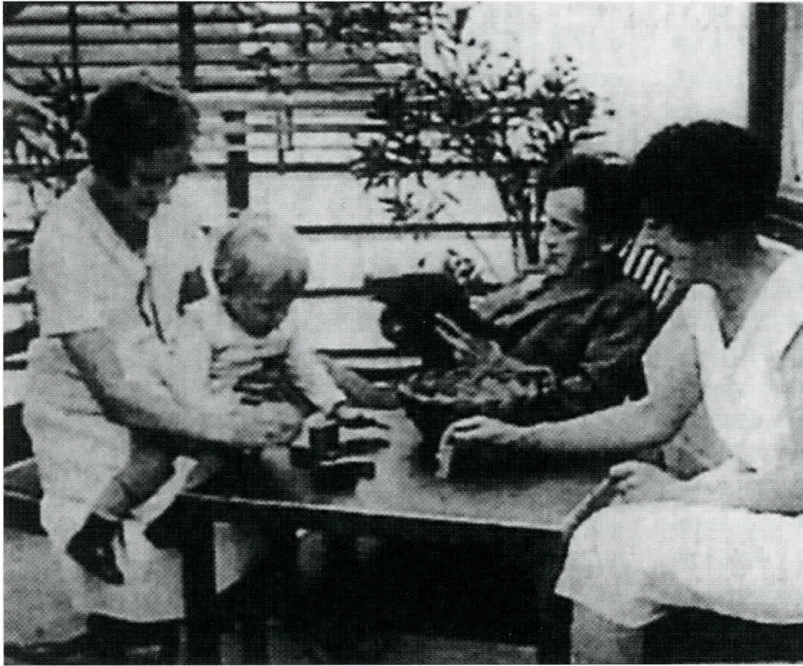


Figure 6 Anton Brenner, *Einliegerwohnung*, Siedlung Praunheim, plan, 1927 (from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1929)



Figure 7 Frankfurt am Main Housing Authority. Siedlung Praunheim, Frankfurt, 1927. Garden view of the Praunheim row houses with *Einliegerwohnungen* on the top floor (from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1928)



**Figure 8** Paul Wolff, *Einliegerwohnung Praunheim, Demonstrationsfilm vom Hochbauamt*, The family entertains a guest, 1927, film still

and opinion both within the Hochbauamt and outside had pushed the single women's housing question to one side.

Still, the *Einliegerwohnungen* built at Praunheim recognizably realized Lihotzky's concept of providing independent dwellings with their own kitchens, private toilets, and terraces, set atop single-family houses. Publicity for the *Einliegerwohnung* included a short documentary film commissioned by the Hochbauamt chronicling a typical day in the life of a young couple and their child (Figure 8).<sup>36</sup> The idealized narrative recalls another memorable portrait created to advertise the New Frankfurt, the rooftop photograph of a couple at Bruchfeldstrasse. Both official depictions neglect housing for single women in favor of provisions made for the nuclear family (see Figure 2). As noted, Lihotzky was no champion of women-only housing, and her own later accounts of the *Einliegerwohnung* make no mention of women as the intended tenants; this was also the position taken by Anton Brenner, who designed the Praunheim *Einliegerwohnung*.<sup>37</sup> As the female tenant disappeared from the discussion, so did Lihotzky and the BDF initiative that propelled her research. In *Das Neue Frankfurt*, the journal that chronicled the bold social and architectural experiment, and in the other professional magazines, *May*, *Kaufmann*, and *Brenner* are the credited authors of the *Einliegerwohnung*.<sup>38</sup>

In the following years, the greatest impediment to women's housing was neither political nor social, but the dire economic conditions that demanded the scaling back of all housing. In 1928 the city mandated that the Frankfurt Housing Authority focus on building minimal, one-room

units (*Kleinstwohnungen*) for families of four. Lihotzky contributed an *Einliegerwohnung* that measured a relatively capacious 44 square meters per unit, but by 1930, the city's minimal dwellings were a mere 33 square meters. Pressed by these circumstances, the city's women's housing initiative was quietly set aside.

### Housing Blocks for Women

The home for the professional woman is now a real possibility. As a concept, it doesn't lack for hypotheses and experiments. For the modest and lower income levels there are already more or less successful *Ledigenheim* solutions that have been built or are in preparation. Here we are concerned not with a *Ledigenheim* in the narrow sense, i.e., not of the combining of a number of housekeeping one- or two- room apartments, but with independent dwellings . . . composed of rental units.<sup>39</sup>

—Otto Völckers, 1930

As the reader will see, the Frankfurt Housing Society for Professional Women did not have at hand any extraordinary means to reach their goal . . . [rather] a small band of modern women, undistracted by any preconceived artistic motivations, and with help of a gifted young architect, have presented us with a complete realization of modern form.<sup>40</sup>

—Otto Völckers, 1930

It was the Frankfurt Housing Association of Professional Women [*Siedlungsgenossenschaft berufstätiger Frauen*]

that discovered another path to building housing for women.<sup>41</sup> First convened in January 1927, the organization began by helping its members find housing, assessing the state of existing rental housing, and lobbying for the creation of more. It even bought properties to turn into women's housing.<sup>42</sup> Within the year, it created a subsidiary, the Women's Own Home Housing League (Verein für Fraueneigenheim) to sponsor the construction of an apartment block for professional women. With a membership of prospective tenants and representatives from its parent organization, the club approached the city with a proposal for what became the Baublock Adickesallee.<sup>43</sup>

The Housing Association for Professional Women was a sister organization of the bourgeois BDF and was proud to distinguish itself from its blue-collar counterpart. Significant social barriers separated white- and blue-collar women, and, although their incomes might not be significantly better, white-collar women had ties to establishment culture and access to professional and political networks that made it easier for them to get the necessary support for such undertakings. Thea Hillmann, a principal figure in the Frankfurt housing campaign, was a secondary school teacher, elected president of the Women's Own Home Housing Club and subsequent long-term resident of the Baublock Adickesallee. While maintaining her teaching post, Hillmann was active in the women's housing cause, wrote about women's housing occasionally in journals such as Frankfurt's *Die Siedlung*, and was a close friend of the architect Max Cetto.<sup>44</sup> It was to provide independent housing for Hilmann and her peers—teachers, health-care, and skilled secretarial workers—that the Baublock Adickesallee was built.<sup>45</sup>

The city and the club established a partnership for Adickesallee and a second project, in which the club exchanged some of its limited municipal funding in trade for fiscal and design oversight. When the proposal was first made public, various objections arose. The Organization of Landladies (Organization der Zimmervermieterinnen) claimed that the project threatened their livelihood, even though, as Walter Schürmeyer averred, most landladies refused women tenants, and others provided women only the smallest and poorest rooms.<sup>46</sup> The idea also angered residents near the proposed site, who objected to the prospect of a flat-roofed building filled with unattached women as their neighbor. They demanded compliance with the technicalities of zoning ordinances to discourage the project. Nevertheless, the city sustained its support for the project and construction began in the fall of 1927. Between 1927 and 1930 the alliance produced this and a second project, the Baublock Platenstrasse, providing housing for some 180

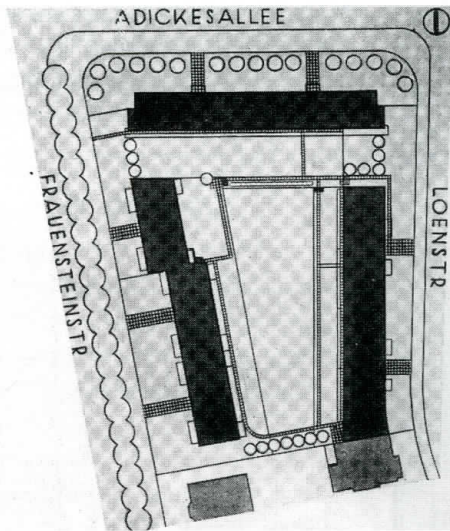
women. The city positioned the new buildings in the north central district east of Grüneberg Park and the Palmengarten, where they were convenient for office and service workers and within a developing network of New Frankfurt settlements. The young architect Bernhard Hermkes (1903–1995) designed both projects. Grete Lihotzky was not involved in either.

The Baublock Adickesallee was erected on the Adickesallee, a major east-west artery, east of the future I. G. Farben headquarters and the new white-collar settlement Miquelstrasse. The complex would eventually consist of three four-story blocks looking onto a common courtyard (Figure 9). Cetto assessed the result as “unpretentious and elegant.” It was “modern,” he added, “without suggesting anything radically different from the norm,” and not too different from its middle-class neighbors, nor so brash or assertive as to bring further notice to its single women tenants.<sup>47</sup> Although the project did have a flat roof, a prerequisite for approval by May's building inspectors, its public face consisted of rather heavy and unexceptional blocks set around the irregular perimeter of the site. Inside the private courtyard, balconies skimmed the facades in great horizontal strokes. The dichotomy between interior and exterior facades reflected a project that was a sum of compromises (Figures 10, 11).

Such a compromise had produced a unique unit plan. Hermkes grouped apartment mates—often siblings or colleagues—in three to five rooms with a shared kitchen, bath, and living room. The only genuinely communal solution in a New Frankfurt project, this layout derived from the neighbors' insistence on compliance with middle-class residential zoning, which set a minimum apartment size of three rooms. This accidental communal experiment was never referred to in the official literature as such; was celebrated instead as a rare model of “independent living” for women.<sup>48</sup> As completed, 43 units housed 120 women.

Otherwise, the design and appurtenances at Adickesallee were unexceptional. Bedrooms looked out to the streets, with living rooms and balconies facing the court. On the ground floor were the furnace for the central heating and hot water, storage, and the caretaker's quarters. Early plans indicated a gym and an electric laundry, but these were deleted with the tenants' permission in order to cut construction costs.

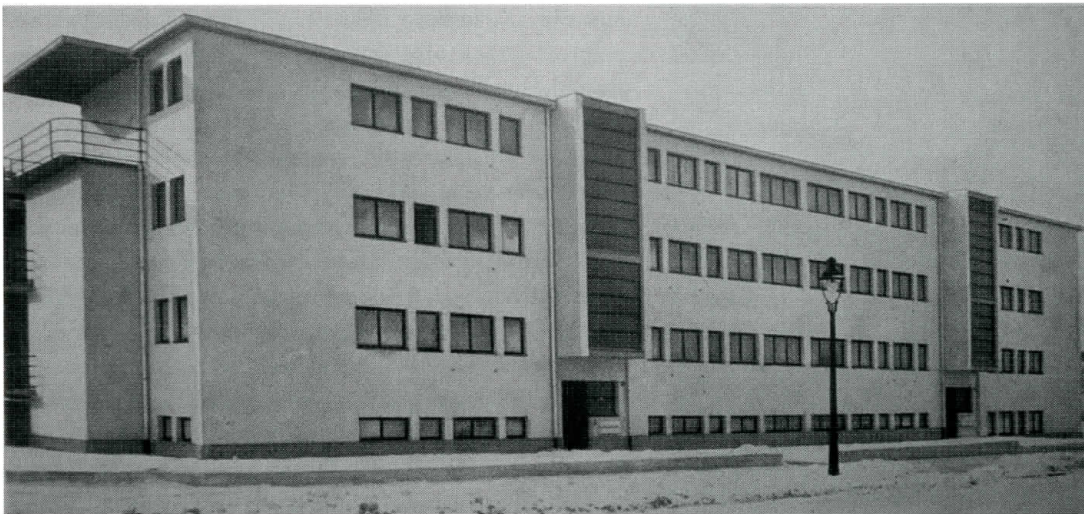
While the apartments were surely welcome, they did not answer Elsa Bauer's call for housing for maids and other low-wage workers. Indeed, most of the tenants were teachers. Each paid about 29 marks per month for a room in a 60- to 102-square-meter apartment. Rent for an entire multi-room apartment ranged from 103 to 168 marks per month. These



**Figure 9** Bernhard Hermkes, Baublock Adickesallee, 1928, plan (from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1929)

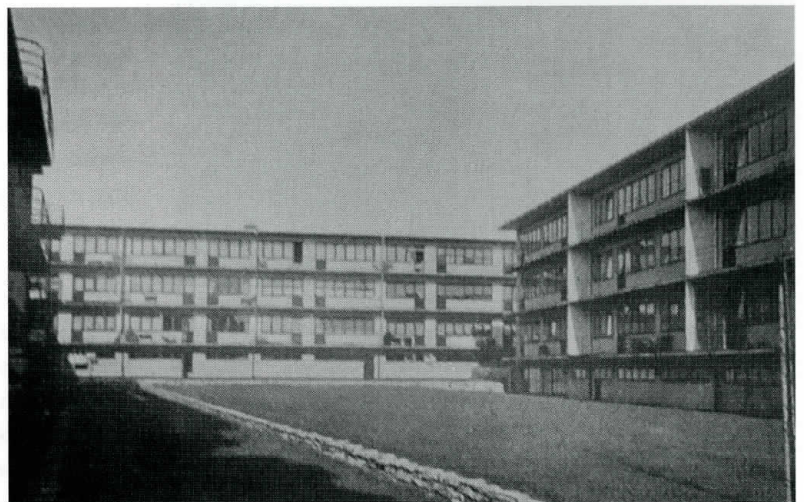
rents were high, and by the time of its completion most of the original prospective tenants had been priced out. Inflation and additional charges for heat, electricity, and the caretaker's fee increased the costs further. By 1931, the rents ranged between 130 and 200 marks. Nevertheless, the building was fully occupied, and Cetto testified to the residents' enthusiasm for the communal living arrangement, especially because it allowed them to share expenses. The project's popularity, he said, was its vindication.<sup>49</sup>

Evaluating the interiors, Otto Völckers declared that the "new, moveable furniture . . . [is] of the best materials and the best construction." It was certainly more elegant than that for the usual Frankfurt *Kleinstwohnung* (Figure 12). Hermkes's typical apartment included some luxurious fittings, such as a wardrobe with twenty shelves and two large drawers in each bedroom, and a rather large bathroom with a bathtub. A vestibule fitted with a pillowed window seat allowed teachers to host schoolgirls without admitting them



**Figure 10** Hermkes, Baublock Adickesallee, street view (from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1929)

**Figure 11** Hermkes, Baublock Adickesallee, view of the courtyard (from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1929)





**Figure 12** Hermkes, Baublock Adickesallee, shared living room (from Walter Mueller-Wulckow, *Deutsche Baukunst der Gegenwart* [Leipzig, 1929])



**Figure 13** Hermkes, Baublock Adickesallee. Vestibule. Mueller-Wulckow (from *Deutsche Baukunst der Gegenwart*)

into the apartment (Figure 13).<sup>50</sup> The published photographs displayed a tasteful array of modern lamps, dark lacquered furniture of Hermkes's design, and many textiles—abstractly patterned rugs and upholstery, and silken throw pillows—likely the work of women in the textile department of the Kunstgewerbeschule. On the ground floor was a small theater with a grand piano, which served for exercise classes, perhaps eurythmics, as well as performances.<sup>51</sup> It was a rich design palette that aspired to provide bourgeois comfort and culture.

The Baublock Adickesallee purported to be the first housing for professional women in Germany.<sup>52</sup> While it received only modest coverage in *Das Neue Frankfurt*, Thea Hillmann wrote about it in *Die Siedlung*, a newsletter sponsored by the Housing Authority, and Englert und Schlosser, the publisher of the journal *Das Neue Frankfurt*, produced a pamphlet devoted to the unusual buildings in the graphic style of the journal, entitled *12 Rental Units in One Block. A Contribution to the Problem of Contemporary Rental Housing (12 Mietwohnungen in einem Block. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des Zeitgemässen Miethauses)*.<sup>53</sup> It was widely discussed in the city newspapers, not always favorably. Some papers lampooned the founding committee as the “Migraine Foundation” [Migränstift], and claimed that each bed had an alarm the tenant could ring when, presumably, her virtue was under assault.<sup>54</sup> Each apartment did have an alarm, a pull located in the living room that rang down to the caretaker's apartment. Such press reports reflected the general presupposition that independent living by women was unnatural and could lead to hysteria and other kinds of aberrant behavior. There was also the subtext that collective and cloistered

women's housing was an incubator of lesbianism that encouraged women's "unnatural" propensities for "unhealthy" relations with each other. The city would protect women by insisting on individual units in its next such project.

### Baublock Platenstrasse

Are such houses . . . really a solution? One that crams together people who happen to have the same lifestyle. . . . Wouldn't these single professional women rather seek ties to . . . families? Indeed, it would be better . . . to integrate apartments for single people within family housing.<sup>55</sup>

—Ludwig Neundörfer, 1931

In 1928 Thea Hillmann, by now the manager of the Baublock Adickesallee, was named chair of a second housing club organized to build women's housing. At the same time, she was put on the city payroll as the project administrator.<sup>56</sup> At a meeting in her apartment in June 1929, the Women's Own Home Housing Club joined with representatives of women's clubs and unions to formalize the plan and establish bylaws.<sup>57</sup> The assembled groups largely represented white-collar professions. They included the Frankfurter Musicians League, the German Union of Female Social Service Workers, the Federal Female Postal and Telegraph Workers Association, the Professional Organization of Women Health-Care Workers, the German Female Bank Workers' Club, the Professional Association of Female Kindergarten, Nursery School Teachers, and Youth Leaders, the Clementine Institute for Healthcare, and the German Catholic Nurses' Club. The Workers Welfare Organization and the Union of Women Office Workers joined later. One of the few working-class organizations attending, the League of German Unions (ADGB), designated the SPD city council member Sophie Ennenbach as its representative. The organization registered with the city as the Women's Housing Club (Frauenwohnungsverein).<sup>58</sup>

For this project, the city stipulated that the club build for the "least well-off." That agreed, the project quickly secured funding. The city council approved low interest loans amounting to 80 percent of the estimated cost of 350,000 marks, to be paid with the tax funds and local bonds.<sup>59</sup> Contradicting Lihotzky's supposition, the project qualified for House Equity Tax funds. The other 20 percent of the costs would come from the provincial authority in Wiesbaden.<sup>60</sup> Tenants would each ultimately pay off about 3,000 marks of the debt, partly in their dues to the society, the rest from rent paid over the first twenty years.<sup>61</sup> The most surprising fact was the twenty year lease, which revealed that the sponsors believed that their tenants were

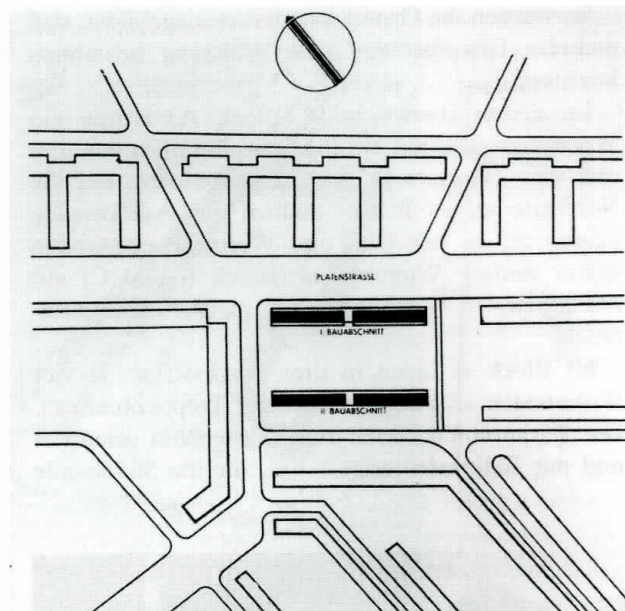


Figure 14 Hermkes, Baublock Platenstrasse, 1930, plan (from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1930)

permanently single women for whom this was permanent housing. It was the only time that the city offered long-term leases to single women, or indeed to anyone other than families. The members of the Women's Housing Club provided the pool of prospective tenants, whose number was limited to 100.<sup>62</sup> Although ostensibly targeting low-paid women, the preference remained for white-collar workers, particularly *Angestellte* chosen from among the numerous office clerks and shop assistants. In order to be financially viable, the tenants would also include a considerable number of low-paid professionals, especially health-care workers, who could have afforded more commodious apartments.

The housing club charged Hermkes to design a building that addressed "the needs of single women" while keeping the rents low.<sup>63</sup> His proposal was simple: two parallel, bar-shaped buildings with fifty apartments each (Figure 14).<sup>64</sup> The construction was a steel skeleton with concrete block walls. Open galleries and a central stair on the street side gave direct access all the units from outside, saving material and construction costs. Eliminating shared internal vestibules and halls also signaled independence and discretely distanced the units.<sup>65</sup> And while the project called for discretion, the impression of a plain rental barracks also was to be avoided. The attenuated blocks, articulated in glass and metal bars, had a sleek elegance that made a tidy counterpoint to Mart Stam's much-admired Altersheim nearby, and issued a smart retort to the lumbering exterior



**Figure 15** Hermkes, Baublock Platenstrasse, yard view (from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1930)

of the Adickesallee buildings. Like the latter, a continuous balcony facing the garden provided each tenant with an outdoor living space (Figure 15).

The committee asked that the units be designed as single-room studios to make them appear larger, as Lihotzky had proposed. To that end, Hermkes designed a plan zoned according to everyday tasks, accommodating them with built-in furniture. The length of the entry-side wall was one deep built-in occupied by cupboards, the entry door, a dressing area and an alcove for the fold-down bed. The first cupboard could be opened from both inside and outside the unit, a reach-through cupboard facilitating bread and milk delivery, and it also served as a food cooler; the second was for garbage; the third was a coat closet. The dressing niche contained a wardrobe with a mirror on one side and a washing table on the other; above the bed was a shelf for books. There was a toilet compartment equipped with a sink, and the kitchenette had a fold-down ironing board, hotplate, and one cupboard for pots and another for pans. On the wall of the living room was a broom closet with a place for

shoes.<sup>66</sup> A cupboard with a fold-out writing table stood under the living room window. Hermkes also designed the movable furniture.<sup>67</sup> The main living areas faced west “toward the Taunus Mountains,” the kitchen, bath, and vestibule faced east and the exterior gallery.

The complex was to be built one block at a time. Sixty of the one hundred units were in the first block, with the caretaker’s apartment, the furnace, laundry, drying, ironing, sewing, and storage rooms, and the least expensive studios on the ground floor. The second block would contain forty units and the social rooms. Proposals for the latter varied as women debated the ideal social structure. The first scheme envisioned a kindergarten for the children of working, single mothers, a common room, and a gym. Further discussion suggested a communal kitchen and dining room. In the end, the committee determined that women who worked in public all day and ate their lunches in cafeterias would make little use of collective spaces; the social room and a communal kitchen would stand vacant. Instead they agreed on a health food restaurant open to the public. In lieu of the

shared dining facilities, the committee arranged for tenants to buy cheap meals at the nearby youth hostel.<sup>68</sup>

In May 1930, the city eliminated the Platenstrasse project from the 1929–30 construction schedule. Especially problematic was the allocation of public funds to women's housing in a year when the general demand had reached emergency proportions. As a consolation, the city pointed out that an increased number of dwellings were slated for construction—although these were not dedicated to women.<sup>69</sup>

On the floor of the city council, the Communists now spoke out in a rare defense of women's housing: "When it comes to women, the city always turns its back. Yet they always have money for sun baths, the fairgrounds, the theater."<sup>70</sup> The council chair, Leonhard Heisswolf (SPD), objected to what he characterized as a blatant misrepresentation, but this was met by catcalls from the gallery. He threatened the agitators with expulsion. Meanwhile, from the Democrats came a plaintive "we have talked about this for four years!"<sup>71</sup> Sophie Ennenbach was astonished. Only a few days before, she said, Anna Schultz (DDP) had confirmed that the city had the needed funds; now they had vanished. An offended Schultz shifted the blame to Hillmann: her inexpert financial analysis brought the city's policy reversal.

At issue was funding for the final 20 percent of the project; if paid by the club, rents would skyrocket; if the city lent it, on top of contributing the regular house tax funding, it would be asked why the city, having paid for the project, would give it away to a newly founded organization run by amateurs—and women at that. The city also feared negative political fallout from the construction of generously equipped housing that was reserved for single women. In time, the two sides reached a resolution: the housing should not give the outer appearance of individual homes, although the units would be fully independent; nor would the new units accommodate collective living, like Adickesallee, or be built in an established neighborhood.<sup>72</sup> The city's welfare office and the provincial authority in Wiesbaden further required that the housing be targeted at those with incomes lower than the housing club had proposed. The new upper income limit of 250 marks per month was less than half that for Adickesallee tenants.

Over the following weeks, the club and the city reworked the project. In October 1930, they eliminated the landscaping; instead the building superintendent would be allotted a plot for a kitchen garden as part of his compensation, and it was suggested that the tenants might make a garden on the remaining portion. In November, the planners reduced the size of the units from 29 to 23 square

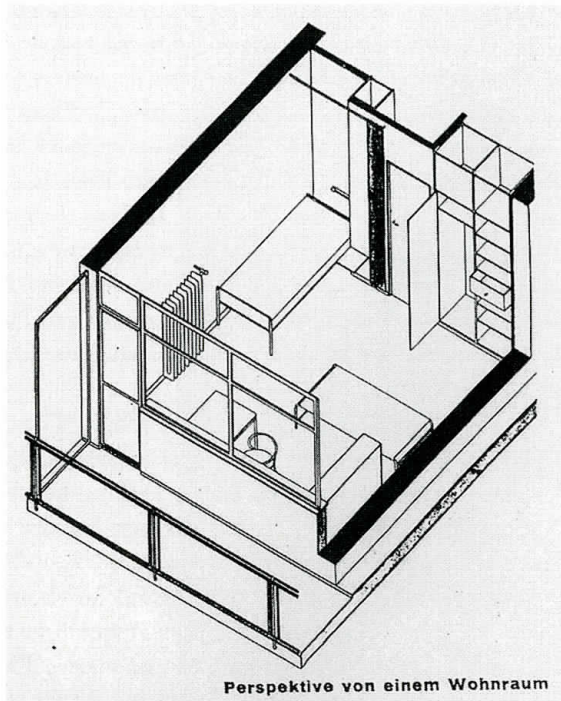
meters, realizing that it was both impractical and impolitic to propose units 29 square meters for a single woman at a time when the *Kleinstwohnung*, at 40 square meters for a family of four, was the mandated standard. Hermkes followed up with a smaller studio plan that contained fewer built-in features. He also substituted a fold-down bed for the sleeping niche, eliminated the rugs, and had the furniture painted, not lacquered. Movable furnishings included a daybed, an end table with one shelf, and a writing desk with two drawers. The fold-down bed was concealed by a curtain during the day and had an adjacent shelf the size of a single book (Figures 16, 17).<sup>73</sup>

Bathing facilities inspired their own debate. The club wanted a bath in every unit: it was vital to independence and to creating a home rather than a lodging house. It would also help poorer tenants do their own laundry in a private and inexpensive way.<sup>74</sup> The city rejected bathtubs as too expensive; the committee then pressed for showers. Ultimately, the city informed the building committee that individual baths, even showers, were too expensive. There would be baths in the basement to be shared. At the same meeting, responding to the question of whether there really would be a second building campaign and a second building, Hillmann's temperate reply was "nothing is certain."<sup>75</sup>

Frustrated, some members now wondered if the club had abandoned its goal of providing permanent homes for single women. An apartment with an area of fifteen square meters was not, agreed Hillmann, a permanent solution. She also objected to the many built-ins, with their constraint on individuality. "So long as a woman is young, she might be satisfied with this, since she can figure on a later alternative in marriage, but if she settles into a profession and then looks toward the future, she must seek a different solution to her housing situation."<sup>76</sup>

Thea Hillmann herself was nearly derailed only two weeks after the conclusion of her negotiations with the city representative. On 15 March 1930 the *Frankfurter Nachrichten* published an exposé: "Personal Politics! The Special Route of the Hochbauamt." It began, "The Housing Society for Professional Women has had much to lament in recent months, the result of irregularities revealed in the leadership." The article accused the Hochbauamt of giving a lucrative job to one of its friends—a veiled reference to Hillmann—although this friend had no training, and that the employee was allowed to charge for the use of her apartment for meetings. "Even though she is a teacher working for the city, she receives a second monthly income from the city of 250 marks, plus another 40 for expenses."<sup>77</sup> "We ask the city: what work justifies the extra pay . . . ? What led the Hochbauamt to trust a woman who at the very





**Figure 16** Hermkes, Baublock Platenstrasse. Revised unit  
(from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1930)

least has made serious mistakes . . . that only more public money can solve? How is the work and cost consistent with her other commitment as a full-time teacher?<sup>78</sup> Gross mismanagement and actual embezzlement by two successive secretaries had resulted in thousands of lost marks, the *Nachrichten* charged, the cost of which fell to the tenants. Furthermore, the tenants had no say in choosing the managing committee. The article called for Hillmann's resignation and for the city to take over the project.

Three days later council members, citing the article, raised the same questions: "We want to know if the article is accurate, and whom it concerns." The response was a report dryly recounting Hillmann's history with women's housing clubs and their initiatives. The Hochbauamt paid Hillmann the standard amount for the job and reasoned that she could be allocated the usual amount for office rent under expenses.<sup>79</sup> Remarkably, the troubling allegations concerning Hillmann's competence and salary quietly receded. She remained a tenant and manager of the Adickesallee building for many years, although her role at the Platenstrasse seems to have ended within the year.

Construction began at Platenstrasse in the spring of 1930. Hillmann, Ennenbach, and the city's representative ironed out the remaining problems, and the club signed a



**Figure 17** Hermkes, Baublock Platenstrasse. *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 1930

sixty-year lease for the site, to end in 1991, at a rent of one gold mark per year. The parties agreed that municipal building inspectors would scrutinize the plans, including the servicing and technical provisions, for “architectural and technical integrity.”<sup>80</sup>

## The Tenants

The tenants were required to meet hardship criteria with regard to income and situation, and preference was given to women over thirty. Demand was high: while the project was still in the planning stages, the housing club received over eighty applications.<sup>81</sup> The first sixty chosen included women in a variety of income, work, and health circumstances. There were health-care workers (including eleven nurses and a number of nurse pensioners), three postal workers, two teachers, three garment cutters, one secretary, one professional singer, two saleswomen, one employee of the Labor Office, one from I. G. Farben, and one blue-collar worker—a factory packager. There were welfare recipients, single mothers, and severe hardship cases. Among the latter were two single mothers who worked as maids, another who had been sharing a cramped room and a single bed with her eleven-year-old daughter, a saleswoman suffering from an accidental injury, an I. G. Farben employee with a chronic stomach ailment, and a sick saleswoman who had been boarding with her sister. Ultimately, the housing club could house the poorest of these women only by balancing their low rents with those paid by a number of higher wage earners. Most tenants earned between 50 and 100 marks per month, but a few received over 200 marks. Rents ranged from 25 to 33 marks per month, with an added charge of some 7 marks for utilities. The small studios on the first and second floors rented for 29 marks; those on the ground floor for 25, and the few 31-square-meter units on the first floor rented for 33.<sup>82</sup> The better-off tenants included some notable individuals: Lia Leopold, an advocate for the unemployed, a Dr. Turnau of the Labor Office, and a novelist who taught at the Adult Education Center (*Völkbildungsheim*).

In the spring 1930 issue of *Das Neue Frankfurt*, Platenstrasse appeared in the yearly survey of new housing, as yet unbuilt, but soon to be. It was the only time it would appear in the journal.<sup>83</sup> The editors described it as a building that would support the independent living of single working women; it was not a communal building, and it would only incidentally foster a woman’s predilection for housekeeping. The journal also hinted at the general public ambivalence toward women’s independence, adding that the decision to include private kitchens reflected the common

view that married life was “every woman’s goal.”<sup>84</sup> However, other critics discerned an unnatural lack of domesticity in the project. Ludwig Neundörfer objected to both of Hermkes’s designs for not providing a sufficiently “feminine” environment. The small built-in kitchens and furnishings denied women the opportunity to assert their creativity, or to learn how to shop for household items and home decorations. He agreed with Lihotzky that women-only housing prevented their integration into family neighborhoods.<sup>85</sup> Hermkes’s design worsened the problem, he said, by providing an internal infrastructure that isolated women by affording what others called independence.

Outside of the architectural profession, the debate over independence versus femininity drew scant interest. Politicians instead criticized Platenstrasse for having cost so much to build and for housing so few of the poorest women. The first political salvo came in July 1930 from the city council. Conservative women members, who had initially supported the project, opened the debate, calling the settlement a failure. They renewed the attack on Thea Hillmann and the Hochbauamt, charging that they purposefully ignored the will of the city council.<sup>86</sup>

There was negative criticism in the newspapers, too, when the press was allowed to see the building that autumn. In October, the workers’ daily *Volksstimme* charged that the rents were too high for working-class “girls.” And that the building was coldly institutional.<sup>87</sup> Giving their readers a detailed description of the building, illustrated with a unit plan, the editors decried what they found: “We have inspected the new building and left it in full revolt.” The *Volksstimme* gave voice to blue-collar values—born of the cooperative, party-, and club-based social world that was foreign to white-collar sensibilities. The housing was too plain, its built-in furnishings too restrictive. In recompense “one assumes there will be a community space . . . a reading room, a work room for sewing and repairs, a community kitchen. . . . But we were amazed to find there is nothing.” They criticized the exterior gallery as hampering neighborly cooperation, so important when a tenant became ill. Moreover, the building was too far from potential employment—an observation corroborated by tenants’ request for a new bus stop in 1931—and transit fares would constitute too great a burden. The club, they said, had botched its most important goal: to provide better living at an affordable price. Finally, they called attention to the city’s determination to open residency to those who earned as much as 250 marks per month—declaring these to be the most needy. This, the *Volksstimme* judged, was a highly optimistic figure. A typical working girl earned less than 150 marks. They concluded, “they should put a sign over the door . . .

‘Entrance by working-class girls forbidden!’” They also quoted Hillmann’s account in *Die Siedlung* against the project: “From her presentation the source of the failure becomes clear.” Their target was precisely what *Das Neue Frankfurt* had identified for praise: “Her emphasis is on the individualistic values of middle-class women, who themselves are against . . . collective homes for working girls and small wage earners.” To her claim that “the furnished room can not replace one’s own home” and her comments about the need for women to practice and learn about “good taste,” they responded, “Such a world’s distance from the proletariat this project has come!” In the real world of the industrial city, “the single worker would be happy enough if the kitchen were just a carved-out space in a room. When she comes home beaten down from work, what she needs is to find the guarantee of relaxation and informal society. For this, nicely arranged community spaces are vital.”

Three weeks later the project suffered another attack in the city council. The right lashed out against Platenstrasse in a statement signed by Nikolaus Vogler, chair of the conservative Wirtschaftspartei (the “Federal Party of the German Middle Class”), and by school headmaster Ernst Landgrebe and Henny Pleimes, a housewife and advocate of the modern kitchen, both of the conservative Deutsche Volkspartei (DVP).<sup>88</sup> Pleimes reiterated that the DVP supported housing women “in a modest, yet comfortable way.” She recounted the progressive disintegration of their agreement with the women’s organization: “We are all aware of the widespread need [for housing] and the great demand for furnished rooms. And as much as I very much wish all working women a luxurious and beautifully fitted home, we have to work within a realistic framework. We think it is outrageous that they produced nothing better from the funds we allocated. For the money, the first block should have produced housing for 120 women!”<sup>89</sup> She told how a request to the oversight committee for financial information evoked the response that financing was no concern of the city council. “To my question as to whether this club could build the housing under its own power, the reply was ‘no’ . . .” She went on to estimate that half the tenants needed aid to pay their rent; the other half were too well-paid, and had “no business living in a public project.”<sup>90</sup> “In light of the total neglect of the council’s wishes, we call for a reexamination of our relationship . . . furthermore, a building that is built using public funds to serve a social purpose should not remain in the hands of a private club. In view of the city’s financial situation, we must set aside plans for expansion for the foreseeable future.”<sup>91</sup> Elsa Bauer, a long-time supporter of the project, delivered a pained response: “For two years my friend advanced the construc-

tion of a home for salaried workers and *Angestellte*; and we have fought long and hard. We are truly amazed that the home is only partly built, just a fragment of what was promised, of what we had planned.”<sup>92</sup>

While the city council presided over this humiliating conclusion to the women’s housing initiative, Platenstrasse tenants were settling in, and coping with the problems and irritations of modern apartment living. The complicated house rules reflected the strains of life in close quarters and the banal difficulties encountered when mediating the ideal of the New Life with everyday problems and a host of new technologies. The use of phonographs and radios was strictly regulated: there was to be no music in the garden, or by open windows, and none after 10 p.m.; a quiet time was observed daily between 1:30 and 3 in the afternoon. Vacuum cleaning was limited to weekdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tenants were reminded that they must pay to use the telephone in the housemaster’s apartment. Other rules prohibited pets and required that bicycles be stowed in their proper place. Linens could be hung only on special racks in the yard, from 8 a.m. to noon, and beaten only before 10 a.m.; hanging wash from windows and balconies was prohibited. Other rules stipulated how to wash the floors, walls, and glass, and how often. Finally, tenants were exhorted not to throw garbage from the balconies, a practice that had already injured one bystander.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, the city electric company offered free lessons for the tenants on hotplate cooking, and most signed up. The classes were held at the test kitchen in the Gaspassage Arcade, designed by Adolf Meyer.<sup>94</sup> One hears in this record the strain between those who could afford phonographs and vacuum cleaners, and the poor tenants who hung their laundry in the yard and practiced the tenement habit of “mailing” their trash. On their own behalf, residents were soon lobbying for improvements: a new bus stop and a radio receiver like those found in the larger housing settlements and the youth hostel. And as was common in the big *Siedlungen*, there were complaints about the housemaster’s administration of the laundry, and he was soon relieved of the job. In the end, the laundry was not the profit-making venture the club had hoped for; it seems that water was too expensive. The tenants asked if the machines could be taken back to the leaser and the laundry room replaced with another unit of housing.<sup>95</sup>

The incomplete Platenstrasse project provided 100 housing units, 60 of them for poor women; Adickesallee, another 43. Of the 4,000 units of housing for women approved by the city council in 1928, only 143 were built, and these took the form of *Einliegerwohnungen* that were not exclusively designated for single women.

This history is a microcosm of the larger story of the New Frankfurt initiative, which under the leadership of Ernst May forged ahead with innovative and progressive projects, undaunted by the storm of political and economic controversy it engendered. Yet, the barriers to housing for single women were certainly far greater than those facing the settlements, which, embracing nuclear family life and the patriarchal order, might meet with aesthetic and budgetary objections, but certainly fewer cultural ones. While Grete Lihotzky's Frankfurt Kitchen gained international acclaim, the few projects for single women's housing earned little recognition, yet they fielded criticism from political parties at both ends of the spectrum. In the early 1930s fascism and the worldwide depression ended both the Frankfurt settlement program and the faltering endeavor to accommodate women, and across Germany hundreds of thousands of single women continued to struggle in poverty and social isolation.

## Notes

- Minutes of the City Council (hereafter MCC), 8 June 1926, Akten der Stadtverordneten-Versammlung, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main (hereafter StVVA), 526.
- MCC, 7 Aug. 1928, StVVA.
- Tim Mason, "Women In Germany, 1925–1940: Family, Welfare and Work," *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class: Essays by Tim Mason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 135.
- An astonishing number of women entered traditionally male jobs. In the steel industry the numbers climbed from 10,000 to 50,000 between 1914 and 1916; in machine and metal industries, from 15,000 to 45,000. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, "Die Entwicklung der gewerblichen Frauenarbeit im Kriege," *Schmollers Jahrbuch* 44, special issue (Munich: Duncker & Humboldt, 1920), 21–54.
- Judit Pákh, ed., *Frankfurter Arbeiterbewegung in Dokumenten 1832–1933* (Frankfurt: Bund Verlag, 1997), 1118.
- For statistics on female labor, see Erna Corte, "Die Wohnung der berufstätige Frau," *Die Frau* 34 (1926), 79.
- Albrecht L. Merz, "Eine neue Form fraulicher Wohnkultur," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 24, no. 25 (25 June 1927), 201.
- Elias Canetti, *The Torch in My Ear*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982), 3–13.
- Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, trans. Quintin Hoare of *Die Angestellten* (London: Verso, 1998); Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work," *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. Renate Bridenthal et al. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 33–65.
- Lihotzky lived alone in her apartment on Kranicherstrasse for only a year before her marriage to architect Wilhelm Schütte. There is a growing body of literature on Lihotzky. See, for example, Susan R. Henderson, "A Revolution in Woman's Sphere: Grete Lihotzky and the Frankfurt Kitchen," in *Architecture and Feminism*, ed. Debra Coleman et al. (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 221–48; Peter Noever, ed., *Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. Soziale Architektur Zeiteugin eines Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1996); Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, ed. Irene Nierhaus, *Erinnerungen aus dem Widerstand: Das Kampfische Leben einer Architektin von 1938–1945* (Vienna: Promedia, 1994). The literature on German women designers in the modern period includes: Design Center Stuttgart, *Frauen im Design: Berufsbilder und lebenswege seit 1900/Women in Design. Careers and Life Histories since 1900* (Stuttgart: Design Center Stuttgart, 1989); Ute Maasberg and Regina Prinz, eds., *Die Neuen Kommen! Weibliche Avantgarde in der Architektur der zwanziger Jahre* (Hamburg: Junius, 2004); Despina Stratigakos, *A Woman's Berlin: Building the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
- Ronald Wiedenhoef, *Berlin's Housing Revolution* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 59–65.
- Guido Harbers, "Das neue Ledigenheim München," *Bauwelt* (1927), 141–46; "Ledigenheim für Männer an der Bergmannstrasse in München," *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, 1 (1928), 1–7; Hans Karliner, *Theodor Fischer: Ein deutscher Baumeister* (Munich: Kastner & Callwey, n.d.), 33, 77, 96; another women's hostel in Munich was the massive block by Ludwig Naneder. See "Heim für erwerbstätige Frauen und Mädchen," *Baumeister* (1928), 259.
- Report of May 1, 1929 read into the minutes on 14 May 1929, Item 656, StVVA, 497.
- Corte, "Die Wohnung der berufstätige Frau," 80–81.
- MCC, 31 Aug. 1926, 774, StVVA.
- MCC, 13 Sept. 1927, Item 1097, StVVA, 948–49.
- MCC, 15 Nov. 1927, Item 1368, StVVA, 1127.
- MCC, 7 Aug. 1928, Item 927, StVVA, 969–71.
- MCC, 8 June 1926, StVVA, 526.
- "Die Frankfurter Küche war ein Umsturz in den Eigentumsverhältnissen," *Frankfurter Stadt-Rundschau*, 23 Jan. 1997, clipping, 21, S2/10 009, Grete Lihotzky, Personalakten, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt a. M.
- Ernst Balsler designed the building in 1926. The bastion piece, soon a motive of New Frankfurt work, first appears in Lihotzky's work in a 1925 sanatorium project. Peter Noever, ed., *Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, Soziale Architektur Zeiteugin eines Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1993), 57; *Ernst Balsler, ein Baumeister unserer Zeit* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1953), 23–25; Heike Risse, *Frühere Moderne in Frankfurt am Main, 1920–1933 Architektur der zwanziger Jahre in Frankfurt a. M. Traditionalismus—Expressionismus—Neue Sachlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Societäts-Verlag, 1984), 241–43; Margarete Schütte Lihotzky, "Die Wohnung der alleinstehenden berufstätigen Frau," ms. 1928, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky Nachlass, Sammlungen der Universität für angewandte Kunst, Vienna (hereafter MSLN); Grete Schütte-Lihotzky, "Die Wohnung der berufstätigen Frau," *Frauenkleidung und Frauenkultur* (1929), 102–3.
- File 42, and 59, "Mustereinrichtung, Einliegerwohnung," (1927), MSLN.
- After World War II, German housing law incorporated the *Einliegerwohnung* and established legal standards for it. It is now a common type and found in a variety of settings.
- This is still a rent that would have edged out most women workers. At any rate, Lihotzky was proved wrong about this: the women's settlements in Frankfurt did indeed secure monies from the House Tax Fund. "Ein- und zwanzig eingerichtete Kleinwohnungen auf der Ausstellung 'Heim und Technik' München 1928," *Baumeister* 26 (July 1928), 231–32; Grete Schütte-Lihotzky, "Allerhand Nützliches. Die Wohnung der studierenden und berufstätigen Frau," 1928, 102, 248, typescript, MSLN. Other versions of this article were published in the Catholic women's magazine *Frauen* in 1928; in *Volkszeitung* 1928, 96–98; in *Neue Frauenkultur*, 1928; and in the pamphlet "Die Wohnung der berufstätigen Frau. Ein Weg zur Eigenwohnung für die alleinstehende Frauen im Beruf u. Studium" (Frankfurt: Englert & Schlosser, 1928).
- Die Frankfurter Küche war ein Umsturz in den Eigentumsverhältnissen-

sen"; Noever, *Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky*, 104–6.

26. Schütte-Lihotzky, "Kleinstwohnung für die berufstätige Frau," *Stein Holz Eisen* (1928), 692.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Nos. 8 and 48, MSLN.

29. Lihotzky's Frankfurt Kitchen was on exhibit next to her model apartment. The kitchen was described as "for the so-called servantless household designed with labor-saving in mind." Untitled newspaper clippings, nos. 182 and 183, MSLN.

30. A company in Essen cooperating with a local youth club designed the other two rooms. "Everything that a professional woman requires is at hand in her small household, from the coffee mill to the pans." *Ibid.*

31. "Einundzwanzig eingerichtete Kleinwohnungen," 231–32; "Die kleine Wohnung, Katalog zur Ausstellung 'Heim und Technik,'" (Munich: Callwey, 1928). Among other projects shown, many were designed by women. One solution, based on a square plan with largely built-in furnishings, was the work of three women identified as Boehm, an engineer; Norkauer, an architect; and Wendelmuth, a chemist. "Die Wohnung der berufstätige Frau," *Baumeister* (1928), 256–57. Other contemporary reviews include "Das Einküchenhaus," *Fra Meisterin* 8 (1928), 59; Max Schoen, "Grundrisstechnische Studie an Hand der in der Ausstellung 'Heim und Technik' gezeigten Wohnungen," *Deutsche Bauhütte* 38 (1928), 290; Schütte-Lihotzky, *Stein Holz Eisen* (1928), 692–93.

32. Ernst May, report, 15 Nov. 1927, StVVA.

33. Report, 7 Aug. 1928, Item 927, StVVA, 969–71.

34. Ernst May, report, 8 June 1926, StVVA, 526.

35. Risse, *Frühe Moderne*, 381–82. MCC, 12 July 1928, StVVA.

36. Paul Wolff, *Einliegerwohnung Praunheim, Demonstrationfilm vom Hochbauamt*, Frankfurt Hochbauamt, 1927.

37. Max Ermers, "Architekt: Anton Brenner, Wien," *Bauwelt* 3 (1931), 3, 11.

38. May and Kaufmann may have been credited as division heads. Lihotzky's designs for house plans were never credited. She was often cited for her kitchen designs. "Die Siedlungen," *Das Neue Frankfurt*, nos. 4–5 (1930), 62–64; E. Kaufmann, "Frankfurter Kleinwohnungstypen in alter und neuer Zeit," *Das Neue Frankfurt* 5 (1926–27), 113–18; E. Kaufmann, "Die internationale Ausstellung 'Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum,'" *Das Neue Frankfurt* 11 (1929), 213–15.

39. Otto Völckers, *12 Mietwohnungen in einem Block. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des Zeitgemässen Miethauses* (Frankfurt: Englert und Schlosser, 1930) pamphlet in the *Der Stein/Holz/Eisen-Reihe* 4 (pamphlet, 16 pages), 3.

40. Völckers, "12 Mietwohnungen in einem Block," 16.

41. Women's groups were at work in Frankfurt and across Germany, shaping housing policy and design. For the national perspective see *Die Wohnungsfrage ist Frauensache!: Frauenbewegung und Wohnreform 1870 bis 1933*, ed. Ulla Terlinden et al. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2006).

42. *Ibid.*

43. Walter Schürmeyer, "Mietwohnungen für berufstätige Frauen in Frankfurt am Main," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (March 1929), supplement *Moderner Wohnbau*, 25–30.

44. Thea Hillmann, "Die Wohnung der alleinstehenden Frau," *Die Siedlung* (Oct. 1930), 113–16. In correspondence about Frankfurt women's housing effort, architect Max Cetto used Hillmann as his source of information. Max Cetto to Gustav Bermann, 10 Jan. 1931, Max Cetto Papers, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (hereafter MCP); Letter (author unknown) to Max Cetto, 10 May 1955, inv. no. 419 043 04, Max Cetto Nachlass, Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt (hereafter MCN).

45. The popular novel by Carl Larsson, *Das Haus in der Sonne* and its real-life counterpart built in Potsdam in 1914 discussed by Stratigakos in *A*

*Woman's Berlin: Building the Modern City* were very likely an inspiration for Adickesallee. The middle-class sensibility, the ideal of home, and the professional stance of the women involved are precisely parallel.

46. Schürmeyer, "Mietwohnungen für berufstätige Frauen," 26.

47. Max Cetto to Gustav Bermann, 10 Jan. 1931, MCP.

48. In *Das Neue Frankfurt* an alternative, apolitical rationale was given for the collective plan; that it originated as a way to deal with limitations imposed by roads and servicing. Hermkes's account cites the zoning constraints. "Die Siedlungen," *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 4–5 (1930), 97, 98.

49. Max Cetto to Gustav Bermann, 10 Jan. 1931, MCP; Völckers, "12 Mietwohnungen in einem Block," 8.

50. Völckers, "12 Mietwohnungen in einem Block."

51. Photograph collection, Paul Wolff, 20.117.1.b1.40, Bernhard Hermkes Nachlass, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

52. Völckers, "12 Mietwohnungen in einem Block."

53. Hillmann, "Die Wohnung der alleinstehenden Frau," 113–16; Völckers, "12 Mietwohnungen in einem Block. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des Zeitgemässen Miethauses,"

54. Madlen Lorei and Richard Kirn, *Frankfurt und die goldenen zwanziger Jahre* (Frankfurt: Verlag Frankfurter Bücher, 1966), 247.

55. Neundörfer, *So wollen wir wohnen*, 32.

56. Board Meeting of the Verein für Fraueneigenheim, July 7, 1928, 1.729, vol. 1, Wohlfahrtsamt Protokoll City Archive, Frankfurt am Main (hereafter WFAP).

57. In order these are the Tonkünstlerbund, the Deutscher Verband der Sozialbeamtinnen, the Reichs Post- u. Telegrafeneamt, Berufsorganisation der weibliche Krankenpflegefürsorge, der Deutscher Bankbeamtinnen Verein e.v., Berufsorganisation der Kindergärtnerinnen, Hörnerinnen und Jugendleiterinnen, the Clementinen Institut für Krankenpflege, and the Verein katholische Deutsche Krankenschwestern, followed by the Arbeiterwohlfahrtsverein, the Verband weibliche Büroangestellten, the Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbund. Minutes of the Frauwohnungsverein, 11 June 1929, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.

58. Frauenwohnungsverein to the Finanzamt, 18 Mar. 1930, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.

59. Item 363, February 25, 1929, StVVA. The Adickesallee housing had a similar ratio of private to city-backed funding. Völckers, "12 Mietwohnungen," 15.

60. Frauenwohnungsverein to the Finanzamt, 18 Mar. 1930, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.

61. Max Cetto to Gustav Bermann, 10 Jan. 1931, MCP.

62. Document, August 5, 1932, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.

63. "Denkschrift über die Errichtung eines Heimes für berufstätige Frauen."

64. Earlier neighborhood plans produced by the Hochbauamt, envisioned a whole neighborhood of such buildings, suggesting that the city provided a model for Hermkes's layout.

65. The fear of lesbianism, which hovered about the issue of women's housing, was apparent both in the city's constraints on the project as in the press coverage (see below). See Despina Stratigakos, "The Uncanny Architect: Fears of Lesbian Builders and Deviant Homes in Modern Germany," *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Gulsum Baydar (London: Routledge, 2005), 145–61.

66. "Das Heim der Damen. Die Verdrehung eine sozialen Absicht!" *Völkstimme*, 8 Oct. 1930, clipping, R1531, Magistratsakten, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main (hereafter MA).

67. Max Cetto reported that Hermkes's design was indebted to architect Albrecht L. Mertz's housing for women in Stuttgart. The twenty units rented from 28 to 60 marks per month. Max Cetto to Gustav Bermann 10

- Jan. 1931, MCP. See Merz, "Eine neue Form fraulicher Wohnkultur," 201–3. This article is followed by a second, "Wohnung für alleinstehende Frauen in Lübeck," authored by its architect, Julius Schöß. Ibid., 203.
68. Document, 17 Feb. 1933, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP; "Die Siedlungen," *Das Neue Frankfurt* 4 (1930), 99–100; "Blocks and Buildings for Professional Women at Frankfort on Main," 168.
69. Hochbauamt report of 1 May 1929, read into the minutes, 14 May 1929, Item 656, StVVA, 496.
70. MCC, 14 May 1929, Item 656, StVVA, 497.
71. Ibid.
72. "Denkschrift über die Errichtung eines Heimes für berufstätige Frauen," typescript, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.
73. Minutes of the Frauenwohnungsverein, 20 Oct. 1930, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP; Minutes of the Frauenwohnungsverein, 18 Dec. 1931, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.
74. Hillmann, "Die Wohnung der alleinstehende Frau," 114; "Denkschrift über die Errichtung eines Heimes für berufstätige Frauen."
75. "Niederschrift." Minutes of the Frauenwohnungsverein, 4 Mar. 1930, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.
76. Hillmann, "Die Wohnung der alleinstehende Frau," 114.
77. On the basis of her supplementary salary alone, Hillmann would have been at the upper limit to qualify for housing in Platenstrasse.
78. "Personalpolitik! Die sonderbaren Wege des Hochbauamtes," *Frankfurter Nachrichten*, 15 Mar. 1930.
79. Hochbauamt report signed Werner Nosbisch, 22 Mar. 1930, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.
80. "Inhalt des Erbbaurechts," June 1930, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.
81. "Inhalt des Erbbaurechts," June 1930, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP; "Denkschrift über die Errichtung eines Heimes für berufstätige Frauen," typescript, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.
82. Minutes of the Frauenwohnungsverein, 20 Oct. 1930, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP; Max Cetto to Gustav Bermann, 10 Jan. 1931, MCP; Hillmann, "Die Wohnung der alleinstehende Frau," 116.
83. "Die Siedlungen," *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 4/5 (1930), 99–100.
84. Ibid., 93–94.
85. Ludwig Neundörfer, *So wollen wir wohnen* (Stuttgart: Franckische Verlagshandlung, 1931), 32.
86. MCC, 8 July 1930, Item 87, StVVA, page 761.
87. The quotations in this paragraph are from "Das Heim der Damen. Die Verdrehung eine sozialen Absicht!" *Volkstimme*, 8 Oct. 1930, clipping, Number R1531, MA.
88. "Dringlicher Antrag," 20 Oct. 1930, 1.728, StVVA; MCC, 21 Oct. 1930, Item 1355, 1019–1922, Protokoll der Stadtverordneten-Versammlung, Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main (herafter StVVP).
89. Item 1355, 21 Oct. 1930, 1019–1922, StVVP.
90. Ibid.
91. "Dringlicher Antrag."
92. Ibid.
93. Notice, n.d. 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.
94. Ibid.
95. Minutes of the Frauenwohnungsverein, 18 Dec. 1931, and 3 Feb. 1932, 1.729, vol. 1, WFAP.