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First the Kitchen: Then the Façade

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'First the Kitchen—then the Façade'

Introduction

The New Dwelling sets for its occupants the task of rethinking everything afresh, of organizing a new life style, and of winning freedom from the irrelevant clutter of outmoded habits of thought and old-fashioned equipment. Like anything that first appears unattainable, but then becomes indispensable, the New Housekeeping, organized in keeping with the spirit of our age, is destined to become a natural part of our everyday life.¹

For many of the progressive German architects of the 1920s the rethinking of the design of the dwelling was one of the first priorities of the Neues Bauen. In publications such as Bruno Taut's *Die neue Wohnung* (1924),² Behne's *Neues Wohnen* (1927),³ Giedion's *Befreites Wohnen* (1930),⁴ and in the pages of journals such as *Die Form*⁵ or *Das neue Frankfurt*,⁶ 'die neue Wohnung'—the new dwelling—was presented as the natural setting for family life in the new republican era. It was argued that a new pattern of living would inevitably emerge as the family was liberated from outmoded attitudes and the inadequate housing of the pre-war years. The 'neue Wohnung' was to be the key to this 'neue Wohnkultur'.

It is important to recognize, however, that this ideal of the New Dwelling and the new pattern of family life that it was to accommodate was not the product of an architectural rhetoric to be imposed on the housewife. As early as 1924 Taut was emphasizing the need for housewife and architect to collaborate: 'Der Architekt denkt, die Hausfrau lenkt' (the architect thinks, the housewife guides); as the subtitle of his book, '*Die Frau als Schöpferin*' (the woman as creator), suggested, the housewife was to play a creative role in shaping the New Dwelling.

Taut's insistence on the importance of this role for the housewife was really no more than the recognition in architectural terms of demands that had been presented for some time by elements of the German women's movement. At a time of national shortage and reconstruction when the problems of housing were seen to be one of the central issues of social policy, the form of the house was clearly too

important to be left to architects alone. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, an influential member of the Bund Deutscher Frauen (BDF)⁷ and an FDP Reichstag deputy vitally concerned with housing, proposed the need to rethink the form of the dwelling as a first priority. This was to begin with the way that the home was run: architects were to design from the inside out, 'first the kitchen—then the façade'.⁸

The task of rethinking ways in which the minimum dwelling so necessary to meeting the housing crisis might be arranged and managed was to bring together housewives, architects, housing reformers and experts on every aspect of family life.⁹ The ideas to which they turned to discharge this momentous task were varied, but can be traced ultimately to two principal areas of debate: first, the debate within both the *bürgerliche* and the socialist wings of the women's movement on the role of women within the home, and, second, to the application of the techniques of 'rationalization' and 'scientific management' to the running of the home along lines already being championed in America.

Der neue Haushalt: The Contribution of the Women's Movement

Questions of improving the efficiency of housekeeping had long been a concern of social reformers and the women's movement in Germany.¹⁰ As early as the 1880s attempts had been made to teach domestic science to the wives of working men as part of a programme of paternalist reform launched by organizations such as the Centralverein für das Wohl der arbeitenden Klassen, one of the oldest and most important associations of reforming liberals, or the Verein Arbeiterwohl, a grouping of liberal Catholic industrialists based in Mönchen-Gladbach. In Berlin, for example, the Verein zur Verbesserung kleiner Wohnungen, founded by members of the Centralverein, had adopted Octavia Hill's system of 'lady visitors' to manage their properties and to advise and educate tenants in the management of their

families. From the late 1890s until the war the Frauenverein Octavia Hill, closely associated with one of the largest Berlin non-profit housing societies, the Berliner Spar- und Bauverein, had run a kindergarten and offered courses on domestic science to tenants of the model tenements designed by August Messel on the Proskauerstrasse.

By 1918 attempts to improve the running of the home were no longer restricted to middle-class reformers offering advice to working-class women. After the privations of the war and the difficulties of the early years of peace, the operation of even the middle-class home needed urgent reconsideration. Already at the turn of the century, finding servants could be difficult: Günther Uhlig links the rise in Germany of middle-class interest in the forms of collective living—the co-operative kitchen, the apartment house—that had been discussed in America since the mid-1890s to the shortage of domestic servants after 1900.¹¹ After the war the fall in the number of those engaged in domestic service is even more marked. Preller records that by 1907 only 6·4 per cent of the total labour force was employed in domestic service, compared with 8·1 per cent in 1895; by 1925 this figure had fallen to 4·3 per cent, and to 3·9 per cent by 1933.¹² In large cities where employment opportunities for women were greater, the decline in the number of household servants was even more marked. During the 1920s, women's magazines such as *Fürs Haus* or *Die Frau*,¹³ the journal of the *bürgerliche* women's movement, frequently commented on the problems of coping without servants and ran a variety of articles telling the housewife how to arrange her working routine or how to make the best use of domestic electrical equipment to ease the burden of running a home without servants.

In the socialist wing of the women's movement, too, there had been vigorous discussion during the pre-war years of the role of women, particularly housewives, in the society of the future. Since Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1887)¹⁴ it had been an article of faith that women should enjoy equal rights with men, including the right to work. Under socialism, women were to be liberated from their stultifying position of subservience within the family, and the state would provide the means—communal facilities for cooking and the care of children—to make it possible for women to work outside the

home. However, sections of the party associated with the trade unions, traditionally the more conservative elements of the party, came to oppose these policies because of the damaging possibility that the labour market would as a result be flooded with cheap female labour. In opposition to the approach that had originated with Bebel, they called for a different strategy for the *Frauenfrage*.

After 1900 a rival ideology, elaborated by revisionist writers such as Edmund Fischer in journals such as *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, called for the emancipation of women from the drudgery of so much of family life but argued that women should serve socialist society from within the home.¹⁵ In *Frauenarbeit und Familie* (1914)¹⁶ Fischer pressed for changes to ease the burden of domestic life for the housewife in order to free her for a more creative role: her new-found freedom was not to be used in working outside the home but should be directed now towards nurturing the family, supporting the husband and educating her children.

Thus by the early 1920s major elements of both wings of the women's movement were united in the desire to see a fundamental rethinking of the role of the housewife within the individual home. Armed with this ideal, they called for a new approach to housekeeping and the management of the home. By seizing on advances in the organization of working procedures in other fields, by taking up the ideas of 'scientific management' which American women were already testing in the home, progressive elements of the women's movement hoped to transform the running of the home and to usher in the age of rational and scientific housekeeping. This, it was argued, would not only ensure that the housewife was seen as having a profession, thus conferring more prestige on women's work within the home, but would also secure for her a far higher measure of satisfaction from this new creative role.

Der neue Haushalt: Rationalization and Scientific Management within the Home

In Germany the application of the techniques of 'scientific management' and the range of nostrums for economic and industrial ills covered by the general title of 'rationalization' had almost acquired the status of a national cult by the end of the 1920s.¹⁷ Part of this interest drew on German sources. Ideas



VEGETABLE PREPARING TABLE

Paring directly or scraping dishes into pail underneath saves soiling any surface. Note knives, parers, graters, etc., directly above working surface. (The opening of the pail should be about eight inches.)

TIME STUDY SHOWING SAVING THROUGH CORRECT GROUPING OF EQUIPMENT

STUDY 1.

1. Walk to storage.
2. Return from storage with small basket of potatoes, and lay on kitchen table.
3. Walk from table to pot-closet for pot.
4. Return from pot-closet to table, on which lay pot.
5. Walk from table to pantry drawer for knife.
6. Return from pantry with knife.
7. Peel potatoes on table surface.
8. Take pot of potatoes in hand and walk to sink.
9. Wash potatoes and fill pot with water.
10. Walk from sink to stove and lay pot on.
11. Walk from stove to table, place refuse in basket.
12. Walk from table to sink with refuse and empty same into garbage pail on floor.
13. Take scrub cloth from sink to table, wipe up same.
14. Return with soiled cloth and knife to sink.
15. Wash cloth, hang up. Wash knife.
16. Walk from sink to pantry drawer to replace knife.
17. Walk from pantry drawer to sink to get basket.
18. Take small basket back to storage.
19. Return from storage.

Time consumed: 5 minutes.

STUDY 2.

1. Walk to shelf adjacent to sink and get pot.
2. Walk to storage, carrying pot, and fill it with potatoes.
3. Return from storage, laying pot directly on vegetable preparing surface near sink.
4. Pick up knife (from nail above this surface).
5. Pare potatoes directly into pail (soiling no surface).
6. Wash potatoes and fill pot with water.
7. Wash and hang up knife (on nail above sink).
8. Walk with pot and lay on stove.

Time consumed: less than 2 minutes, not counting actual peeling, which would require the same time in each case.

RÉSUMÉ:	TIME REQUIRED	NUMBER OF STEPS
Study 1	5 minutes	19 steps
2	2 minutes	8 steps

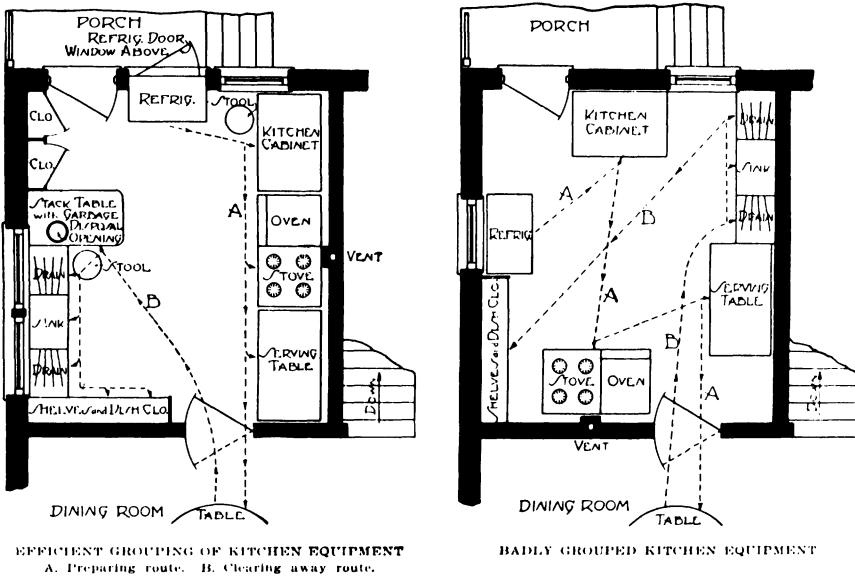
I Pages from Christine Frederick, *Scientific Management in the Home*. The rationalization of procedures and layout in the kitchen lay at the heart of the movement for scientific management in the home

on standardization formed a natural part of the debate on rationalization, and German achievements in this field were in advance of the rest of Europe. Developments were greatly accelerated by the formation of the Deutscher Normen Ausschuss in 1917, an organization charged with the task of setting up norms, Deutsche Industrie Normen (DIN), for different sectors of industry in order to ease the problems of war-time production.¹⁸ During the economic difficulties of the early post-war years the need to standardize was equally strong, and by the end of the 1920s standards had been widely introduced, not only into the building materials and components industry, but also for a range of household goods including all forms of kitchen equipment. Many of these standards were the product of the need to rationalize the processes of production, but in a number of areas the formulation of appropriate norms inevitably involved considering questions of use and, in the case of kitchen equipment, of good housekeeping practice.

However, a more important source of ideas on rationalization was the apparently highly successful application in America of 'scientific management' in a whole range of fields. Henry Ford's biography, published in Germany in January 1924, the month of

the stabilization of the Mark, had been an immediate best-seller; by the end of the decade it had sold over 200,000 copies. It suggested to many, suddenly freed from the trauma of hyperinflation, the way to success. American management and the techniques of rationalization had brought colossal success:¹⁹ surely what had worked for Ford could work in Germany too. At a time of economic reconstruction the potential of these ideas seemed obvious.

To the women's movement the application of these techniques of 'scientific management' to form the basis of a new approach to housekeeping was immediately attractive. German debates on the new housekeeping invariably drew directly on American sources, particularly on Mary Patterson's *Principles of Domestic Engineering* (1915)²⁰ and Christine Frederick's *Scientific Management in the Home*²¹ of the same year. The latter generated such interest that a German edition was already available by 1922; Irene Witte, who was engaged in translating the works of Taylor and Gilbreth, translated Frederick's *Scientific Management in the Home* into German under the title *Der rationeller Haushalt*.²² Thus, by the early 1920s there was a direct link between the American debate on 'scientific' housekeeping and German attempts to rethink the running of the home.



2 Illustrations from *Scientific Management in the Home*, contrasting 'good' with 'bad' grouping of equipment.²³

Starting from the 'Twelve Principles of Scientific Management' as defined by Gilbreth, and committed to the ideal of the housewife working in her own individual dwelling, Christine Frederick explained how to run the home more efficiently, more cheaply and, above all, how to manage without the assistance of domestic servants. For Mrs Frederick as for Mrs Patterson, the most essential area for the application of the principles of 'scientific management' was the kitchen. As a reflection of this priority Mrs Frederick addresses herself first to the kitchen and its related activities. Much of the discussion consists of the detailed application of Gilbreth's 'Twelve Principles' to improve the sequence and to rearrange the location of activities such as washing up or serving to save a maximum of time and effort. In a series of useful hints masquerading as scientific truths, Mrs Frederick suggests the importance of clustering together of pieces of equipment in continual use, of setting tables and work surfaces at the right height, and of the proper lighting and ventilation of the kitchen. Much of this is simply common sense. But of central importance for the discussion of the design of the New Dwelling was her insistence that the kitchen be used only for the preparation of food. All other activities—laundry, cleaning, and general household activities—were to be excluded:

What is a kitchen? It is a place for the *preparation of food*. All unrelated work, such as laundry work, with its particular equipment, should be kept out of the kitchen as much as possible. We see then that a kitchen, or a

place merely for food preparation, can be much smaller than was formerly the case when it was used as a combined sitting-room, laundry and general workshop.²³

The benefit of making the kitchen smaller was that less movement was required to perform the same job. By defining the tasks to be carried out in the kitchen first as either 'preparing food' or clearing away' and then breaking down these activities into specific sequences, so that 'food preparation' became 'collecting, preparing, cooking and serving food materials', redundant movement could be cut out, simplifying activities and thus saving time and effort. Mrs Frederick's message was clear: the application of 'scientific management' to the problem of the kitchen would result in a saving of space, time and effort, and essentially the same results would follow if the same techniques were applied to the other areas and activities in the home. Most important for the design of the New Dwelling, the European designers reading Mrs Frederick now identified the cooking kitchen as the hallmark of American 'scientific' housekeeping.

Der neue Haushalt: German Applications of 'Scientific' Housekeeping

It might be supposed that the transfer of Mrs Frederick's principles across the Atlantic to Germany would have resulted in considerable modification to her ideas. Surprisingly, however, her ideas seemed to be readily acceptable even in the very different

conditions of the Germany of the early 1920s. Indeed, the success of her principles suggests that they were easily linked with a number of changes taking place in the role of women in Germany at this time.

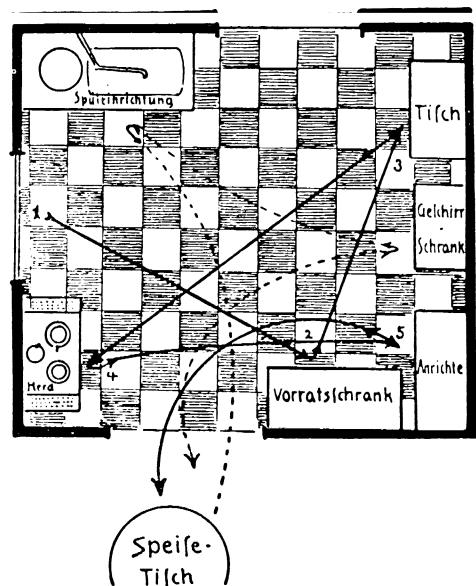
Two developments are of particular importance for our account. First, these American ideas were very much in line with the new image of the housewife advanced by the German women's movement. In *Die Frau*, journal of the BDF, and in a number of other magazines which dealt with the home such as *Fürs Haus*, considerable emphasis was placed on the fact that being a housewife was to fulfil a professional role.²⁴ In both the American and the German literature the importance of educating the housewife for new vocations had long been stressed: the idea of a 'domestic science' reflected this notion, and the manuals on home management, with their insistence on elaborate rituals of cleaning and organizing the home, further emphasized the extent to which there was a 'right' and a 'wrong' way to go about tasks which, at least to the uninitiated, might appear quite straightforward. Naturally, the combination of these earlier ideas with the principles of 'scientific housekeeping' enhanced the role of the housewife still further. In *Die Frau*, for example, the housewife's round of daily chores was elevated to the status of a full profession: in a series of articles in 1922, entitled *Die Organisation der Hauswirtschaft als Beruf* (the organization of household management as a profession), a Dr Thomae elaborated this theme at length;²⁵ the year before, the influential Marie-Elisabeth Lüders had written a short but powerful article asking the rhetorical question 'Hat die Hasfrau einen Beruf?' (has the housewife a profession?).²⁶ Even during the mid- and late 1920s women's magazines returned to this theme: in 1927 *Fürs Haus* launched a series of articles which, sandwiched between articles such as 'Wie decke ich meinen Kaffeetisch im Garten?' (how shall I set my coffee-table in the garden?) and 'Wage ich einen Wittwer heiraten?' (should I dare to marry a widower?), laboured this same theme.²⁷

The constant refrain of this type of article was that the housewife, be she working-class or middle-class, now had to play a demanding but rewarding role for which she required education, ingenuity, and creativity. Despite the difficulties created by an economy in the process of reconstruction, this role offered its own non-financial rewards, not least of

which would be the extra time that the housewife would be able to lavish on her husband and children. There is certainly no suggestion that rationalization of the home would reduce the work of the housewife to the point where she might go out to work; the purpose of these innovations was to secure her position at the centre of the family.

The second area of major importance in which the ideas of 'scientific management' had an immediate impact was in the way that the activities of the family were now to be arranged within the house. In Germany, as in England,²⁸ there was widespread discussion throughout the 1920s on the most appropriate way to plan the kitchen and the living areas of the working-class home. At a time when solid fuel was the principal source of domestic heat, housing reformers had championed the 'living kitchen' in which the general round of family activities took place alongside the more specific tasks of cooking, while jobs requiring water—washing-up or laundry—were banished to a separate scullery. To pre-war housing reformers battling for the suburban cottage as an ideal form of housing, the 'living kitchen' was the most economical arrangement, and Muthesius, for example, had presented an attractive picture of the *Wohnküche in Kleinhaus und Kleinsiedlung* (1917),²⁹ drawing attention to the importance of this form of kitchen in the traditional housing of a number of regions in Germany.

However, with the widespread availability of gas for both lighting and cooking from around the turn of the century,³⁰ it was no longer necessary to use a single source of heat for cooking, heating water and heating space; it now became possible to move cooking out of the living room either into the scullery or, in a tenement, into a separate and much smaller galley kitchen. This development was viewed with mixed feelings by many pre-war housing reformers. There was regret at the passing of the traditional 'living kitchen', particularly for cottage housing, but support for attempts to introduce into low-cost housing the kind of differentiation between activities so evident in planning higher up the economic scale. The reformers' notions of propriety were shocked that the working class should welcome the delights of sleeping in the cramped warmth of a kitchen, or eagerly accept the lodger's rent in lieu of the supposed benefits of privacy.³¹ After the war, with the support of those in favour of 'scientific management' within



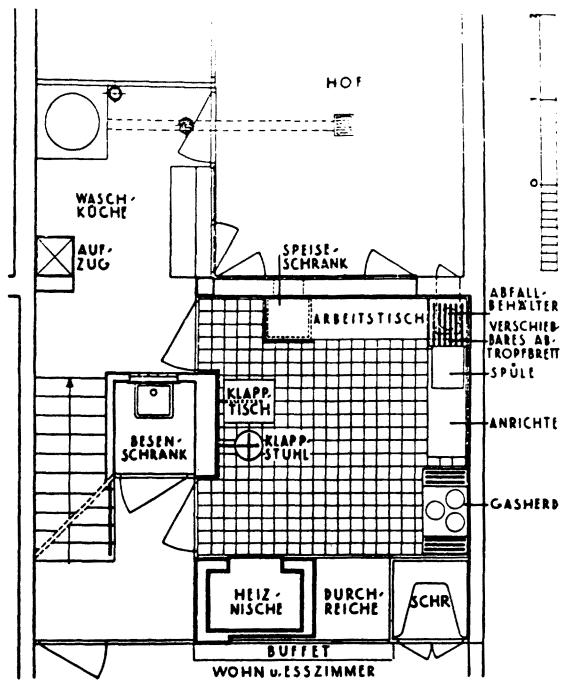
3 Illustrations from Erna Meyer, *Der neue Haushalt*, showing the incorporation of Mrs Frederick's ideas into German practice

the home, the case for the *Kochküche*, or 'cooking kitchen', was greatly strengthened; with the additional support of those members of the women's movement who were actively involved with the housing question and concerned to achieve every form of economy in the construction of public housing,³² the case for it appeared unanswerable. Suspicious of its associations with a vernacular tradition, the young architects of the Neues Bauen readily condemned the *Wohnküche* as an inappropriate form of kitchen for an urban working class.³³ By contrast, the *Kochküche* could be directly associated with the prestige products of the modern age such as the galley kitchens of the Pullman restaurant cars. Was this not the more fitting image for modern public housing?

The way in which the principles of 'scientific management' were incorporated into the German debate is best illustrated by the unprecedented success of Erna Meyer's handbook of good housekeeping, *Der neue Haushalt*.³⁴ First published in 1926, it had already gone through twenty-nine editions in only two years; by 1932 it had reached its fortieth edition with sales of well over 40,000. Yet, although exceptionally successful in form and content, the book was not dissimilar to a number of other books and series of articles on the same subject.

Der neue Haushalt opens with a discussion of a number of well-established themes: the importance

of increasing the efficiency of domestic housekeeping for the national economy; the significance of the 'professional' role of the housewife, and the benefits of her creative approach to housekeeping for the well-



4 J. J. P. Oud, house, Weissenhof Siedlung, Stuttgart, 1927. Plan of 'rationalized' kitchen



5 J. J. P. Oud, house, Weissenhof Siedlung, Stuttgart, 1927. Kitchen

being of the whole family. To be a housewife was to have a true vocation:

If the housewife can learn to master all this [daily routine] then she can win through to what she most earnestly needs: *self respect* and a high regard for her own activities in the home. With this, and with the knowledge of her responsibilities and capabilities, she will ensure for herself a new pleasure in her work, which will change from grinding routine to joyful creativity, so that she will feel her calling to be worth quite as much as any other profession.³⁵

Meyer then discusses the impact that the introduction of 'scientific management' will have on the design of the New Dwelling and considers ways in which space and time can be saved here and there throughout the home by more efficient planning of activities or by the use of better equipment. But for Meyer, as for Mrs Frederick, it is above all the reorganization of the kitchen that receives most attention. She starts from two premises: first, that anything redundant be removed from the kitchen and, secondly, that anything retained be put in a position to ensure the

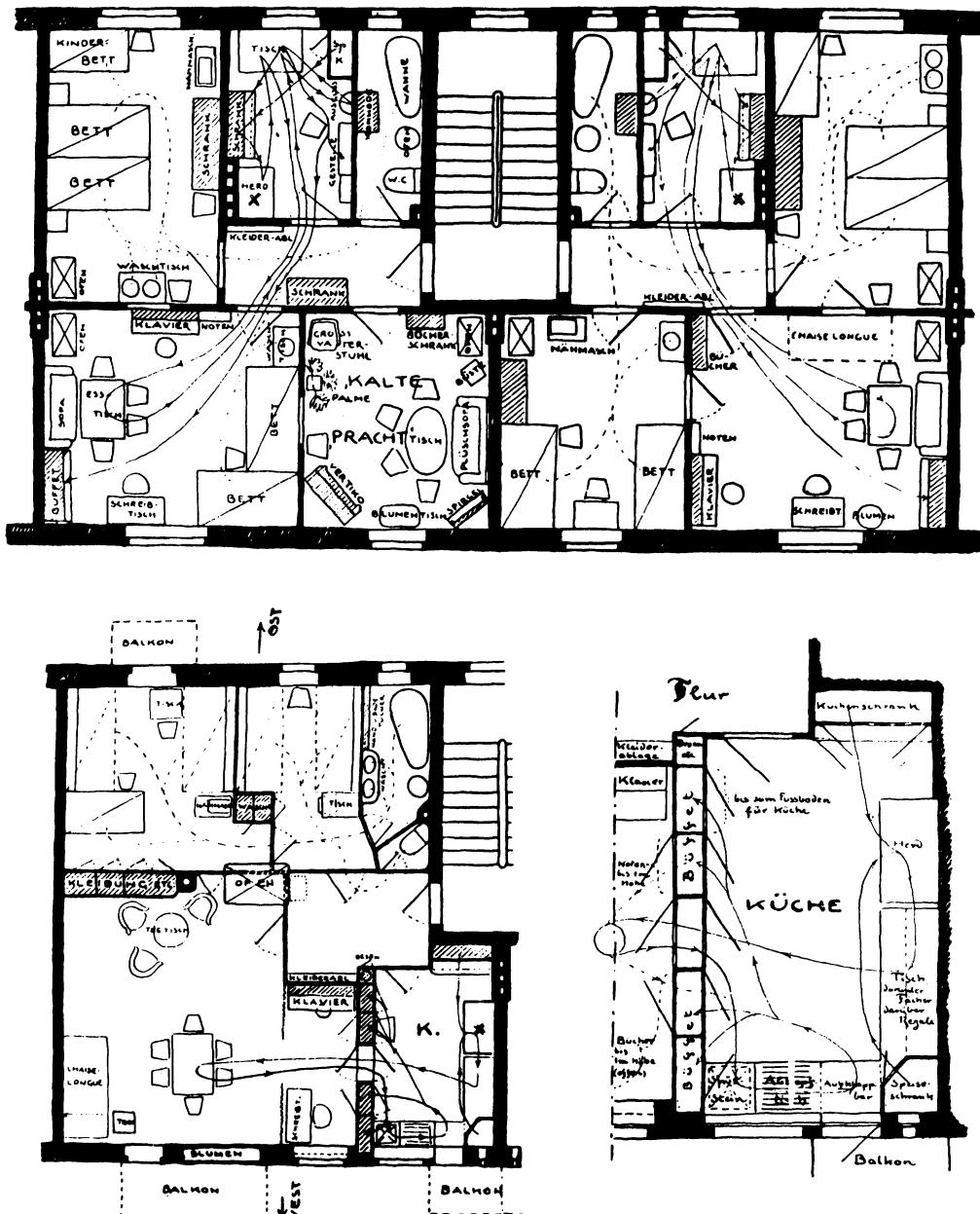
minimum expenditure of time and effort. On these grounds she condemns the traditional *Wohnküche* and presses strongly for the *Kochküche* where all activities not directly connected with cooking are excluded. Significantly, she illustrates these arguments with interiors of houses built by architects associated with the Neues Bauen and equipment designed by the Bauhaus. In editions of the book published after 1927, she refers to her collaboration with Oud on the design of the kitchens for his terrace houses at the Weissenhof Siedlung to show how the new kitchen and its equipment, designed in line with the recommendations of the new house-keeping, could combine, in theory and in practice, with the New Architecture.

Most of the arguments that Meyer sets out are familiar; her significance lies in the success with which she disseminated these ideas. What is important is the extent to which her ideas, and those of other writers on the same themes, prepared the way for a sympathetic reception for the New Dwelling. From the reports in contemporary women's journals

of visits to the Werkbund exhibitions at Stuttgart and Breslau, or to the housing estates in Frankfurt or Berlin designed in the modern style, it is clear that the New Architecture was widely interpreted as a response to demands by the women's movement for an appropriate setting for the New Housekeeping.³⁶

From the New Housekeeping to the New Dwelling

The connection between the ideas of the New Housekeeping and the design of the New Dwelling was established before the mid-1920s. In January 1924, barely a year after the publication of Witte's trans-



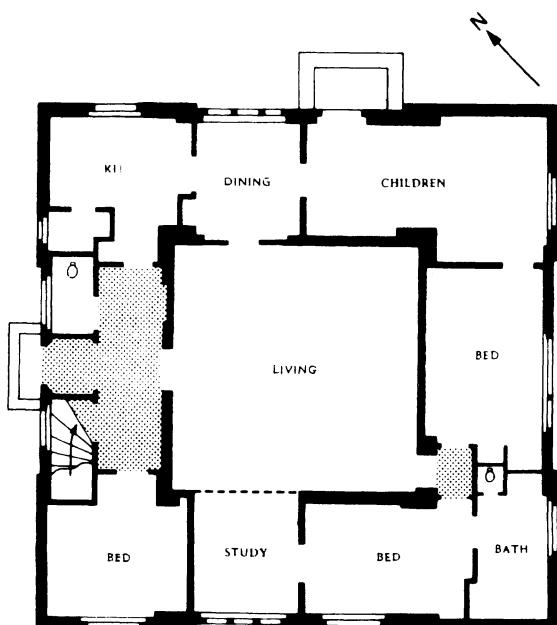
6 Diagrams from Bruno Taut, *Die neue Wohnung* (the new dwelling), showing the application of the techniques of rationalization to the re-organization of the layout of a typical flat. Top: typical 'unrationalized' apartment block floor plan. Below: 'improved' (rationalized) apartment plan; and detail of 'rationalized' kitchen plan

lation of Frederick's book, Bruno Taut was presenting these ideas as the direction for the New Architecture to follow.³⁷ Drawing on the work of advanced designers such as Rietveld, Tessenow and the Bauhaus, he showed how designers were already treating the design of the dwelling in a new and simplified way, and went on to demonstrate how this approach was of particular value to the problems of low-cost housing. Taut argued that this approach could be carried much further if it were combined with a radical reconsideration of the way in which the house was managed along the lines set out by Mrs Frederick. Basing his argument on her approach, Taut attacked the layout of the typical German flat and suggested ways in which the unused space of the 'best room', derided as 'kalte Pracht' (chilly luxury), could be rearranged to give a much more intensive use of space. Most important, he showed how this development of Mrs Frederick's ideas on rationalization in the home might be used to tackle the question of low-cost housing by reducing space standards, and thus costs, but with no sacrifice in convenience. By the late 1920s these ideas on combining the New Housekeeping with the New Architecture had been developed, in the form of *Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum* (the subsistence dwelling), as one solution to the urgent problems of the housing shortage.

Parallels to Taut's ideas can be found in a number of projects from the early 1920s: in 1923 Georg Muche and Adolf Meyer's approach to the design of Haus am Horn, the experimental house at the Bauhaus's Weimar exhibition, had swept away the conventional divisions between the different spaces of the house, living room, dining room, and kitchen, in order to allow a wide range of possible patterns of use.³⁸ By the mid-1920s the housing built in Frankfurt under Ernst May, and a number of the houses on display at the Weissenhof exhibition in Stuttgart in the summer of 1927, were incorporating ideas which were the product of the enthusiasm for 'scientific management' in the home. But one of the most important and interesting, if little known, examples in this field of the close collaboration between architects, housewives' associations, production engineers, and all those concerned with the production of kitchen fittings and household equipment, is to be found in the work of the Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit

im Bau- und Wohnungswesen e.V. (Rfg). This organization was founded in January 1928 to engage in research on every aspect of the design,³⁹ production and economy of housing, and the background to its foundation emphasizes how strongly it was a product of both the BDF's interests in the home and the movement for rationalization.

The Rfg grew out of the amalgamation of a number of central-government agencies that had been working in this area even before 1924. The Reichskuratorium für Wirtschaftlichkeit, for example, had already launched a series of publicity lectures, printed as pamphlets and complete with slides, that dealt with increasing the efficiency of housekeeping; titles such as *Die Normung in der Hauswirtschaft* (standardization in housekeeping) and *Hausarbeit leicht gemacht* (housework made easy) had already reached a second edition by 1924.⁴⁰ By 1925 the Deutscher Normenausschuss (DNA), the central institute for standards, had convened a committee to investigate the standardization of household products which brought together expertise from various branches of industry and the Reichsverband deutscher Hausfrauenvereine. In August 1926 a committee on *Typisierung der Wohngebäude*, or standardization of

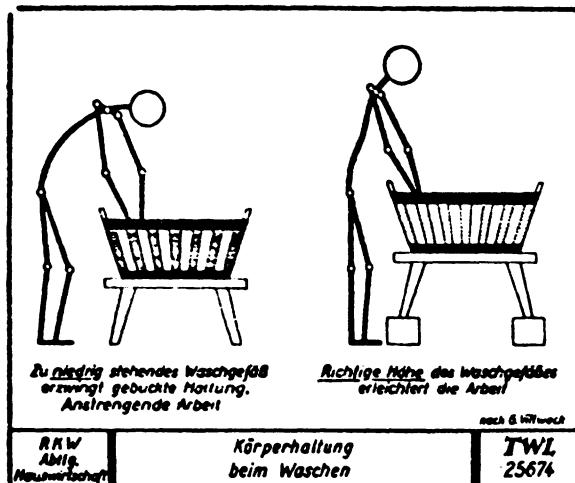


⁷ Georg Muche and Adolf Meyer, Haus am Horn, Weimar, 1923. Experimental prototype for mass-produced housing, built for the first Bauhaus exhibition. Plan, ground floor

housing, was set up under the auspices of the DNA, largely at the urging of Marie-Elisabeth Lüders and with powerful support from the building industry, the building trades and government, to consider questions of economy in design and construction of housing. This committee mapped out a field of research, dividing the subject into five major areas; one of these was to focus primarily on the problems of the layout of the dwelling, the preparation of 'type' plans and the standardization of various elements and components of the home, and was to take into account the views of the housewives' associations and their demands for the rationalization of house-keeping. After a number of changes in constitution and membership, the committee was renamed, early in 1928, the Reichsforschungs-gesellschaft.

Within the Rfg, Committees 4 and 6 worked together on questions of house plans (*Grundriss-gestaltung*) and housekeeping (*Hauswirtschaft*).⁴¹ The former soon produced a study of preferred layouts for small dwellings which brought together ideas on the arrangement of activities within the dwelling (which had originated in a number of suggestive but not very profound studies by Alexander Klein)⁴² with constraints on space standards determined from rent levels and assumptions about household income. However, this committee soon recognized that the resolution of the design of the small dwelling was critically dependent on the layout and dimensions of the kitchen. Thus the investigations of Committee 6 on kitchen layout and management became of critical importance for the whole programme of the Rfg, and this central position was duly reflected in the bias of the papers given at the Rfg's first Technical Conference in Berlin in April 1929.⁴³

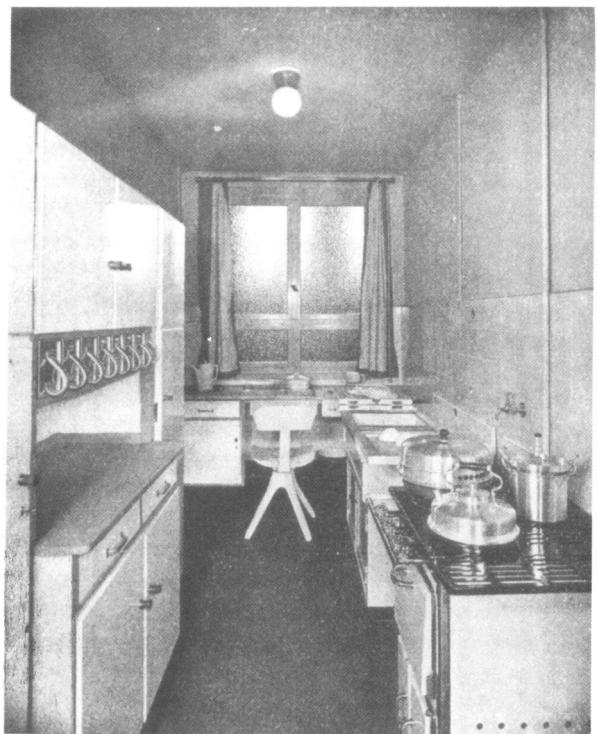
After only four months of existence, Committee 6 had already launched designs for six kitchens which were displayed at 'Die Nährung' exhibition in May 1928 in Berlin, and in June it published a review of the current thinking on kitchen design.⁴⁴ The starting-point for their approach was again the view that the kitchen should only be used for cooking and washing-up. The kitchen was therefore to be small—indeed this was a necessary virtue to meet the committee's fears that a larger kitchen might simply become a general family space, or worse still, might be used for sleeping. The reduction in space standards was to be achieved through the use of gas or electric



8 German studies of 'good housekeeping': an illustration of the correct approach to washing clothes, from the pamphlet *Hausarbeit leicht gemacht*, published by the Reichskuratorium für Wirtschaftlichkeit

cooking, in place of solid fuel, and the use of specially designed kitchen furniture. The rationale that lay behind the committee's recommendation of the cooking kitchen was principally based on economy, hygiene and aesthetics. Not only was the galley kitchen smaller, and therefore cheaper, it was also claimed to be healthier. The committee considered the build-up of warm, moist air in the family's main living room to be detrimental to health and to furnishings; they also claimed (quite reasonably) that the persistent smell of cooking or boiling washing was likely to be offensive to the family. Despite their advocacy of the *Kochküche* the Committee did, however, recognize that the simplest house plans were those in which the separate kitchen and dining area were linked as closely as possible. Accordingly they proposed a series of designs which included a separate 'cooking kitchen', a combination of living and dining room with a cooking recess attached, and even a kitchen with a minimal surface for eating within the kitchen; but the large 'living kitchen' was proposed for use only in rural areas.

The kitchens designed by the Rfg conveniently represent the mainstream of current attitudes at the end of the 1920s, but the range of practical experimentation carried on throughout the 1920s was considerable and often highly successful. One of the best known, and by all accounts one of the most



9 'The Gas Kitchen'—one of the kitchens designed by the Rfg as part of a study of kitchen design

effective applications in practice of the new approach to the design of the kitchen, was the 'Frankfurt kitchen' designed by the Austrian architect Grete Schütte-Lihotsky and incorporated in a large number of the dwellings built in Frankfurt under Ernst May.⁴⁵

The principles underpinning the design echo closely the programme of the New Housekeeping:

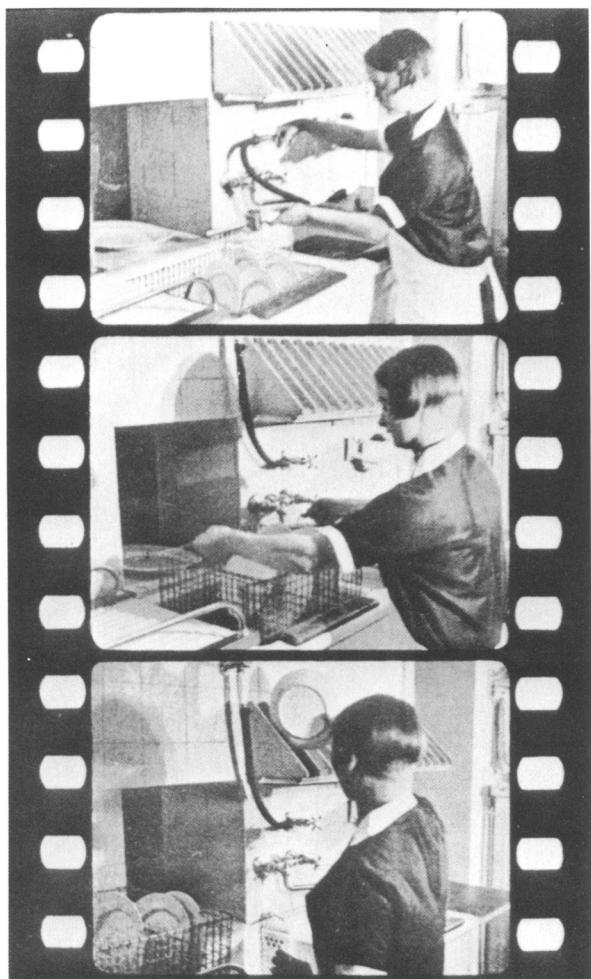
Every thinking woman must have experienced the backwardness of the present ways of running a home and must recognize in this the principal barriers to her own development, and thus to that of the family as a whole. The problem of organizing the daily work of the housewife in a more systematic manner is equally important to all classes of society . . . To achieve this, the arrangement of the kitchen and its relationship to the other rooms in the dwelling must be considered first.⁴⁶

The kitchen designed by Schütte-Lihotsky should be interpreted as a 'correct' response to Mrs Frederick's demands for a 'scientific' arrangement of the kitchen; Ferdinand Kramer even recalls seeing either a copy of Witte's translation of Frederick's book or the English version itself when he first arrived in the

Architects' Department in Frankfurt.⁴⁷ The layout was conceived in terms of minimizing time and effort. The kitchen, naturally a *Kochküche*, was small in order to save on the need for movement: the publicity film commissioned by the Architects' Department showed how the housewife could reach all the most important things she might need when preparing food—sink, chopping board, and food storage—from a conveniently placed swivel stool. This aura of modernity was further enhanced by designing the kitchen for the use of electricity, the 'power of the future': the three kitchens displayed at the exhibition *Die neue Wohnung und ihr Innenausbau* at the Frankfurter Messe in 1926 were all equipped with electricity, and the Römerstadt Estate, in which the Frankfurt kitchen was extensively used, was presented as one of the first 'all electric' estates in



10 Grete Schütte-Lihotsky, the 'Frankfurt kitchen', 1925/6, as installed in some of the 1920s Frankfurt housing estates, including Römerstadt



11 Rationalization at the Bauhaus: kitchen of a Bauhaus Master's house. The format of the illustration as a film strip is reminiscent of those in American studies of rationalization, such as those by Taylor and Gilbreth

Germany. Yet, for all its sophistication, the cost of the kitchen was kept low by the use of factory prefabrication: assembled in a conventional way the kitchen cost (in 1930) just under 400 Marks, but prefabricated the cost fell to just under 240 Marks, comparable to the costs of the kitchens being designed by the Rfg for low-cost housing.⁴⁸

The success of the Frankfurt kitchen was given the widest publicity both within Germany and abroad. Catherine Bauer, already greatly impressed by the quality and the scale of the Frankfurt housing programme, hailed the kitchen as one of the real achievements of the New Architecture.⁴⁹

The Frankfurt kitchen may well deserve its reputation, but it must be remembered that the same principles and ideas were being tried out elsewhere in Germany. The exhibition of kitchen designs at the Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart in 1927,⁵⁰ the exhibition 'Die neue Küche' in Berlin in 1929 where the *Ringküche* designed by Häring and Hilbersheimer was first exhibited,⁵¹ and the range of kitchen designs built as part of the low-cost housing programmes by Otto Haesler in Celle and Karlsruhe, or by Taut and others in Berlin, all confirm the importance accorded to the kitchen as a central issue in the design of the New Dwelling.

The New Housekeeping in Practice

Despite the influence of the New Housekeeping in shaping the approach of architects and others involved in housing during the 1920s, its value in practice remained limited. Indeed, in two important respects the widespread application of the principles of 'scientific management' can be challenged as inappropriate at a time of national reconstruction and housing crisis.

The first line of attack emphasizes the essentially middle-class assumptions incorporated in so many of the basic attitudes which underpinned the new approach, and questions their applicability to the very different pattern of working-class life. The allocation of different activities to different rooms, the concern for 'privacy', the implications of a 'scientific' approach to house-keeping on family expenditure, all are very much at variance with the little that we know, or can infer, of family life for large portions of the working classes. Despite the conditions revealed in the census of 1925 and the National Housing Survey of 1927, much of the discussion of the New Housekeeping suggests a total misunderstanding of housing conditions at the time for the vast mass of the urban population: in working-class areas of Berlin such as Wedding, 53 per cent of the population lived in tenements with only one or two rooms, 43 per cent of all dwellings had no separate water closet, 81 per cent had no electricity, and nearly 15,000 people had no home of their own.⁵² For these families the supposed benefits of the New Housekeeping must have seemed hopelessly remote.

Secondly, the New Housekeeping was unrealistic



12 Rationally planned and equipped living room, Weissenhof Siedlung, Stuttgart, 1927



13 Typical 'Wohnküche' in a dwelling in a working-class quarter of Berlin, early twentieth century

for all but the affluent middle-class family because of the sheer cost of so many of the ideas proposed. Information on household income and expenditure is scanty during the Weimar period, but the broad picture that emerges suggests that, with an average

annual income of 3,325 Marks for working-class families, and an average income of 4,712 Marks for a white-collar family, the cost of a kitchen even modestly equipped for 'scientific' housekeeping was far beyond the reach of most.⁵³



14 'Wohnküche'—1 room dwelling—in a working-class quarter of Berlin, c.1930

Naturally, in 1930 the cost of an electric kitchen, the future ideal for all but a few, would have been enormous: an AEG electric refrigerator cost 1,050 Marks, a Siemens electric mixing motor, without its attachments, 165–240 Marks; an electric cooker a further 300 Marks.⁵⁴ The cost of just three items would amount to more than a third of the annual income of even a white-collar worker. Moreover, despite the sophistication of the electrical industry in Germany, the costs of electric power were still high at the end of the 1920s: at a cost (in 1928) of 20 pfennig/hour for an oven and 24 pfennig/hour for a hot ring, the running costs for cooking alone could become a significant element of the family budget.⁵⁵

But even the cost of the modest and more realistic recommendations on equipping a kitchen made by Erna Meyer or the Rfg seem high when compared with household income. At a time when hire-purchase arrangements were limited, the purchase of a simple kitchen dresser, as recommended by the Rfg, at about 150–250 Marks would have been a major expenditure. According to the results of the survey of household income and expenditure carried out by the Reich Statistical Office, working-class families spent not more than 4 per cent of their total annual income on furnishings and equipment of all kinds; on even the most optimistic assumptions it would take the typical working-class family more

than 5 years to buy the minimum kitchen equipment proposed by the Rfg.

Should we dismiss the ideal of the New Housekeeping because of these limitations? Can we afford to neglect a set of ideas which appeared so significant in shaping the approach to the new housing of the 1920s? The sales of Erna Meyer's *Der neue Haushalt*, the influence of the Frankfurt kitchen, or the coverage given to the subject in women's magazines, all indicate that these ideas are too important to be ignored. The challenge of applying the principles of 'scientific management' to the design of the home was one of the most powerful forces behind the New Dwelling. A willingness to challenge long-established and increasingly outmoded attitudes to managing the household was necessary in order to rethink the form of the home: both *die neue Wohnung* and *die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum* were products of this new approach. But, most important, the New Housekeeping appeared to legitimize the New Dwelling. It lent conviction to claims that this was more than just another formal or stylistic exercise: were not architects now rethinking the design of the house from the inside out, from the kitchen to the façade, precisely as Marie-Elisabeth Lüders and the women's movement had demanded? Here was an attempt to meet, in a 'scientific' way, the housing demands of those who could quite plausibly be regarded as representing what was wanted by the majority of

German families. Architects like May, Taut, or Haesler were not engaged in an attempt to foist an architectural ideal onto an unsuspecting public. Our interpretation of the work of these architects must not be distorted by the jaundiced critique of the role of the architect in public housing since the war which is currently fashionable. Whatever its failings, the campaign for the New Dwelling was an attempt, perhaps naïve, even foolishly optimistic, to meet the urgent demands of a society in the process of reconstruction.

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Notes

This article is based on a paper given in the session on European design between the wars, organized by Christopher Bailey and Charlotte Benton at the annual conference of the Association of Art Historians in 1983.

- 1 E. Schuster, 'Die neue Wohnung und der Haushalt', *Das neue Frankfurt*, 2, no. 5, 1927.
- 2 B. Taut, *Die neue Wohnung: Die Frau als Schöpferin*, Leipzig, 1924.
- 3 A. Behne, *Neues Wohnen, neues Bauen*, Leipzig, 1927.
- 4 S. Giedion, *Befreites Wohnen*, Zurich, 1930.
- 5 W. Lotz, 'Wohnen und Wohnung', *Die Form*, 2, no. 10, 1927; W. Riezler, 'Die Wohnung', *Die Form*, 2, no. 9, 1927.
- 6 E. May, 'Grundlagen der Frankfurter Wohnungsbaupolitik', *Das neue Frankfurt*, 2, nos. 7/8, 1928; G. Lihotzky, 'Rationalisierung im Haushalt', *Das neue Frankfurt*, 1, no. 5, 1927; Schuster, 'Die neue Wohnung und der Haushalt'.
- 7 The Bund deutscher Frauen was the principal organization of the *bürgerliche*, or middle-class, women's movement; for a discussion of the women's movement in Germany, see R. J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894–1933*, London, 1976; for an account of the Socialist women's movement, see W. Thönissen, *Frauenemanzipation: Politik und Literatur der deutschen Sozialdemokratie zur Frauenbewegung, 1863–1933*, Frankfurt, 1969.
- 8 The title of a paper by Marie-Elisabeth Lüders in *Die Küche der Klein- und Mittelwohnung*, Sonderheft no. 2 der Rfg, Berlin, 1928.
- 9 For a discussion of the ideas behind the *neue Wohnkultur*, see N. Bullock, 'Housing in Frankfurt 1925–1931 and the new Wohnkultur', *Architectural Review*, June 1978.
- 10 For a discussion of the way in which this early debate was related to the design of workers' housing, see N. Bullock and J. Read, *Housing Reform: The Movement for Housing Reform in Germany and France 1840–1914*, Cambridge, 1985), especially chapter 8; and G. Uhlig, *Kollektivmodell 'Einküchenhaus'; Wohnreform und Architekturdebatte zwischen Frauenbewegung und Funktionalismus 1900–1933*, Berlin, 1981.
- 11 Uhlig, op. cit., p. 53.
- 12 L. Preller, *Sozialpolitik in der Weimarer Republik*, Düsseldorf, 1949, pp. 93–4.
- 13 See, for example, E. Corte, 'Die Wohnung der berufstätigen Frau', *Die Frau, Monatsschrift für das gesamte Frauenleben unserer Zeit*, 34, 1926–7, pp. 79–83; M. Weinberg, 'Der ideale Haushalt', *Fürs Haus, das illustrierte Blatt der Frau*, vol. 45, 5 June, 17 July, 14 August, 4 September, 1927.
- 14 A. Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus*, Berlin, 1887; in this section I have made considerable use of Uhlig's useful account of the socialist women's movement and their response to the management of the home.
- 15 E. Fischer, 'Die Frauenfrage', *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 1905, pp. 258–65, quoted in Uhlig, op. cit., pp. 57–70.
- 16 E. Fischer, *Frauenarbeit und Familie*, Berlin, 1914.
- 17 See, for example, the exhaustive account of the application of the techniques of 'rationalization' in the *Handbuch der Rationalisierung*.
- 18 For an account of the German approach to standardization, see W. Hellmich, 'Zehn Jahre deutscher Normung', *DIN 1917–1927*, Berlin, 1927.
- 19 F. W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, New York, 1911; F. B. Gilbreth, *Primer of Scientific Management*, New York, 1914; Henry Ford's autobiography, *My Life and Work*, New York, 1922, was a best-seller in Germany. The application of these ideas in Germany is discussed in J. Ermanski, *Wissenschaftliche Betriebsorganisation und Taylor-system* Berlin, 1925.
- 20 M. Patterson, *Principles of Domestic Engineering*, New York, 1915.
- 21 C. Frederick, *The New Housekeeping*, New York, 1913; and C. Frederick, *Household Engineering; Scientific Management in the Home*, New York, 1915; for an excellent account of the debate on good housekeeping in America, see D. Handlin, *The American Home, Architecture and Society 1815–1915*, Boston, 1979, especially chapter 6; and also D. Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass., 1981, pp. 281–9.
- 22 Der rationeller Haushalt, translated by I. Witte, Berlin, 1922; see also Witte's own book, *Heim und Technik in Amerika*, Berlin, 1928.
- 23 Frederick, *Household Engineering*, p. 19.
- 24 This theme, laboured in journals (see notes 25 and 26 below), was vigorously championed by the Bund deutscher Frauen as a means of increasing the standing of women within the existing order of society.
- 25 M. Thomae, 'Die Organisation der Hauswirtschaft als Beruf', *Die Frau*, 29, 1922, pp. 118–22, 147–153, 181–5.
- 26 M-E. Lüders, 'Hat die Hausfrau einen Beruf?', *Die Frau*, 28, no. 5, 1920–1.
- 27 Weinberg, 'Der ideale Haushalt'.
- 28 See, for example, the discussion in the Tudor Walters Report (Report of the Committee appointed by the President of the Local Government Board and the Secretary for Scotland to consider questions of building construction in connection with the provision of dwellings for the working classes in England and Wales, and Scotland, and report upon methods of securing economy and despatch in the provision of such dwellings), *Parliamentary Papers*, 1918, especially chapter 3.
- 29 H. Muthesius, *Kleinhaus und Kleinsiedlung*, Munich, 1918, pp. 65–80.
- 30 C. Nussbaum, 'Die Ausbildung der Küchen in kleinen Wohnungen', *Zeitschrift für Wohnungswesen*, 1, 1902, pp. 165–7, 178–9, 183–5.
- 31 For a discussion of the relationship between the ideals of the housing reformers and the reality of the working class before the war, see L. Niethammer and F. Brüggemeier, 'Wie wohnten Arbeiter im Kaiserreich?', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 16, 1976, pp. 61–134.
- 32 Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, for example, was vigorous in her support for the 'Kochküche', and the same attitudes were reflected in the pages of *Die Frau*, for example, G. Linke, 'Wohnungsbau und Hausfrauen', *Die Frau*, 33, 1925–6.

- 33 See, for example, E. May, 'Grundlagen der Frankfurter Wohnungsbaupolitik', *Das neue Frankfurt*, 2, no. 7/8, pp. 118–19; the same attitudes were also held by those outside the Ring group: Alexander Klein was a strong supporter of the 'Kochküche'. See, for example, A. Klein, 'Beiträge zur Wohnungsfrage', in *Probleme des Bauens*, F. Block (ed.), Potsdam, 1928.
- 34 E. Meyer, *Der neue Haushalt, ein Wegweiser zu wirtschaftlicher Hausführung*, Stuttgart, 1928.
- 35 Ibid., p. 3.
- 36 See, for example, J. Lepmann, 'Die Wohnung der berufstätigen Frau in der Werkbundausstellung "Die Wohnung" in Stuttgart', *Fürs Haus*, 46, 23 October 1927.
- 37 Taut, op. cit.
- 38 A. Meyer, *Ein Versuchshaus des Bauhauses in Weimar*, Bauhausbuch no. 3, Munich, 1924.
- 39 There is no adequate survey of the work of the Rfg, but an account of its foundation and operations and the membership of the various committees is given in the annual *Tätigkeitsbericht*; see also D. Weber, 'Tätigkeitsbericht der Rfg', *Erste Mitglieder-Versammlung* (Mitteilungen der Rfg 12–15), Berlin, 1928.
- 40 The Hauswirtschaftlicher Lehrdienst des Reichskuratoriums für Wirtschaftlichkeit published a number of pamphlets (as lectures) on this subject: G. Villwock, *Hausarbeit leicht gemacht* (Vortrag 1), Berlin, 1924; P. Wisotzky, *Ratschläge und Winke für die Auswahl von Kochgeschirr und Zubehör* (Vortrag 2), Berlin, 1924; M. Rudorff, *Die Normung in der Hauswirtschaft* (Vortrag 3), Berlin, 1924.
- 41 Ibid., p. 9.
- 42 See, for example, Klein, 'Beiträge zur Wohnungsfrage'; Klein's studies are illustrated in Professor Wolf's paper at the Rfg's first annual conference: G. Wolf, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der Grundrisstypisierung', *Erste Mitglieder-Versammlung* (Mitteilungen der Rfg No. 13), Berlin, 1928.
- 43 Wolf, op. cit.
- 44 *Ausstellung von 6 Küchen bearbeitet vom Ausschuss der Rfg 'Küchen- und Hauswirtschaft'*, Berlin, 1928; and *Die Küche der Klein- und Mittelwohnung* (Sonderheft No. 2 der Rfg), Berlin, 1928.
- 45 G. Schütte-Lihotzky, 'Rationalisierung im Haushalt'. *Das neue Frankfurt*, 1, no. 5, 1926–7, pp. 120–23.
- 46 Ibid., p. 120.
- 47 Conversation with Professor Kramer in Frankfurt in 1974.
- 48 E. May, 'Fünf Jahre Wohnungsbautätigkeit in Frankfurt am Main', *Das neue Frankfurt*, nos. 2–3, 1930, p. 39.
- 49 C. Bauer, *Modern Housing*, New York, 1934, p. 127.
- 50 E. Meyer, 'Das Küchenproblem auf der Werkbund-Ausstellung', *Die Form*, 2, no. 10, 1927.
- 51 This kitchen was illustrated along with a number of others by progressive designers in the widely available book by W. Müller-Wulckow, *Die deutsche Wohnung der Gegenwart*, Königstein im Taunus and Leipzig, 1932.
- 52 *Die Grundstücks- und Wohnungsaufnahme sowie die Volks-, Berufs- und Betriebszählung in Berlin im Jahre 1925*, 4, Berlin, 1928, tables 3 and 8.
- 53 These figures, like much of the information on household income and expenditure in this period, are drawn from *Die Lebenshaltung von 2,000 Arbeiter-, Angestellten-, und Beamten-Haushaltungen; Erhebungen von Wirtschaftsrechnungen im Deutschen Reich von Jahre 1927–8* (Einzelschriften zur Statistik des deutschen Reichs, no. 22), 1–2, Berlin, 1932. For a most helpful discussion of family income and expenditure, see S. Coyner, 'Class Patterns of Family Income and Expenditure during the Weimar Republic: German White-collar Workers as Harbingers of Modern Society', unpublished PhD dissertation, Rutgers University, 1975.
- 54 The cost of fitting up a flat in the modern style can be calculated from Wilhelm Lotz's useful book, *Wie richte ich meine Wohnung ein? Modern Gut mit welchen Kosten?*, Berlin, 1930.
- 55 *Die Lebenshaltung von 2,000 Arbeiter-, Angestellten-, und Beamten-Haushaltungen*, pp. 19–20, 31–2, 42–3.

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