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Feminist critic and utopias

### **Feminist Housing Utopias – some critical remarks**

In 1979, Christa Reinig, a German feminist author, published a short-story entitled, „the widows,, (Christa Reinig 1981). In this story she describes a fictional situation in which all men become sick due to a virus infection which does not affect women. The consequences are horrible. The few female doctors cannot help all the infected men. Therefore, the male part of society dies. There are aeroplanes flying which can never land because the pilots and air traffic controllers are all male. There is no electric power because all the plant workers are male and there are no female engineers. Without power there is no electric light or energy for the lifts in high-rise buildings. There is no delivery of food to the towns because all truck drivers are male.

At first the women are paralysed. They try to call for help, but all forms of rescue are male and there are no men left. However, after a while, the women start to work. They use their skills to drive cars and bring trucks into town. They bury the men in the underground tunnels as these are no longer used. They stop working in the evenings as there is no electric light. They are angry that the men have left them in such an ignorant state, without any technical skills, but they also find the situation exhilarating. Housewives, having lost their „job,, now work, quite happily, as construction workers. Female doctors clean the hospitals together with the cleaning women. Some women dare, for the first time in their lives, to walk in the park at night. They see the moon, which they only remember from the television. Soon an exodus to the countryside begins. The women walk to the places „where food is coming out of the earth and the water bucket has not to be lifted up twelve stories,,.

You may ask why I have referred to this short story. In the strict sense of the word, the description above is not a utopia; it is not a concept of an ideal society as utopias, since Thomas Moore’s „insula utopia,, are expected to be. However, Christa Reinig’s short story (which was quite famous within the autonomous women’s movement in Germany at the end of the 1970’s) includes many elements which appear to be crucial for feminist utopian ideas.

The first is the abolition of the gendered division of labour. The message of the story is clear; women feel, in principle, able to do all kinds of work, which they believe is useful. In fact, the abolition of the gendered division of labour which excludes women from technical and managerial work (still a fact in most western European countries) is one of the essential criteria to be found in almost all feminist utopias or concepts of new societies.

The second important element in the above story is the remarkable scepticism in relation to man-made technology and an anti-urban attitude. At the end of the story the women wander off to the countryside in order to be „near to the place where food is coming out of the earth,,. This could be compared to the ecofeminist concepts of subsistence production, although this is clearly not the interpretation Christa Reinig sought to infer. Nevertheless, the exodus of women to the countryside as well as the last sentences of the story: „,,do you know where we can find something to eat?,, „Yes, this is now the problem.,, in my mind, above all, shows the practical sense of women and their orientation to what we call „daily life,,. This prioritising of the problems of daily life (and not the „big issues,, such as the representation of male power or of technical progress) seems, to me, to be typical for feminist utopias. Although

feminist utopias are mostly based on the abolition of the gendered division of labour, they never forget the needs for reproduction and reproductive work, which is seen as indispensable and central to the development of society.

The third essential element of feminist utopias is the lack of male violence. In Christa Reinig's story this has two effects. The first effect, the fact that women now dare to walk in the park at night, is quite common in feminist utopias. However, Christa Reinig mentions a second effect. Due to the lack of a superior enemy, women believe they have a chance in fighting and therefore do not hesitate to fight against „female hooligans,, who, for example, take advantage of the situation and start looting. In this regard, Christa Reinig's story differs from most feminist utopias. The women in the story are not the better human beings. They are not all peace-loving and free of aggression, sensible and hard-working. Some of the women drink, some of them fight, some of them loot, but the female society can deal with them because „the villains are people like yourself and power stands against power,,. This situation is completely contrary to the unequal fights between the two genders, where women have no chance. This, at least, appears to be Christa Reinig's implicit message.

I think this is a very important aspect of Christa Reinig's „utopia,, as she obviously has no intention of changing the existent gender relations which exclude women from crucial parts of society. Therefore, she abolishes gender relations by developing a single sex society, which in the story appears to be the „natural,, society as it is produced by „nature,, namely the virus which only kills men.

Some of you may feel uncomfortable that I start my article with such a men-hostile story from a radical (lesbian) feminist. In doing so, however, I do not wish to promote a single sex, female society, but rather I want to point out that, in my mind, a feminist utopia has to deal with all aspects of gender relations and especially with the questions of power and hierarchy. To reduce a utopia to the single aspect of the gendered division of labour, as a lot of feminist utopias do, particularly in spatial planning, fails to touch on the crucial aspects of gender relations. I will come back to this point later.

Let us first take a step back into history (or, more precisely, herstory). In her book, „The Grand Domestic Revolution. A history of feminist designs for American homes, neighbourhoods and cities,, first published in the 1970's, Dolores Hayden describes the ideas of (not only) American female activists, who, beginning from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, developed new concepts of homes, neighbourhoods and cities which were intended to help end the subordination of women in society (Dolores Hayden 1981a).

Central to these concepts was the idea of „the domestic revolution,, a revolutionary change in domestic work. According to Dolores Hayden, three generations of materialist feminists in the USA challenged, between the end of the Civil War and the Great Depression, „two characteristics of industrial capitalism: the physical separation of household space from public space, and the economic separation of the domestic economy from the political economy. In order to overcome patterns of urban space and domestic space that isolate women and made their domestic work invisible, they developed new forms of neighbourhood organisations...and proposed ideal, feminist cities,, (Dolores Hayden 1981a:1).

Even in these early times, these feminists criticised the fact that domestic work was not valued as it should be, nor regarded as an indispensable part of the national economy, or more precisely, the basis of this economy. Therefore, they not only struggled for remuneration for domestic work, but demanded that „the bearing and rearing of children, the most exacting of

employments, and involving the most terrible risks, shall be the best paid work in the world,, (published in *The Revolution* 1869, quoted by Dolores Hayden 1981a:1). In general, they demanded „for the wife who acts as cook, as nursery-maid, or seamstress, or all three, fair wages,,(Ibid.).

Remuneration is, without doubt, a crucial aspect for the integration of domestic work in the political economy. However, surely it is not enough. Just as important as payment is a new organisation of domestic work, which abolishes the isolation of women doing housework in a separated domestic sphere. For this purpose, Fay Peirce developed the idea of „cooperative housekeeping,, which Dolores Hayden describes as follows, : „Groups of twelve to fifty women would organise cooperative associations to perform all their domestic work collectively and charge their husbands for these services. Through membership fees, such a group could purchase a building to serve as its headquarters, furnish it with appropriate mechanical equipment for cooking, baking, laundry and sewing, and supply a cooperative store with provisions. One or two members would manage the association, and many members would work there, although some women might choose to develop other careers or spend more time with their children. Some workers may be former servants, hired for their particular skills in cooking or sewing. All workers... would be paid wages equivalent to those paid to men for skilled work. The association would charge retail prices for cooked food, laundry, clothing and provisions – cash on delivery,, (Dolores Hayden, 1981a: 68).

„Modern,, feminists may argue that in this concept the gendered division of labour is not challenged as only women do the domestic work. However, this critique is not adequate. Peirce’s concept is based on the assumption that cooperative housekeeping will achieve remarkable economies of scale. Therefore it „would provide economic rewards for women who were efficient and skilled at domestic work,,. As in Peirce’s concept, this domestic work is paid the same as skilled men’s work, housekeeping work can be seen as a *specialisation* of women which has nothing to do with the most crucial point of the gendered division of labour, that is, the devaluation of female work. Fay Peirce argues for this specialisation due to the fact that agriculture and manufacturing are already dominated by men, whereas the developing sectors of distribution and services can still be taken over by women. An essential prerequisite to doing this are the economies of scale of cooperative housekeeping which „would enable many housewives to find time to use their broader talents,, (ibid.) - which may include qualified work outside the home.

However, Fay Peirce’s ideas implied more than just making domestic work more efficient. The idea was the liberation of women in giving them more control over their economic lives. The idea was to create a „women’s sphere,, including „womanhood suffrage,, (Hayden 1981a: 79). Peirce „advised women not to wait for ‘manhood’ suffrage but to gather in towns and cities, elect their own officers and set up women’s committees to deal with public issues such as education, health, and welfare,,(Ibid.). Her final idea was a „Women’s House,, (elected by all women) which should take the place of the U.S. Senate.

All in all, Fay Peirce developed a utopian society based on a spatial concept. The centre of cooperative housekeeping should be a headquarters with „counting room, sales room, consulting room, fitting room on the first floor, the working rooms (for cooking, sewing, laundry, etc. ) on the second floor and a dining room, (with dumb-waiter) a gymnasium, and a reading room on the third floor, all of them connected that they could be thrown open in one suite when the cooperative housekeepers wished to give their work-women a ball,,. Additionally, comfortable dressing rooms were planned. As all domestic work was done in the housekeeping building, the surrounding family homes were planned without kitchens. Or, even better, the cooperative housekeeping facilities could be included in a multi-family

apartment house with kitchenless dwellings. In promoting the apartment-house for (white) middle-class families, who not only in her time, predominantly lived in detached houses or terraced houses, but never in flats, Peirce can still be regarded as relevant today.

The idea of the kitchenless home is taken up by various reformers, both men and women, some of whom have changed the idea of cooperative housekeeping of housewives into a professional, or rather commercial, solution. In these concepts, Fay Peirce's central idea of developing, alongside the cooperative housekeeping, a „women's sphere,, of (economic) independence and self-determination, got lost. The idea was to free the (middle-class) woman from domestic work. For this, kitchenless houses with communal services, developed in Germany in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were criticised by (female) communists as a form of the exploitation of badly paid servants.

Despite this critique, the idea of the kitchenless, residential construction was, nevertheless, central to „an imaginative vision of life in a feminist, socialist city,, (Hayden 1981a: 242), developed by the „self-educated,, architect Alice Austin. She not only planned „labour saving devices in the home and a central laundry and kitchen together with kitchenless houses as a small neighbourhood, but developed plans for a whole 10 000 inhabitant city of kitchenless courtyard houses built in rows „to express 'the solidarity of the community' and emphasise the equal access to housing supported by the socialist municipal government,,(Ibid.). These residential units were „connected to the central kitchen through a complex underground network of tunnels. Railway cars from the centre of the city would bring cooked food, laundry, and other deliveries to connection points, or „hubs,, from which small electric cars could be dispatched to the basement of each house,, (Ibid.) As the tunnels could be used for all service lines (gas , water, electricity and telephone), the costs would be acceptable. Above all, the lack of business traffic would produce „a more restful city,, where residents could walk in the centre of the city. Private cars should only be used for trips outside the town.

Nowadays there are, as far as I can see, no more feminist utopias based on the idea of kitchenless houses, nor any similar technological solutions such as Alice Austin's concepts show. At first glance, „modern,, feminist housing utopias are the precise contradiction to the ideas of Peirce, Austin and others. They do not propose kitchenless houses, but houses (and apartments) where the kitchen is the central area for family life. This fundamental change in feminist ideas, in my mind, can be taken as an example of the very complex relationship between social problems and spatial solutions.

Indeed late 20<sup>th</sup> century feminists who have developed ideas for new housing floorplans with big kitchens in the centre, try to solve the same problems Peirce was already dealing with, that is, the isolation of women doing domestic work. However, instead of creating a cooperative women's sphere or trusting in communal services delivered by complex technical systems, modern feminist utopias are mostly built on the idea of domestic work equally shared between household members, especially between wife and husband. In this context, moving the (big) kitchen into the centre is seen as a means of making domestic work visible and worthy and enabling the family to cooperate in doing domestic work.

How did this complete change in feminist housing utopias come to take place? I see two main reasons. One is connected with technological development, and the other with the hope of possible gender harmony.

Firstly, developments in technology, on the one side, created a variety of different electrical appliances to support domestic work (for example, washing machines, dishwashers, vacuum

cleaners, etc.) and which, consequently, reduced the economic advantages of cooperative housekeeping. Additionally, there was an increase in the import of cheap clothing and goods which devalued home-made articles. On the other side, technological developments also showed the limits of a technological approach. The industrialisation of food production in all stages, from agriculture to fast food delivery, obviously was not possible without an extreme reduction in quality. Convenience foods, including delivered, cooked food, are usually, extremely unhealthy and even toxic. For this reason, not only, ecofeminist utopias explicitly reject the „technological solution,, for domestic work.

Nevertheless, the question is how to solve the problem of the gendered division of labour which is loading women with a „triple burden,, as Caroline Moser names it. The burden of reproductive work, of productive work and of communal work (Moser 1993). One type of modern feminist utopia put their hopes on the equal sharing of domestic work. As Ulrike Schneider shows in her analysis of housing projects developed by groups of families in Germany (Schneider 1992), the ideas for the project mostly came from the women, who hoped to solve their „double or triple burden,, problem. Mutual support was a crucial aspect of these housing projects. This mutual support was expected from all (adult) members of the families, but resulted in being mostly restricted to the female members. Having started with the illusion of the abolition of the gendered division of labour, the women ended up, in successful projects, with some work of women-only cooperative domestic work, not so much cooperative cooking or laundry, but more in respect to mutual childcare and shopping.

To a certain extent this may be the result of the fact that German men are the most resistant to sharing domestic work in the European Union as Jan Künzler demonstrated in comparing a variety of national time-budget studies (Künzler 1995). However, also in other European countries men's share of domestic work is certainly not equal to the women's share. We should question, therefore, why a lot of contemporary feminist utopias are so optimistic with respect to the equal sharing of domestic work between men and women.

When the second (autonomous) women's movement started in the 1970's, the feminist utopias of planners and urban sociologists had a much more radical approach. Kerstin Dörhöfer, for example, published in 1983 an article entitled „Corbusier and the human sister,, a short vision of the future life of the „housewoman<sup>1</sup>, (housewife) which uses the standards of formal jobs for domestic work (Dörhöfer 1983). In this vision, the housewoman requires an end to her work. Therefore, after eight hours she leaves her working place and returns to her own space in a hotel, or guesthouse, a restaurant or club, or in her private rooms (outside her working place), in order to spend her free time for her own recreation. At the beginning of the year the housewife gives her employers (husband, children) her plans for holidays and demands an additional salary to finance her holidays. For at least three weeks she leaves her working place to travel - in a women-only train, or with „feminist airlines,, to visit holiday camps, hotels, or guesthouses for domestic workers. At 65 years old, the housewoman retires and lives as a normal pensioner with an appropriate pension. She continues to live in a hotel or guesthouse or shared accommodation, or in her private rooms where she lived during her time as a housewoman.

Similar to the feminists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kerstin Dörhöfer proposes a separation between women's working place and their living space. However, in contrast to her predecessors she

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<sup>1</sup> The German language does not differ between woman and wife. Therefore a „Hausfrau,, (which commonly is translated as „housewife,,) must not necessarily be married (although she is, in the common understanding of the term). Kerstin Dörhöfer uses this variety in her vision.

separates the living space of the domestic worker from the home of the rest of the family, her „employers,“. In her vision this is necessary in order to offer women the possibility of their own recreation, without being constantly „available, (for the needs of her „employers,“). Similar to Fay Peirce, Kerstin Dörhöfer developed the idea of a „women’s sphere,“ but, in this case, not in the economic sphere, but in the private sphere.

Kerstin Dörhöfer’s basic idea was to offer women a life model in which there was a clear separation of work and recreation, just as men have created for themselves in capitalist society and which they obviously still value very highly. This concept does not seek to change the behaviour of men, but intends to offer women autonomy and a space of their own, not only in a material way, but also in a mental and emotional sense. Similar to Peirce, her concept is based on an economic sector run by women, but unlike Peirce’s concept, this sector is not necessarily concentrated on domestic services.

Dolores Hayden, in 1981, published her vision of a „non-sexist city“ (Hayden 1981b). This city consisted of small participatory units, called „HOMES“ (Homemakers Organisation for a More Egalitarian Society). These Homes were to be initiated by women’s groups (such as groups which have already established shelters for battered women etc.) but would be nationwide.

The principles of these homes were:

1. Men and women participate equally in all domestic work and childcare as well as in paid work.
2. The unpaid domestic work would be reduced as far as possible. In order to do this, HOMES offers different services such as a day nursery, laundry, kitchen offering meals for the nursery, elderly people and a dinner for everyone, a bus service with two buses, a garden to cultivate vegetables for the use of the unit and a service centre for sick people or parents with sick children.
3. All federal and local programmes and rules which explicitly or implicitly presume or establish the role of an unpaid housewife are changed.
4. All social segregation, whether based on class, race or age, is abolished.
5. The opportunities for leisure and recreation for people doing domestic work needed to be extended.

The aims of Dolores Hayden are very similar to those of Kerstin Dörhöfer, but the way is different and leads to different spatial concepts. Where Dörhöfer expresses the principle of social and spatial separation in her vision, Hayden develops an integrative social and spatial concept. By facilitating the equal division of sexes between both spheres of work (whether unpaid domestic or paid employment), both economic spheres are spatially linked. In Hayden’s concept 40 households, representing the household structure of the US American society live in one neighbourhood. Thirty-seven of the sixty-nine adults (parents with children, single parents and single people) can find paid employment within the different services of the neighbourhood. Others work outside the neighbourhood. In order to allow them to participate in the unpaid domestic work, and also to generate sufficient demand for the services, the spatial integration of the residential area and the working places is indispensable.

Dolores Hayden's concept makes certain essential assumptions which are difficult to realise. Women and men need not only to participate equally in domestic work and paid employment, but additionally should not, within these areas, follow a traditional gender specific division of labour, such as male drivers and female nurses or cooks. There needs to be no differentiation in wages paid for men and women (or for typically „male“ and „female“ work). Additionally, people working in the neighbourhood projects should not have incomes lower than those working outside. This means domestic services have to be valued as qualified work.

Dolores Hayden has developed detailed plans of how traditional suburban, residential areas, with detached houses, can be changed into neighbourhoods as presented above, with individual space (including individual gardens) and space for the community, including buildings for different services, a communal vegetable garden and common green space. The spatial principles are, in effect, a reduction of private space and an increase of common space, the integration of residential areas and workplaces. Her idea was not only to create some isolated neighbourhood models, but to disseminate these ideas of socially and spatially integrated, non-sexist neighbourhoods with equally shared domestic and paid work, all over the cities. This vision aims to overcome the separation between the public and the private sphere.

Dolores Hayden should be regarded as one of the feminists who, at a time when the functional division of space was, at least in western countries, still „state of the art“, developed concepts of the spatial integration of homes and working places, with an improved public ( or better common) transport system and an extreme reduction of the use of private cars. In short, she developed urban concepts which nowadays are discussed in the mainstream as new ideas for an integrated and compact city. However, references to Hayden or other feminist planners are never made in this debate, but that's nothing new.

Let us come back to the comparison of the visions of Kerstin Dörhöfer and Dolores Hayden, who have similar goals but opposing spatial and social solutions. What unifies them is the assumption that there is a connection between the social and the spatial organisation of a society. What separates them is the concept of social change. Whereas Dörhöfer doesn't make any effort to change men, Hayden's concept is dependent on the willingness of men to realise that it is better for them to give up their privileges, to share unpaid work and to reduce their advantage in income.

But how is this achieved? What processes can be established to enforce this fundamental social change? Experiences in the economical and political field, where, more than a twenty-five year struggle has brought about a series of anti-discrimination laws or equal rights measurements, but absolutely no equal access for women to the economical and political elite or even an equal share of the better paid, qualified jobs, in my mind, indicates the powerful resistance of men against equal rights of women and equal access to all fields of society. Why, in spite of these experiences which seem to be characteristic of, not only, German society, but of all European countries, are housing utopias which try to establish non-hierarchical gender relations much more common in the feminist debate on housing than concepts which try to create separate women-only spaces?

If we look back in herstory, feminists have long developed ideas for independent housing for women and also realised them. In Germany, women of the so called first women's movement founded, as early as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a multitude of hostels, boarding houses and apartments for single working women and female students who before had no opportunity to

live independently. The debate on these concepts, which Ulla Terlinden has documented in her analyses of the different journals published by the different wings of the first women's movement (Terlinden 1999) shows very clearly the implicit fears which can be connected to the idea of an extended „women-only“ space (in the material and also cultural, political or mental sense.)

According to Ulla Terlinden, socialist activists criticised that the offer of hostels for young female workers may help them individually but weaken their class consciousness, because they may have the illusion that there is a way to a better life without a revolution (Terlinden 1999:19). Some authors of the so called bourgeois women's movement criticised women-only housing projects because this would „isolate“ women from society. These authors proposed building or renting single flats in „normal“ housing areas which can be shared by some women, who were then better integrated in the „normal society. (Terlinden 1991:22)

More than in the first women's movement (where other authors contradict this opinion) the argument of the „isolation“ of women in women-only housing projects is used in the contemporary debate on feminist, or rather „women-friendly“ housing concepts. In Germany this argument is often used when, for example, local representatives for equal rights plan a housing project for lone mothers. These projects either have only a few dwellings, or are integrated in a project with „normal“ families. Both are explicitly done to avoid the isolation of lone mothers respectively „a lone mother's ghetto“.

Why are women living with women defined as isolated? Are men who spend most of their time in men-only groups (in business, in clubs, in sports) seen as isolated? I don't think anyone would argue so. To take women as isolated when they live without men defines men as the centre not only for society, but for every female being. This is exactly what the concept of compulsory heterosexuality means, which was developed by Adrienne Rich (Rich 1980).

Bearing this in mind, let us go back to our question of why „integrative“ visions of housing are much more common in the feminist debate than separatist ones. For me this is a consequence of the compulsory heterosexuality or the heteronormativity which influences not only the norms concerning sexuality, but all aspects of life. In western societies, women can live separately, but if they have children, they are seriously threatened by poverty (in Germany 49% of all children of one-parent families live in poverty and in the UK even 69% (DIW 2002)). Even if they are without children, they still have to pay a remarkably higher proportion of their income for their living space than men. Although this is mainly a result of the discrimination in the job market, and only secondarily a result of the mechanisms of the housing market. Women easily learn from these experiences, that it is not „normal“ to live alone (or with another woman).

Compulsory heterosexuality or heteronormativity tells women that there is no perfect life outside the heterosexual relationship. With the heterosexual norm in mind it is not possible to develop a utopia which includes a separate women's space. On the basis of heteronormativity there is no other way to develop an utopia than to integrate women's lives into men's lives. As the reality of gender relations in society as well as on the individual level is so unsatisfying for women, this means that feminist utopias based on heteronormativity must develop the ideal of non-hierarchical, equal and harmonic gender relations, the illusion of unconditional love and harmony between men and women. For, if this love exists, it can create mutual respect and can destroy every kind of hierarchy.

Contrary to this statement it can be argued that in none of the visions, referred to above, is love mentioned. That's right. In all the models there is work – a lot of work – and some recreation and leisure. But neither love nor sex. However, undoubtedly love and sex is in the underlying subtext. When reading the vision of Kerstin Dörhöfer, didn't you think about the sexual relations of these housewives living separately from their husbands (who, in the utopia, only were mentioned as their employers)? Didn't you feel that this utopia is less realistic and perhaps less worth striving for?

I do not now intend to debate sex or love. My intention is to show how heteronormativity limits our imagination in developing utopias – as well our ability to develop strategies for an independent life for women, whatever kind of sexual relations they may prefer.

For the debate on feminist housing utopias and housing politics this means that without a theoretical concept of the construction of gender relations and the dual sex system we will not succeed in developing strategies to create spaces for an independent life for women, a life outside subordination. As Judith Butler states, the social construction of a dual- sex-society is inextricably linked with heteronormativity. Both are the bases of the hierarchical structure of gender relations. If this is so, feminist housing strategies cannot assume, that abolition of the gender hierarchies in the private sphere (for example the gender division of domestic work or the ubiquitous domestic violence against women) is a question of private bargaining or an outcome of an increasing acceptance of the needs and interests of women by men.

„The private is political“ feminists stated in the seventies. I think we should remember this principle in the housing debate. With respect to utopias this means not to assume harmonic gender relations but to challenge heteronormativity in developing concepts of living without putting men in the centre of female life.

This does not mean necessarily a concept of spatial separation as Kerstin Dörhöfer presented, but it does mean concepts where all kinds of living arrangements are accepted as „normal“, where the spatial concentration of non traditional living arrangements such as single mothers, single women or lesbians (where are the lesbians in feminist housing and urban visions?) is not seen as isolation or as a ghetto; where women can live heterosexuality without sharing all their energy, work and feelings with their male partner. If we have such utopias in mind we would probably care more about the multiple attempts of autonomous women's groups who try to realise housing projects where women can live together in a non-heterosexual, non-hierarchical sphere and space. There are few – very few - projects of this kind in Germany. However, even when heterosexuality is not excluded, even when the only aim is to keep the tenure-rights in the hands of women, these housing projects face a variety of difficulties which other women's housing projects do not face, as my analyses of women's housing projects in Germany shows (Becker 2001).

Challenging heteronormativity would probably, for example, in developing a utopia of urban space, create more awareness of the interests of lesbians who, leaving their dwelling, are constantly confronted with a heterosexualised space, as Gil Valentine describes very precisely (Valentine 1993). To create not only ideas for a „non-sexist“ city but for a „non-heterosexual“ city (i.e. a city without heteronormativity, not without heterosexuality) could be, in my mind, a first step in the „undoing of gender“ which is necessary to brake the power of hierarchical gender relations (Becker 1998).

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