

BEYOND THE KEY

**UNRAVELING THE SYMBOLISMS AND IDEALS OF THE LAUNDRY
ROOM IN ZÜRICH'S COOPERATIVE HOUSES**

ABSTRACT

The laundry room evolution in cooperative buildings unveils a hidden narrative about the overruled place of conflict transition into a place of opportunity. The analysis of laundry spaces reveals a notable shift in contemporary cooperative practices, particularly in the flexible adaptation of laundry rules. As these cooperatives sought liberation from the constraints of speculation and a commitment to doing things differently, they simultaneously embarked on redefining the laundry experience in the late decades. This departure from purely functional spaces was not only symbolic but also practical, reflecting a tangible effort to foster communal interaction. Breaking away from the rigid use regulations of the past, cooperatives transformed laundry spaces into not just utilitarian areas but also communal hubs for social interaction and collective management.

Vertiefungsarbeit
In-depth Study

Beyond the Key
Unraveling the symbolisms and ideals
of the Laundry Room in Zurich's
Cooperative houses

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I had completely wrong ideas about the laundry room key. I had thought it was a key for a laundry room, but the laundry room key was something entirely different: It was an integral part of house rules, in the face of which the laundry room itself lost significance. We use the laundry room much like our democracy – not so much as a space for freedom, but rather, all the more gladly as a foundation for house rules.

*Der Waschküchenschlüssel, oder, Was-wenn Gott Schweizer wäre
Hugo Loetcher 1988*

1 INTRODUCTION

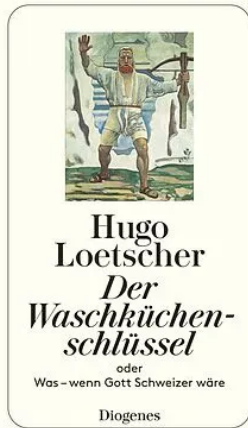


Abb. 1. Loetscher book cover

The laundry room key in this country is not simply a tool that opens the space called the laundry room, where machines are located to facilitate the process called "washing." Oh no. The laundry room key unlocks a completely different realm here; it provides access to something deeper. And this is not only because laundry day holds a significant place in the ritual life of the Swiss housewife – where not just shirts, blouses, socks, or underwear are hung on the line, but rather, flags of cleanliness are raised.

No – the laundry room key holds significance beyond its mere function of opening a door; it is a key to democratic behavior and a conscientious mindset.

If the 'laundry room key is a fundamental experience of Swiss behaviour'¹ looking throughout those spaces could be a source attitudes that says something about how people live together in cooperative modes of living.

The modern way of washing clothes, as a routine task, is as much recent as the story of cooperative living in Zurich. Before the laundry rooms gets widely spread in households a long period of urbanization has been paved, which mostly started on 19th century. The evolution of laundry spaces from lavation rooms to the clean, tidy laundry spaces presented as valuable community assets at the heart of new developments. In which ways do young modern laundry spaces serve as symbolic or practical manifestations of the unique characteristics of cooperative living in the Swiss context?

How does the intentional placement of laundry spaces in prominent locations of young cooperative buildings (such as the ground floor, corridors, or rooftop) contribute to fostering a sense of community and enhancing the overall well-being of residents in cooperative housing in Switzerland?

This research has the objective to explore the impact of strategic laundry space placement on community dynamics while also delving into whether the design and placement of these spaces reflect distinctive traits associated with cooperative living in Switzerland.

The way to approach and navigate throughtout this research topics led me to merge the documented conclusions from Daniel Kurz book publication about non-profit housing construction in the canton of Zurich with archive investigation of original plans.

1 Kurz D. (2000)

1.1 METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the impact of strategic laundry space placement on cooperative dynamics and explore whether the design and placement of these spaces reflect distinctive traits associated with community living in Switzerland, a comprehensive methodology has been devised. The research will employ a two-fold approach, combining insights from Daniel Kurz's publication on the 100 years of cooperative housing history in Zurich with an archive investigation of original plans. The first step involves a thorough review and analysis of Daniel Kurz's documented conclusions, extracting valuable insights into the evolution of cooperative living and the role of laundry spaces within that context. This historical perspective will provide a foundation for understanding the cultural and societal shifts influencing laundry space design. Simultaneously, original plans of cooperative buildings were personally collected thruout archival research, aiming to uncover intentional patterns in the placement of laundry spaces within these structures. The focus will be on identifying commonalities in locations such as the ground floor, corridors, or rooftop, and assessing their potential contributions to fostering a sense of community and enhancing residents' overall well-being. By triangulating historical insights with architectural analyses, this research aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the relationship between intentional laundry space placement and cooperative living dynamics in contemporary Swiss housing.



Abb. 2. The Wäscheständer Stewi is considered a Swiss world famous creation (photo from 1974). Stewi is a manufacturer of drying racks in Winterthur in the canton of Zurich. Stewi (a combination of the words Steiner and Winterthur) is became a symbol of household appliances in Switzerland. Image: SRF News - KEYSTONE/PHOTOPRESS-ARCHIV/EUGEN SUTER <https://www.srf.ch/news/wirtschaft/ende-einer-traditionsfirma-waeschestaender-stewi-schweizer-kult-objekt-steht-vor-dem-ende>



Abb.3. Stanser Dorfplatz with village fountain around 1828, a meeting place especially for housewives and maids who did their laundry in the neighbouring trough, as shown in this picture. [Ökopfad Nidwalden, Quellwasser] <https://www.nidwaldnerbrunnenfuehrer.com/geschich>

2 LAUNDRY TALK

2.1 RIVERS, PUBLIC BASSIN AND ROOMS

As much as today's laundry machines serve as an apparatus for the daily action of doing laundry, so do laundry spaces to this research. What does the laundry room have to do with the city, the community, or individuals? What does it tell us about living together in the course of time?

From the first known mode of clothing wash, on rivers, to the current communal laundry rooms coexist a parallel story of how humans are evolving and living in society. The labor of washing clothes began on rivers and latterly became a routine tasks inside of a compulsory physical space in most of cooperative buildings - the laundry room.

Laundries in the format of public spaces or buildings (no longer on rivers) are an outcome of the modernization of the labor of clothing wash. Laundries as physical spaces inside buildings became possible because there is a city machine running non-stop, which requires fitting systems and substantial urban infrastructure. The cities expansion boost from 19th century onwards follows a model city which is a by-product of its technical needs.

In a clear timeline, which washing method came first? The river for sure. Then I would bet that the basin was the subsequent creation. Next, I guess it would be the laundry houses once someone realizes it is possible to bring running water into covered basins. Ok, but aqueducts came much earlier... well, I presume the moment we realized a basin could be placed further away from a natural water resource it could take place anywhere. So I would assume this might be the moment the laundry space was conceptualized. Besides my conjectures of what came first or later, the ultimate communal laundry rooms requires a whole city planning and building system conception that has been mostly shaped in the last two centuries.

In all methods, washing clothes has been a ritual, a performance. The moment it was figured out as an object (basin), it has been placed in public spaces. The moment it was figured out as a space (laundry house), it was placed in the city. The privilege of a self-owned laundry room in buildings is only possible because there is a generous infrastructure serving the city, which opportunely benefited from the urban sanitary demands over time.

The laundry rooms unrolling story across cooperative buildings assess the understanding of communal living in Zurich. The theme cannot be only associated with the meaning of the physical space as a regular room in a building, but also its correlation to the city, regulations, transformation of washing rituals, and its people.

2.2 SWISS WAY OF WASHING

According to Joris² on Middle Age times the water consumption was already regulated by statutes in Valais around 1672. Some villages had already imposed limited and sometimes full restrictions on font water uses for washing. Concerns about contamination, sanitary manners, use of ash (used as detergent) were among the motifs for such control, which also led many women to frequently use rivers and lakes. The village wash houses were co-owned by multiple families which also carried different washing rights. At this point on time, washing was an occasion that happened two times a year and 'die grossen Wäsche' was an event that demanded a certain amount of women to act and collaborate together in charge to complete the long and exhaustive hours of labour to rub, slap and hand-rug all the garments.

As only very few houses had laundry rooms, washing remained a publicly performed task in the 19th century, often carried out on riverbanks or lakesides, on washing ships (as in Zurich), in washing houses and huts, or at fountains. These workplaces held social significance for most women, serving as meeting points. Neat and clean laundry increasingly symbolized feminine virtues such as diligence, duty fulfillment, order, and cleanliness (hygiene). The quantity and quality of the laundry, which comprised a significant part of the dowry, attested to the social status of the wife³.

Upper classes families delegated the washing labour to their maids or professional laundresses, and lower classes families had no other chance than doing it themselves. In the end of the process, the wet laundry was carried on baskets to be hung on clotheslines or attics, when upon to harsh weather conditions. The early modes of washing mechanisation came around 1850 with the spread of washboards and release of hand-operated washing machines which would perform single functions of the process, such as agitation and swing. Nevertheless, none of those equipments could substitute the laborious preparation and actual washing work.

After WWI, industrially manufactured washing powder became widespread. Nevertheless, traditional lye soap continued to be used. Electrically powered washing machines, introduced around 1913, were initially found mainly in affluent households, along with other household appliances. Larger models were present in new laundry facilities or in a few cooperative and urban settlements⁴.



During the post-war economic boom, home laundry underwent a gradual modernization with the introduction of electric drum washing machines equipped with wringing devices and separate spin dryers. In the 1960s, fully automatic washing machines from companies like Schulthess in Zurich or Verzinkerei Zug AG gained popularity. The emergence of laundromats facilitated access to affordable washing machines. The latest machines, featuring shock absorbers and integrated tumble dryers, ensure that even hands remain dry during the washing process⁵.

Abb. 5. Advertising poster by Jacques Bänninger, 1962 (Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, Plakatsammlung, Zürcher Hochschule der Künste). St. Peter, Florenz, Uffizien. (2015) HLS Waschen

- 2 Joris E. (2015) HLS Waschen
- 3 Joris E. (2015) HLS Waschen
- 4 Joris E. (2015) HLS Waschen
- 5 Joris E. (2015) HLS Waschen

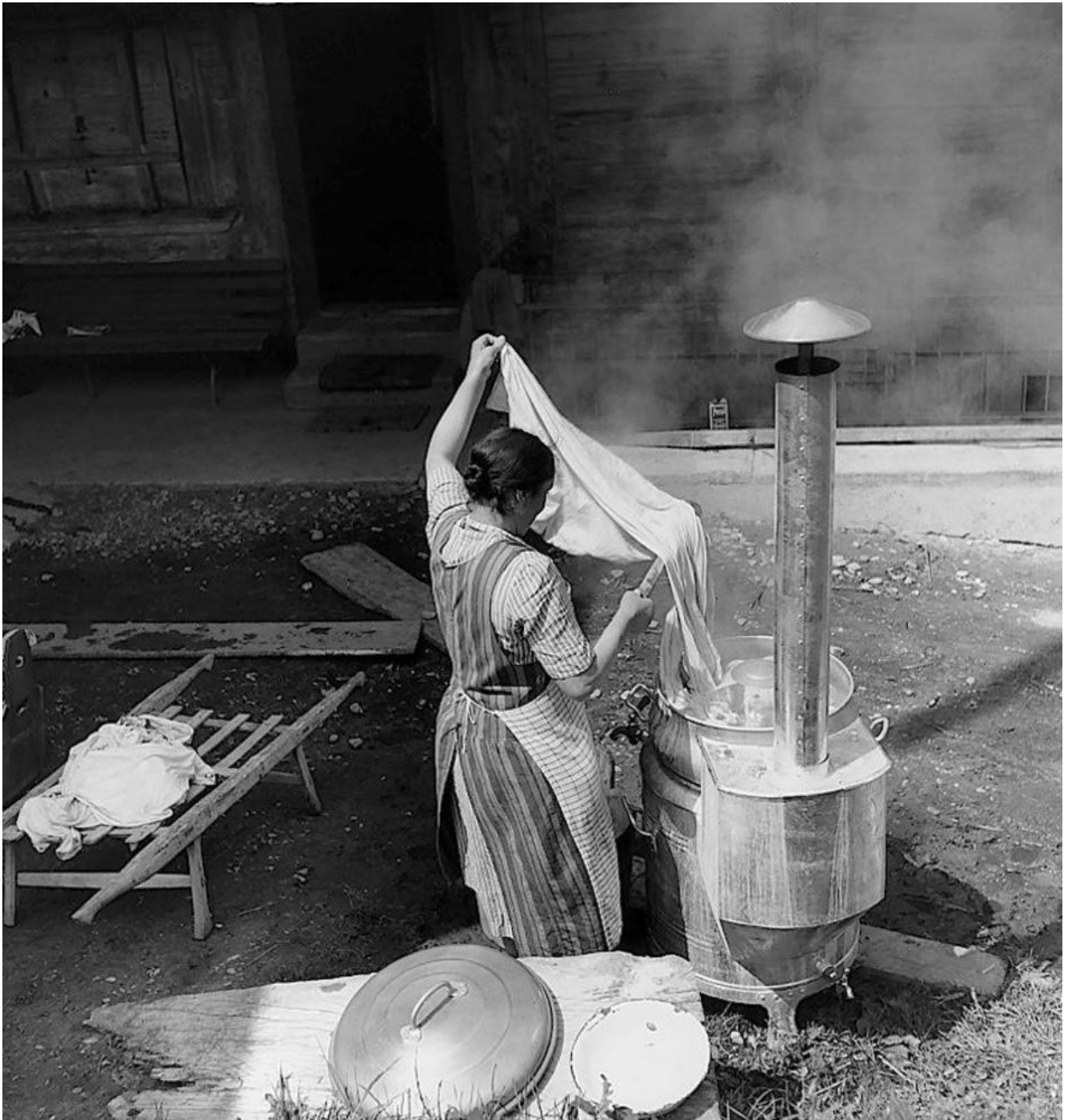


Abb. 4. A woman washes in Eggiwil in the Emmental using a so-called couleuse, a steam washing machine. Photograph by Ernst Brunner, 1944 (Swiss Institute of Folklore, Basel). The zinc couleuse facilitated and rationalised the work. This washing cooker boiled the laundry, which was repeatedly sprayed with hot water from a bubbler in the centre.

2.3 THE WÖSCHWYYBER

What is today most often known as a carnival costume or an outdated term expression also explicates particularities of the culture of wash in Switzerland. "Wöschwyb" is a Swiss German term that translates to "laundry woman" or "washerwoman" in English. The term is a combination of two words: "Wösch," meaning laundry, and "Wyb" or "Weib," which translates to woman. In a historical context, a "Wöschwyb" refers to a woman responsible for doing laundry, often in a communal or public washing area. Historically, the women of Kriens were responsible for handling the laundry of the noble families in Lucerne, bringing back numerous news and rumors to Kriens. Presently, various "Wöschete" events aim to replicate the gossip and overall ambiance of those times⁶.

While the term "Wöschwyb" specifically refers to the laundry woman and carries historical connotations related to communal washing social narrative, one can draw a symbolic correlation between the concept of cooperative living in Switzerland. In the context of cooperative living, residents often share communal spaces and resources, fostering a sense of community and collective responsibility. The historical role of the "Wöschwyb" as a figure responsible for communal laundry tasks aligns with the cooperative spirit, where individuals work together for the common good deriving out the laundry physical space and social dynamics.

Around 1988 Loetscher has enlightened the cultural particularity of Swiss way of washing and its social realm of problems. His book initiates with a satirical chapter that depicts washing clothes as a synonym of conflict within communities. Loetscher draws a precise metaphor between laundry rituals and the Swiss democracy behaviour by detailing nitty-gritty scenes that only happen to take effect in this country. Suddenly the laundry room becomes the laboratory of the Swiss territory which is ruled by supreme duties and obligations of its citizens. As any other democratic land, the conflicts are fundamental to keep its system alive.

I had completely wrong ideas about the laundry room key. I had thought it was a key for a laundry room, but the laundry room key was something entirely different: It was an integral part of house rules, in the face of which the laundry room itself lost significance. We use the laundry room much like our democracy – not so much as a space for freedom, but rather, all the more gladly as a foundation for house rules. What a vast field everyday life is. And even if misfortune arises from it, what matters most is whether the majority is involved in maintaining the laundry order or not—especially since none of the unfortunate individuals can claim they did not get their laundry room key⁷.

The laundry service is intricated in Swiss culture from books to parades. The laundry room key is played as a metaphorical tool that acts as a mediator, facilitating discussions on cleanliness and shared responsibilities within communities. Over its more than 100 years of existence, how Swiss cultural influences have impacted laundry spaces in Zurich cooperative buildings?

6 Stadt Kriens. Retrieved on 29.12.23. <https://www.stadt-kriens.ch/ueber-kriens/fasnacht/woeschwyb.page/1941>

7 Loetscher H (1998)



Abb. 6. Wöschwyyb costume on carnival festivities . Stadt Kriens. Retrieved on 29.12.23. <https://www.stadt-kriens.ch/ueber-kriens/fasnacht/woeschwyyb.page/1941>

3 FROM A PUBLIC PERFORMANCE TO A PLACE OF OPPORTUNITY

3.1 MORE THAN 100 YEARS OF COOPERATIVE HOUSING IN ZURICH

The cooperative housing history in Zurich starts around 1892, marked by 'Zürcher Bau- und Spargenossenschaft' the foundation of the first tenant cooperative in the canton⁸.

According to Kurz famous mottos as «Klein aber meinund» (small but mine) and «der Spekulation entziehen» (withdraw its houses from speculation) differentiate the two objectives from the initial motivations that led the cooperatives to reach such significance over the time.

This research will comment on cases that emerged during important shifts of cooperative story. The selected cases were subjectively selected to serve as base of discussion of documented material from cooperatives houses in Zurich. The hypothesis underpinning this research posits that designated laundry spaces could unveil communal aspects of cooperative living. However, it is essential to note that the emphasis will not be placed on specific spatiality, location, or function. The purpose is to investigate which ideals of living together each case stand for. Instead, the primary objective is to delve into traits of communal living represented by each case.

Those dates were significant moments in the history of Cooperatives in Switzerland due to one or more factors such as:

- 1900': major problems as plagues, bad living conditions and lack of housing in urban areas have urged action from public resources towards cooperative financing;
- 1920': the extreme housing shortage after WWI, foundation of Schweizerische Verband für Wohnungswesen (SVW) in 1919 which provided financial support and expertise to cooperatives and subsidies that boosted housing production from Swiss Parliament.
- 1950': second post war era which faced again another housing shortage

Umfang und Zyklen der privaten und gemeinnützigen Wohnbautätigkeit in der Stadt Zürich im Vergleich

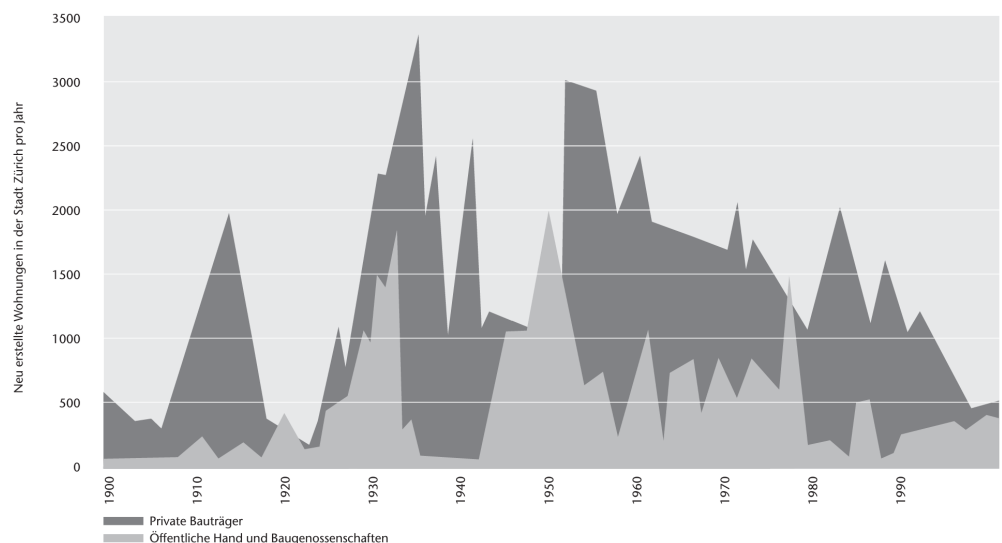


Abb. 7. Scope and cycles of private and non-profit residential construction activity in the city of Zurich In comparison. From Kurz, D. (2000)

8 Kurz, D. (2000)

after WWII and attained plenty offer of subsidies for housing constructio

- 1960' – 70': Major developments eclosion, suburbs boom, oil crisis effects....
- 1990': young cooperatives surgence
- 2000 onwards: Recent cooperatives

In summary, the cooperative housing history in Zurich has undergone dynamic shifts, reflecting changing motivations and emphasis. This research explores some of those pivotal moments during significant historical shifts and focuses on cases that emerged during these periods. The subsequent chapter will delve into specific cases, connecting historical milestones, from addressing the very first cooperative case ideals to the latest cooperative developments from this century.

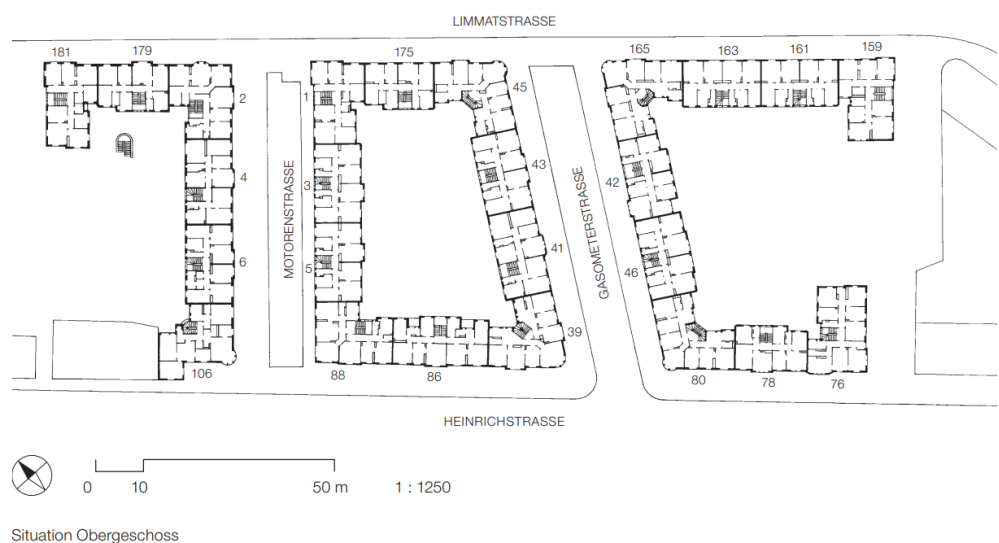
3.2 1900': THE FIRST COOPERATIVE HOUSE

Laundry room as a utilitarian shared space - Wohnsiedlung Limmat I (1908)

Limmat I is the first cooperative building benefited from public housing policy from City of Zurich. It emerged in a critical time where major problems as plagues, bad living conditions and lack of housing in urban areas have urged action from public resources towards cooperative financing. The building is milestone for the new urban policy era in Zurich. Spread over three blocks, the apartments ranges from 1 to 4.5 rooms, although the majority of units focus on 3 rooms type. The inner courtyards brought a positive atmosphere to the industrial quarter⁹.

The continuous fassades are internally splitted into smaller blocks. Located in the attic, there was a dedicated laundry room to each building subdivision which means that nearly 10 families have shared the space. The laundry space was directly connected to the storage area and its opposite side there was an additional apartment unit, which I found quite surprising since both of uses are quite distinctive.

Abb.8. Limmat I plan. Zürich Industriequartier Siedlungsdokumentation Nr.1. Stadt Zürich Liegenschaftenverwaltung.



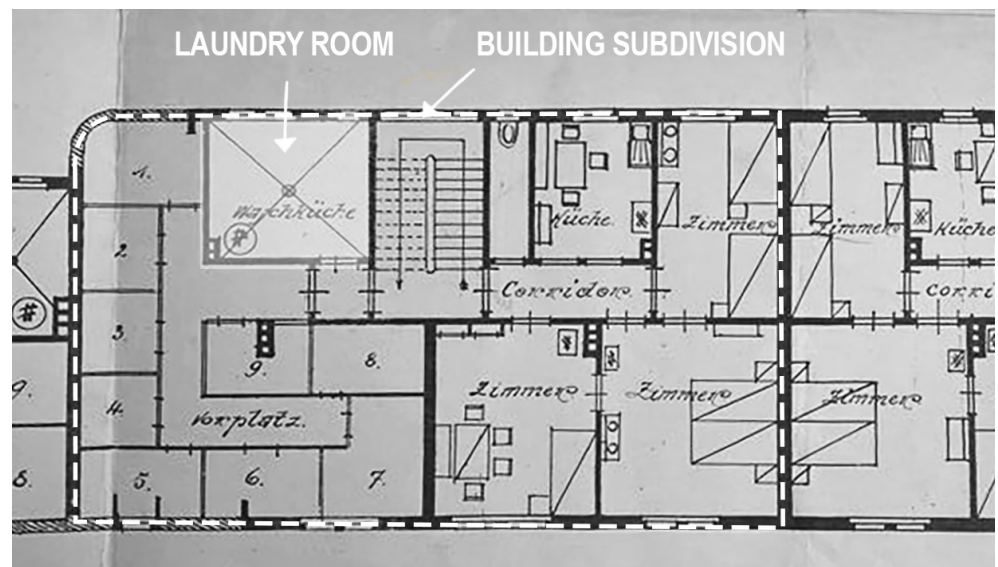
9 Limmat I. Zürich Industriequartier Siedlungsdokumentation Nr.1. Stadt Zürich Liegenschaftenverwaltung.

I have not found specific answer for the positioning of the laundry room in the attic. Perhaps because the spare corner requires less climate protection. Although, the existence of an apartment in the counter side speaks against this idea. At this point on time, even though laundry would still be hand wash effort, possibly with limited automation, from plans observations is not possible to precisely say what really happened in this laundry room and the kind of interactions were created in this space. Nevertheless, the space already stood for the shared space principle. While acknowledging the speculative nature, seems that the very first cooperative laundry room was a merely functional labour space with no spatial connection to other parts of the building which follows the historical practice of keeping service spaces in attics or basements solely as utilitarian spaces.

In the beginning of the 20th century, dedicated service rooms as bathrooms and laundry rooms were designed with much simpler requirements. Due to the fact it was a pre-heating era¹⁰, the hydraulic building system was built only for cold water and swage functions.

May be proper to say that it was innovative to bring washing function to interior the part of the building but the change was purely spatial and perhaps a bit more climatically comfortable. Although, the practices were still pretty similar and such simplicity invokes back to the basin rituals spread over public spaces. It does not entirely convince that there were gains on laundry performance but rather a early attempt to possess a exclusive service space. It happened with the co-owned wash houses in the past that granted washing rights to specific families. Following this principle seems resonable to believe that the main value of laundry ownership was not about its spatiality qualities or social significance but the allowance for control and space utilization.

Abb.9. Siedlung Limmat I - Dachgeschoss. Retrieved from Stadt Zurich in 19.12.2023 on Amt für Baubewilligungen Departament. Image: Author



10 Kurz D. (2000) highlights the evolution of bathrooms availability in cooperative housing with only 16 percent of apartments having their own bathrooms before 1917, rapidly rising to 92 percent in 1926 and reaching 98 percent by 1930. It outlines the rarity of bathrooms in middle-class homes in the first quarter of the decade. And apparently not everyone appreciated the modern amenity since they were frequently used for other purposes as storage for cleaning supplies, wood, briquettes and other items because tenants have not made use of their bathtubs.

3.3 1920' - THE HEALTHY RURAL LIVING

The extreme housing shortage after WWI has boosted governmental financial support and expertise to cooperatives and subsidies for housing production.

The beginning of the decade brought a new typology called garden city. The trendy had a clear intention to abandon the typical cold urban tenement building character.

"The widespread use of central heating in cooperative colonies is also noteworthy, as shown in the table. However, washing machines, a frequent and hotly debated topic at general meetings, were viewed by board members as an incredibly long time as an expensive and unnecessary luxury"¹¹.

3.4 1940' - 1950' - SECOND POST WAR ERA

According to Kurz, after the great waves of construction Switzerland saw significant progress in nonprofit construction efforts after the conclusion of World War II. Federal and cantonal authorities responded to the lessons learned from the challenges of 1918 by providing subsidies and cement quotas for housing construction. The prevailing public sentiment, shaped by the experiences of active service, led to a widespread focus on community and solidarity. In the canton of Zurich, housing construction relied heavily on cooperative efforts and state subsidies. Each year, 60 to 80 percent of new construction apartments received financial support from both the canton and the federal government. However, a referendum in 1950 terminated federal housing subsidies.

Kurz states that the multi-family houses were enveloped by extensive green areas and followed a premise to be as low as possible.

As federal subsidies disappeared, the fifties were a period of calm in the history of nonprofit housing construction. Little was built, but existing structures were consolidated. The boards were particularly proud during this time if they did not have to raise rents. Often, interest rates remained completely unchanged from the thirties to the sixties. Cooperative officials vehemently opposed new desires of tenants, such as the installation of refrigerators or washing machines¹².

It is not too clear in which terms were washing machines opposed, if in collective or private sense. But if 1960s was the decade that fully automatic washing machines gained widespread popularity¹³, I guess it refers to the private ones which was an early mode of the current "washing towers".

3.5 1960 - 70' MAJOR DEVELOPERS UNTIL THE OIL CRISIS

Real estate funds, pension funds, and general contractors took over the success recipe of building large residential units from cooperatives.

Kurz mentions an relevant approach from Eiwog towards strong identity and

¹¹ Kurz, D. (2000)

¹² Kurz, D. (2000)

¹³ Kurz, D. (2000)

good architecture dense developments. The massive density of people on large developments requires a clear delimitation between what is semi-private and what is private, since hierarchy is fundamental to keep a minimal order. The surge of dedicated community spaces as community room, village square, playground, or swimming pool, which were managed by homeowners. The self management means more self organization and proactiveness, sense of community, And also mean more disputes and disagreements. And requires high levels of engagement from community.

The high density is a fertile ground to amplify the democratic behaviour and adequate swiss attitude in laundry rooms described by Loestcher.

3.6 1980 - 90' YOUNG COOPERATIVES

New cooperatives between 1980' - 90' had a special focus on saving old buildings from demolition in the city center. The rural areas has received public sector support which started to offer other alternatives to high density housing. In early 1991, a revised cantonal housing promotion law took effect, urging municipalities to tackle the housing shortage by providing land with favorable terms. This led to additional support from both the canton and the federal government towards cooperative housing. The fresh cooperatives, like Wogeno, were inspired by the spirit of solidarity, self administration and self determination.

"No rigid cooperative apparatus," meaning no laundry room intrigues, no caretakers, and no standard apartments. Young and older "68ers" came together in Wogeno – people with some capital and a desire for communal living. Unlike most traditional cooperatives, Wogeno was open to unmarried couples with or without official marriage certificates, and children, for tenants in wheelchairs, for shared living arrangements, for the young, and also for the elderly.

The young cooperatives had to deal with diverse groups and needs. People working together to make decisions and organizing events create a strong sense of community. This self management and strong community engagement is a key aspect of some housing projects from the 1990.

Back to the ground - Siedlung Hellmutstrasse (1990)

Hellmutstrasse has shifted the laundry room paradigm in many ways. First, its positioning is no longer hidden on under or upper floors and it has stabilised a direct contact with the ground floor. The room is surrounded by local business spaces and it is adjacent to the building stairs. Laundry routine becomes visible and connected to other uses and its part of a new urban logic. The simple act of freeing the laundry room from reminiscent areas of the buildings has sparked the chance to explore ideals of openness, flexibility and spatial connectivity in a laundry room. The ground floor is too valuable and worth of meaning to be purely functional.

In the original plans, laundry room has been designated as "Community Room-possibly Laundry Room". Such hybridism is quite atypical since service rooms functions usually demand specific and high costs technical installations which does not make room for a facultative use. In this case I tend to believe there is no dualism because it is a laundry room, but it would - still - be something else.

In which conditions were both uses performed? Would they hide the sinks and washing machines under curtains to make it a community room? Or would they sit let it all there and just use the space in between? Perhaps those uses got exclusive usage in different years, maybe just laundry was needed and it never happen to be a community room. Despite the unknown, Hellmutstrasse is the case where the social and service symbols are merged in one space.

It seems conceivable that the prominence of the ground floor positioning drives the seek for new experimentations. This kind of hybrid use of laundry spaces corroborates with the idea that socialization dynamics occur beyond spaces

dedicated for such purposes. In addition to being a laundry room or a community meeting space, this will always be a collective space because service performances are perceived with the same value as political, social, or leisure performances. A space that provides spatiality, accessibility, and appropriate infrastructure will be able to strengthen connections regardless of the activities taking place within it.. And also confirms the importance of daily routines in shaping the sense of community, as well as the certainty that there will be other needs for established spaces.

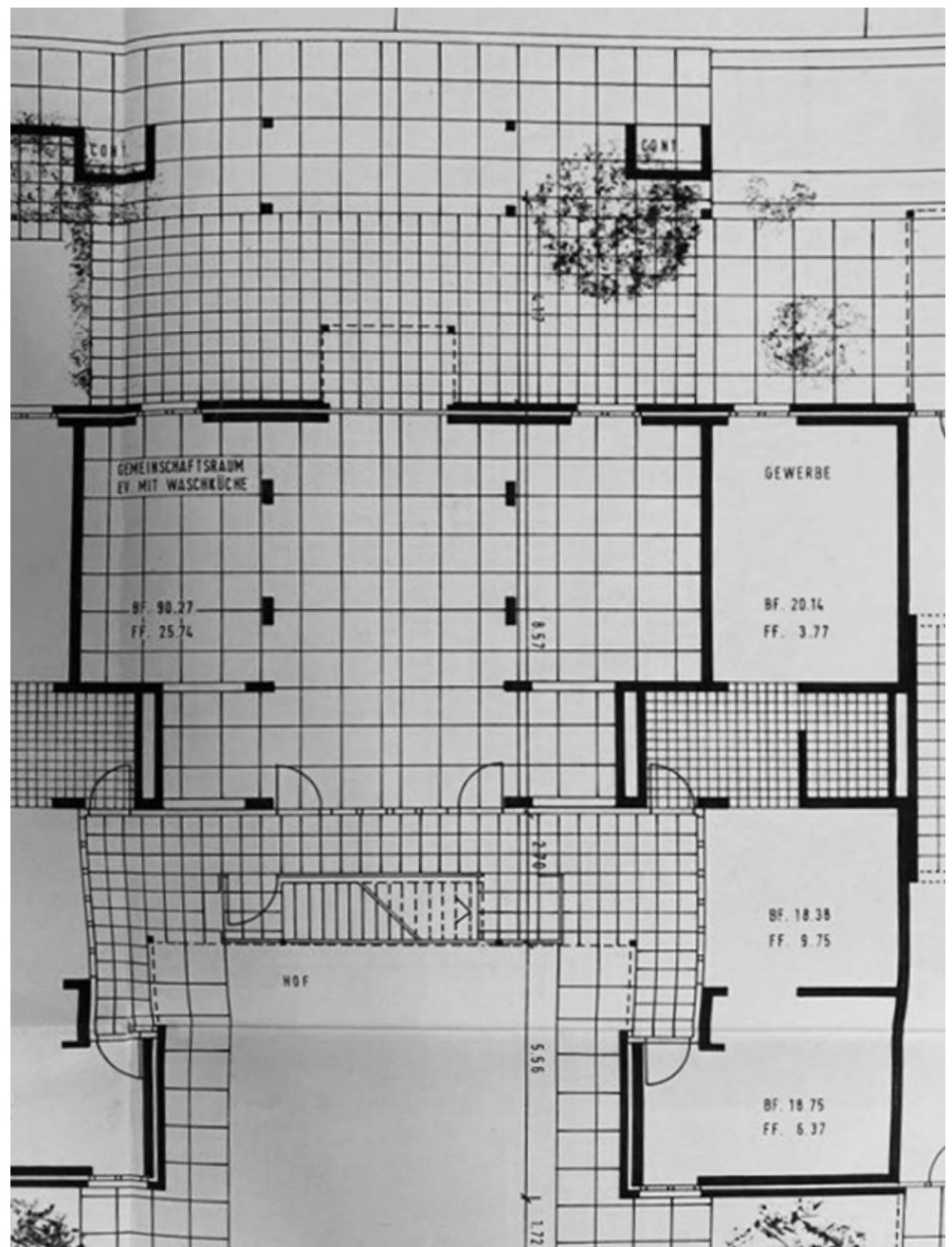


Abb. 10. Siedlung Hellmutstrasse-
Ground floor plan. Retrieved from
Stadt Zurich in 19.12.2023 on Amt
für Baubewilligungen Departament.
Image: Author

3.7 2000' ONWARDS

In the past decades, the establishment of laundry facilities was initially associated with economic privilege until it evolved into a mandatory, regulated sanitary installation in every building. With technology transforming laundry labor into a routine task, the current discourse has shifted towards fostering sustainability in this essential aspect of daily life. Laundering clothes communally has become synonymous with environmental responsibility. Instead of each apartment having its washing tower, the shared laundry room provides more space for residents. According to Bürgisser¹⁴, besides the new developments many other cooperatives are also currently dealing with the challenge to get rid of dark and narrow existing laundry rooms that were implemented some decades ago.

The intentional move into bringing spatial qualities, key circulation positioning, connection to other uses and creating ambience and mood in laundry spaces became an institutionalized goal, which is the case of Allgemeine Baugenossenschaft Zurich (ABZ) on Klee.

Between pragmatic and poetic - Siedlung Klee



Abb. 11. Villard de Honnecourt:
Aussen- und Innenaufriß eines
Langhausjochs der Kathedrale von
Reims, um 1230.

In Siedlung Klee washing towers were only approved in certain circumstances and the shared laundry room follows a self-made plan from its cooperative members. The acknowledgment of constant conflicts in such space has led cooperatives into looking for new ways of managing the space in more democratic ways, by attributing more flexibility that fosters and obliges members to discuss and get in contact with each other. Another strategy that works well is to have an additional joker machine that is non-reservable so its use is upon the spontaneous availability¹⁵. Although, the new order requires a level of communication that the Swiss way of washing has been somehow avoided by making strict rules that escapes most type of disappointments.

Klee has positioned its laundry rooms on the rooftop, with plenty natural light and stunning views. I assume that the building density and height have been among the reasons to have also laundry spaces located in the underground. In the rooftop, the interstitial spaces between rooms are used to dry clothes. This is a case that is neither in the future nor in the past, it is both. The old-fashioned underground laundry room is a pragmatic experience and the rooftop is poetic a performance of washing clothes.



¹⁴ Bürgisser T. (2021) WOHNEN

¹⁵ Bürgisser T. (2021) WOHNEN

4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of laundry spaces within cooperative buildings is a journey from the overruled place of conflict to a realm of opportunity. The clean, tidy laundry spaces are presented as valuable community assets at the heart of new developments and unveil a narrative of transformation and adaptation in contemporary cooperative practices, particularly evident in the flexible approach towards laundry rules. As cooperatives sought liberation from speculative constraints and committed to innovative approaches, they concurrently redefined the very essence of the laundry experience in the late decades. Examining the trajectory from the inception of laundry spaces to contemporary instances in Zurich's history reveals pivotal shifts:

Transition from Locked Spaces to Self-Management: The evolution leans away from secluded, locked rooms, emphasizing self-management fostered through communication and trust.

Shift from Concealed Spaces to Community Assets: No longer relegated to hidden undergrounds or rooftops, contemporary laundry spaces have emerged as bright, accessible ground-floor units or custom-designed rooms, positioning themselves as valuable community assets and opportunistic spaces.

Transformation from Labor Spaces to Social Opportunities: Departing from their purely utilitarian origins, laundry spaces have evolved into casual social hubs, presenting opportunities for communal interaction and shared experiences.

The evolution of laundry spaces is more than a symbolic gesture—it represents a practical manifestation of the cooperative spirit. Breaking away from traditional functional placement on hidden corners, these spaces have been transformed into dynamic hubs that not only serve utilitarian purposes but also become focal points for communal interaction and collective management. It underscores the commitment of cooperative communities to transform challenges into opportunities, ensuring that even the most seemingly dirt spaces become integral to the fabric of cooperative living in contemporary Switzerland.



Abb. 16. Washerwomen at the Läuferbrunnen fountain in Bern, around 1900 (Swiss National Library, Federal Archives of Historic Monuments, Wehrli Collection). HLS 2015 - Waschen



Abb. 17. Rüdiger Kreiselmayr is reading a book in the laundromat in Kalbreite Cooperative (Image: Fabia Bernet). VBZ Online. Elina Fleischmann

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7 DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

Hiermit versichere ich, dass die vorliegende Arbeit mit dem Titel:

Beyond the Key

Unraveling the symbolisms and ideals of the Laundry Room in Zurich's Cooperative houses

selbstständig durch mich verfasst worden ist, dass keine anderen Quellen und Hilfsmittel als die angegebenen benutzt worden sind und dass die Stellen der Arbeit, die anderen Werken - auch elektronischen Medien - dem Wortlaut oder Sinn nach entnommen wurden, unter Angabe der Quelle als Entlehnung kenntlich gemacht worden sind.

Mariana Mayumi Ab

Luzern, 09.01.2024

