THE NEED FOR SHELTER
LAUGIER, LEDOUX, AND ENLIGHTENMENT'S SHADOWS

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Abstract

The scope of this text is to think about how the human need for shelter began to appear as a foundational allegory for the discipline of architecture in the early modern age (XVIII - XIX), particularly in Laugier's "Primitive Hut" of 1753 and Ledoux's "L'Abri du Pauvre" of 1804.
At roughly the same periods as these architects were investing the discipline with a new existential calling, new European visions of society, its organization and constraints were exploding the imaginary and concrete limits of the European polity which, at the time, was a planetary polity. Between Rousseau's social contract, Kant's Republic, Hegel's "state," among many other visions spanning from 1753 to 1804, Europe's subjects, government and power, and their respective relationships, were structurally changed.
Assembled in the same picture, these allegories and visions give us many possibilities of reflection about architecture's new position and role within the political in the modern age. On the other hand, it may help us reflect on what architecture articulates in the outbreak of new social contexts. Heeding Walter Benjamin, we propose to take control of these memories, disparate and synchronic as they might "really have been," to ask in a moment of danger: why doesn't architecture shelter today? How can we read that foundational calling today?

Keywords: Architectural ideals, Shelter, Enlightenment, Modern Capitalism

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Introduction

To provide shelter is one of architecture's foundational callings. Ever since the written word of Vitruvius and then Alberti, it is assumed that the profession's primary product comes in the form of a shelter of some kind. The idea of sheltering is inclusively a key part of architecture's nativist belief in itself or the idea that it can generate new life.[1] Why is it then that we assume that most foundational of callings of providing shelter to be so obvious that we have forgotten architecture's social role as that of sheltering? In other words, why is it that when we think of shelter and sheltering our imagination is fixated on tents, encampments, sheds, card-board structures, as if sheltering is naught but a fragile and ephemeral act? Architecture as a social force that is supposed to protect us humans from nature and ourselves, seems today to have no shelter to give. We should read this as a crisis and crises tend to be impossible to grasp for those living through them. As Jason Moore claims: "(t)he philosophies, concepts, and stories we use to make sense of an increasingly explosive and uncertain global present are – nearly always – ideas inherited from a different time and place."[2] So, let us procure some sense in some inherited ideas and images.

When our modern age was taking shape two foundational engravings of shelter emerged as a source of architectural sense. We speak of the two first illustrations of Marc-Antoine Laugier's *Cabane Rustique* grounding his essay on architecture of 1753 and Claude Nicolas-Ledoux's *L'Abri du Pauvre,* presented in his treatise on the ideal city of Chaux of 1804.[3] Although half a century apart and with different values of representation (Laugier's illustration was not his, while Ledoux's was) both engravings hold a central role in how we have come to understand architecture as the verb: to provide shelter. As we will see later in the text, Laugier's concept image of the rustique foundation of architectural style is continuously used and abused to highlight architecture's almost natural ontology or proximity to sheltering needs or still to the vernacular; while Ledoux is continuously reified as a calling to architectural enlightenment, which according to modern historians means modern architecture. Said bluntly, these two images of shelter form altars of meaning, condensing various articulations of the faith in architecture's provision of shelter. We could understand both engravings of shelter as what Max Weber termed "ideal types."[4] These are not overdetermining canons of architecture, as the classic inspired ones by Alberti, but a way to guide "the construction of hypotheses" and a way of giving sense to a particular description of reality. In Weber's terms, the ideal type is formed by the "accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis

1 Cairns, Stephen and Jacobs, Jane M. *Buildings Must Die: a perverse view of architecture.* Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2014.
2 Moore, Jason W. "Introduction: Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism" in Moore, Jason W. (ed.) *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism.* Oakland: Kairos, 2016: 1.
3 Laugier's essay was first published in 1753, yet the engravings only emerged with the publication of its extended version and translation two years later. The painter Charles Eisen was responsible for the engraving in the extended French version. We were not able to identify the author of the engraving in the english translation. Laugier, Marc-Antoine. *Essai sur L'Architecture.* Paris: Duchesne, 1755; Laugier, Marc-Antoine. Essay on Architecture. London: Gray's Inn, 1755. Ledoux, Claude-Nicolas. *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation.* Paris: H.L.Perroneau, 1804.
4 Weber, Max. *Methodology of the Social Sciences.* New York: Free Press, 1949.

of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena,'' whose ultimate objective is to define a ''unified analytical construct.''[5] Perhaps we may call it a way to establish a cohesive viewpoint over reality and our hypothesis to change it.

1. Nature found, nature lost

Seen in this light, both images of shelter advance a specific analytical construct of architecture. The historic arguments are known. With his reference to the *Cabane Rustique*, Laugier confronted and criticized the Baroque canon of his day, claiming architectural truth was ''natural'' like the supposedly elemental act of building a hut. Only columns, entablatures and pediments belonged to this truth, everything else such as vaults, arches, pilasters, pedestals, arcades, were abuses of this nature.[6] Understandably, this was highly controversial at the time, given the Baroque standard required the use and abuse of all those things Laugier deemed ''unnatural.'' Often, however, Laugier's shelter for architecture is read otherwise, particularly with the mistranslation of *Cabane Rustique* to ''primitive hut.''[7] (Fig. 1)

5 Ibid: 90.
6 Laugier. *Essai sur L'Architecture*. Paris: Duchesne, 1755: 14.
7 Rykwert, Joseph. *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981.


[Fig.1]
Engraving of the cabane rustique by Charles Elsen in Laugier, Marc–Antoine.
Essai sur L'Architecture. Paris: Duchesne, 1755, courtesy of Commons.wikimedia.org, accessed at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Essai_sur_l%27Architecture_-_Frontispiece.jpg
in October 9 of 2020.

The association to primitivism has much to be said, for now it suffices to say that it fuelled the reading of his essay as a call to "organic" Baroque's formal inventiness. The opposite is closer to historical truth. Laugier aimed not for a new Baroque phase, but yes for a refundation of architecture against Baroque hubris. For this he refounded nature in the process or, better said, found architecture as an integrated body in a produced state of nature. This statement surely results from the coalescing of more than a century of Jesuit architectural knowledge, constituting a review of past productions and then current ideas.[8] At the same time, the guiding metaphor for this review could not have been articulated without a knowledge of "primitive" peoples and their "natural" dwelling, as Jesuits had been amassing for more than a century of colonial endeavours. Laugier founded his observed nature as a state of permanent grace, displacing architecture's symbolic role from the production of a dialogue with God (Baroque) to the reification of an already and always present grace given by a natural state. Architecture was always to be nature's given shelter. (Fig. 2)

8 Payne, Alina (ed.). *Companions to the History of Architecture, Volume I: Renaissance and Baroque Architecture.* Hoboken: Wiley–Blackwell, 2017.

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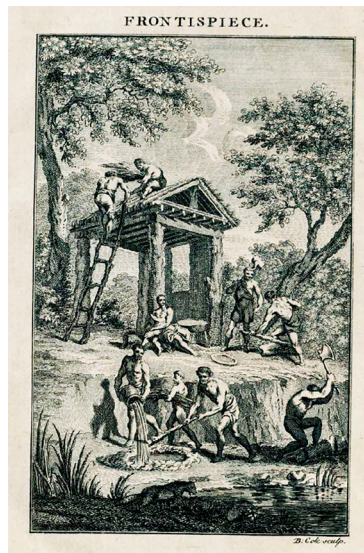
''La petite *cabane rustique* que je viens de décrire, est le modèle sur lequel on a imaginé toutes les magnificences de l'Architecture. C'est en se rapprochant dans l'exécution de la simplicité de ce premier modèle, que l'on évite les défauts essentiels, que l'on saisit les perfections véritables.''[9]

Ledoux half a century later would produce an altogether different ideal of shelter. As an early and one of the most eloquent agents of the neoclassical turn, he has been commonly associated with the antimonarchim present in French neoclassicism. This was in part due to the fact that the monarch was the tastemaker in the ancien regime, both in his and Laugier's time, and the King's taste was for the Baroque and its cyclical perpetuation. Neoclassicism, molded by a fascination with pagan naturalism, probably not without Laugier's help, articulated the rejection of Baroque exuberance with a calling for other social orders beyond that of God and Monarch. Understandably, this was taken as ''revolutionary.'' Neoclassical architects gave particular emphasis to civil architecture and the role of civic institutions, something at which Ledoux excelled in his prison re-working of the Salines de Chaux.[10] Ledoux's Abri du Pauvre, however, cannot be fully understood in this light, for it holds not so much a revolutionary stance as one trying to represent a larger revolution at foot. (Fig. 3)

9 Laugier. *Essai sur L'Architecture*: 12-13.
10 Ching, Francis D. K., Jarzombek, Mark M., Prakash, Vikramaditya. *A Global History of Architecture.* New Jersey: John Eiley & Sons, 2007: 593-597.

[Fig.3]
Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, L'Abri du Pauvre, in L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation. Paris: H.L.Perroneau, 1804, courtesy of Gallica.
bnf.fr, accessed at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5401411f?rk=21459;2
in October 9 of 2020.

A lone naked white man sitting on a rock, in the shade of a solitary tree in the midst of a threatening or forbidden, as Vidler might say,[11] sea, with parting clouds above showing the gods of the Olympus. The lone man pleads with his hands for attention, but there is no sign the latter will come. *L'Abri du Pauvre* does not seem to be a shelter of any kind, definitely not a rustique hut. Kaufmann reads in this illustration Ledoux's "reaction to the humanitarian ideals of his day," by which he specifically meant the influence of Rousseau's noble savage and the contrast between nature and society put forth by this ideal type.[12] Vidler deepens this reading of Rousseau's influence in Ledoux highlighting the importance of a harmonious dialogue with nature in the former's ideal plan for Chaux, the belief in a *pacte social* and the idea of a return to origins.[13] "Consulter la Nature; partout l'homme est isolé" claimed Ledoux.[14] Rousseau's concept of the noble savage, however, did not hold the promise of a future social–natural harmony, but instead articulated a problematic relationship between society and nature that, following the promethean allegory, held no common ground between both. The noble savage was thoroughly removed from the corruption of society, and the civilized human from the purity of natural relations.

Notwithstanding this misinterpretation of Rousseau's unsolvable confrontation between a society that corrupts and a nature that purifies, Kaufmann, before Vidler, had already read *l'abri* as a call to a natural goodwill towards the new human as "sheltered only by Heaven's goodness." Both Kaufmann and Vidler read this goodwill as the promise of future architectures that will serve the needs of the naked, deprived and isolated human. A picture of strange eeriness thus becomes a sort of hopeful promise that will be delivered by the new civic orientation of Ledoux's modern, "revolutionary," architecture. But for this to occur those ethereal figures in the clouds must look down and impart something to the pauper beneath.

Kaufmann's and Vidler's rich interpretations of the symbology of *l'abri du pauvre* are compelling. Yet, their interpretations are built from the position of someone who knew what came to pass. Both knew the French Revolution advanced the development of the modern state in its republican form, propelling the emergence of the urban programs that came to spatially establish its function and symbology: ministries, bureaucratic headquarters, hospitals, schools, planning offices, police stations, health depots, etc... A whole assortment that provides sense and foresight to Ledoux's ideal city of Chaux's multi–functionality and attention to the various

11 Vidler, Anthony. Claude–Nicolas Ledoux. *Architecture and Utopia in the Era of the French Revolution.* Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006: 129.

12 Kaufmann, Emil. *Three Revolutionary Architects, Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu.* Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1952: 535.

13 Vidler, Anthony. *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

14 Ledoux, Claude–Nicolas. *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation.*

functions of a modern capitalist society. But what if the revolution had gone even more astray? What if the European response to it won the day, sparking an age of monarchical and conservative superpowers? What if Ledoux's vision had no vindication in the civic architecture that would take a century and a half to fully emerge, and from which spaces Kaufmann and Vidler wrote about Ledoux? What if we read *l'abri du pauvre* without a future?

The illustration transpires a loneliness and disillusionment that seems to mirror what might be Ledoux's actual sense of self as a prisoner of the Revolution. While Kaufmann read those divine figures in the clouds as the promise of a new architecture to come, we should ask: what evidence do we have that among those figures are architects and that they, seeing the naked human below, will feel impelled to sheltering its needs? Vidler inspired the hypothesis Ledoux wanted to give them the role of opening the clouds, which is quite hopeful.[15] Then again, Vidler was writing this before the credit crisis of 2008. The naked human is perhaps not so much isolated, as in Rousseau's sense, but abandoned, left astray or marooned in a sea of nothing. There seems to be no sheltering occurring or about to occur here, not from the heavens, neither from nature. It is as if Ledoux might be replying to Laugier that there is no state of grace to be found in nature, there is no shelter to be provided.

Both Laugier and Ledoux searched a transcendental legitimation of architecture in trying times. For the first, architecture is a personified divinity that teaches the cherub going about, about the frugal, almost biological, manner in which architecture emerges from nature. For Ledoux, it is the human condition in its rawness that is faced with a menacing nature. For him, humanity will eliminate the difficulties and increase the benefits, yet for that it must count with the help of the blasée gods of Olympus, may they be willing to shine a light to shelter the lone human. In Laugier's engravings architecture is the focal point, sublime and naturally given. Architecture preserves its status requiring only a shift in guidance, to remember its natural origins. For Ledoux's engraving the focal point is the human in its lone condition. Ledoux's engraving suggests something is about to happen if only those gods might decide to act. Both attempt a way out of Baroque vertigo, but at what price? What kind of shelter for humanity was architecture supposed to be?

2. Acknowledging double truths

In the space of half a century, architecture went from a naturally given act of grace, functional and elemental with Laugier, to a rootless and unnatural exercise with Ledoux in which everything, starting from the beginning, must be reconstituted. The hypotheses these ideal types inspire in architecture history are well known and we have already discussed some. Some took Laugier's (mistakenly) primitive hut to echo the naturalist, geographic, sensibility of the roman Vitruvius.

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15 Vidler, Anthony. Claude–Nicolas Ledoux. *Architecture and Utopia in the Era of the French Revolution*: 129.

Laugier's metaphor was either an early calling to functional architecture or, and connected with the latter, a first step towards the epistemological turn to primitivism and then to geography and tradition that invested modernism in a vernacular infatuation.[16] The work of Semper, particularly his illumination that the construction process of huts in Malaysia contained his ideal type of architecture as weaving comes to mind.[17] Semper, however, was only one of the first architects to be most obvious about the ''primitive'' origins of his architectural theories. Ledoux's *abri du pauvre* in the context of his ideal plans for Chaux, made Kaufmann, then Vidler and then many others, read it as a recognition of the poor and the emergent need of new civic architectures to shelter their needs. But there is much more to be said about both ideal types when taken as part of their space–times. There are, we might say with Weber ''(...) a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena (...)''[18] that run into these images of architecture as shelter.

2.1. Natural nature

Is a preposterous proposition today, to make this qualification and distinction between a natural nature and an unnatural nature. But it was not so in the eighteenth century and not for Rousseau, and it was not a small thing for architecture and the way its agents understood its mission of sheltering. The problem, of course, was unsolvable. Society, by its very nature, was an active and expansive agent that corrupted. Nature, on the other hand, was this passive entity, continuous victim to society's corruption. Rousseau's gift to the modern world cloistered it in a violent gendered duality. Who and how was architecture supposed to shelter: the noble savage and its passive nature, Ledoux's homme isolé, or the ''civilized'' human and its expanding social world? Neither, both at the same time, how?

Laugier's *cabane rustique* being contemporary to Rousseau's early writings, seems to be closer to the purity of the idea of recognizing the virtues in the noble savage. He recognized, as Rousseau, a moral and aesthetic perfection in the state of nature, which he translated as a state of religious grace. Like Vitruvius before, he held architecture telos, sense of self and mission, to the perfect relation between natural conditions and human needs present in the simplest of buildings. Unlike Vitruvius, however, his human needs did not spring from particular citizens and subjects of the Roman empire, but from an abstract human being, taken to be primitive, but never thus qualified by Laugier himself. It can be none other than Rousseau's noble savage, which for Laugier were all too real concrete people he met across his colonial trips. Yet, his new, purified, architecture was not particularly aiming to shelter all these real people, but to cleanse architecture canon of all the hubris of Baroque. So, who did his *cabane rustique*

16 Küreli, Ece. ''Laugier vs Durand: Revisiting Primitive Hut in the Classical Architecture Discourse,'' *YEDI*, 2016: 111–120.

17 Ching, Francis D. K., Jarzombek, Mark M., Prakash, Vikramaditya. *A Global History of Architecture*: 593.

18 Weber, Max. *Methodology of the Social Sciences*: 90.

shelter afterall? Most definitely a renewed sense of architecture rule and order. But also and perhaps, containing the latter a much larger entity, a relationship with nature and the nature of artificial processes such as architecture. It seems he was trying to reconstitute a lost connection between human, shelter and nature. This should not come as a surprise, given that at least since the early Renaissance there was a recognition of the nature destroying power of human technology. It is perhaps in Alberti we find the most reflexive early articulations of architecture's prometaican role as a technology of creation via destruction and unfounded ambition.[19] By 1755, the European world had long evolved within these lines. It is not so much that by then there were more architects recognizing the discipline's prometaican character, but that the state of European technology and what it allowed in terms of natural exploitation was far more present, extensive and violent. In other words, many natures had been changed, transformed and destroyed by then. Thus, it is not unthinkable that a Jesuit priest who had travelled some of the places then considered "natural" and "primitive," might attempt to cure a fall from grace by curing the architecture of the civilized, corrupted, and baroque Europeans.

When Ledoux appeared so much more had come to pass in the history of the planet. But one thing is for sure, there was no longer a state of nature and of grace in Ledoux's drawings, either in the abri du pauvre or in any other drawing in his 1804 essay. As argued by Kaufmann, Ledoux is already thoroughly modern in his recognition of architecture's lack of divine or natural foundations.[20] He was a precursor to what came to be celebrated as the modernity of the next generation of French neoclassical architects, such as Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, for whom Laugier's allegory was naught but a cause for opposition.[21] The architecture of the enlightenment could only be borne of reason and rationality. Yet, for all its pompous refoundation of the discipline in the new values of empiricism, the architecture of these enlightened architects would always come back to nature or should we say to a physiological yet mysterious nature as foundation. In Ledoux's plans what might pass as Nature is a composed vegetation providing a silent background to his ideal new civic buildings. Nowhere in the ideal city of Chaux may we find a reference to the very concrete natural-human phenomenon of its existence: the forest of Chaux and the exploitation of its trees as fuel for the salt market. This nature, the actual material, living, reality of Chaux is amiss, out of sight and removed from Ledoux's synthesis. At the same time, the "nature" presented is exuberant and almost uncontrollable, as if suggesting a "virgin" landscape. In other words, nature became simultaneously functional and exotic. It seems the new enlightened civic architecture was dependent on a refoundation of nature as mechanics on the one hand and, on the other, as exotic virginity.(Fig. 4)

19 Tafuri, Manfredo. *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006 (1992).

20 Kaufmann, Emil. *Three Revolutionary Architects, Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu.*

21 Küreli, Ece. "Laugier vs Durand: Revisiting Primitive Hut in the Classical Architecture Discourse."

Vue perspective de la Cénobie

2.2. Isolated or alone

Vidler, in the wake of Kaufmaan's ideological reading of Ledoux, advances the hypothesis that the latter's architectural ideal could be understood as a struggle for disciplinary autonomy. Reading Ledoux's essay together with Kant's philosophical problems, Vidler identifies in the architect a quest for the pure reason of architecture and thus its elevation to a form of knowledge beyond history.[22] This, of course, was not exclusive to Ledoux, Laugier might be said to have accomplished the same desire with his *cabane rustique*. But what does this quest for autonomy through function and program represent at the time? Or what diffuse, discrete, concrete individual phenomena does it articulate without showing?

For somebody who has had one of its greatest works burned and destroyed, such as happened to Ledoux with the *Barriéres* of Paris. To further know that this destruction was due to one's association with a regime that so oppressed and mismanaged its population as to provoke

22 Vidler, Anthony. *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism.*

the bloodiest of revolutions.[23] And then to recognize that architecture's role in establishing the terms for a social progression was, at best, a most peripheral agent. All of these things surely give an architect cause to imagine that justice can only be delivered if his efforts were not evaluated through the eyes of history, but from the standpoint of a larger, less material, purpose of history. Laugier may have tried to reconvene a state of nature when there was none to have, but Ledoux tried to rebuild Plato's Republic apparently not recognizing that the philosophes were those in the guillotine.

Function and program, in their harmonious arrangement of parts and whole, could never account for the violent fact that their reason, universal it may be, does not subsume political reality, but is instead its producer and product: there is no civil code without hygienist planning, no penitentiary system without its prison architecture, etc...[24] The problem with the neoclassical French ''revolutionaries'' was exactly this, that their idea of equality never existed in the same realm as the actual lack of equality that gave rise to it. Ledoux's quest for architectural autonomy articulates a radical inability of the architecture of his day to think in cooperation, co-dependence and mutuality beyond the functional. Another generation, one steeped in the revolutionary crises and the powerful will to stabilize a republican collective, would be necessary to start conceiving the actual experience of those terms in social and spatial forms.

2.3. Marooned and forgotten

Ledoux may be excused for being imprisoned and deprived of surely most of what he held dear during the time he wrote his ideal type. But he was not only socially isolated, his whole world had in fact collapsed. Independently of believing in architecture's capacity to resolve the problem of the poor, his system of reference, namely the patrons that would finance such a sheltering architecture disappeared with the revolution. In a sense, he was not so much imprisoned as he was marooned, lost in the fringes of society and from there rebuilding a society from scratch. Maybe this explains why the naked pauvre in the *abri* does not seem isolated as we might be led to think, but like Ledoux, marooned in a desert of sea. Considered in this light, the picture contains two discrete yet concrete phenomena that escape most interpretations of architecture's ideal types and particularly the two we have been dealing with.

One of these has to do with the cycles of expropriation that early modern capitalist societies started evolving. The need to make nature, including humans, cheap and accessible of the early European commercial empires created a pattern that progressively hastened, reaching the

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23 On the French Revolution's particular social realities see Sewell, William H. *Work & Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

24 Michel Foucault made one of the most compelling arguments for this reading of architecture's political productivity in his posthumous published *Security, Territory, Population: lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978,* tans. Burchell, Graham. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

vertiginous space–time of our century.[25] This pattern follows a particular path, reconnaissance, exploitation, production, and creates a particular experience for those doing the reconnaissance, those doing the exploiting and those being exploited, and those doing the production and that being produced. Dislocation links the steps in the process or rather disbands them for both positions. The landscape produced from this cycle is strangely not very different from that portrayed in *l'abri du pauvre*: above some collectivity enjoying the product, below a landscape estranged and barren, in it a human with very little to distinguish itself from the barren nature in which he sits and whose stance is that of disquiet. Should we interpret those in the clouds as "civilization" and "society" that may eventually rain down on the deprived human? Should we interpret the latter as a colonial dispossessed or as the deprived workingman, or both at the same time? Ledoux shows us something that perhaps Laugier could not or would not, perhaps that only somebody without a world could. He shows us the tabula rasa of capitalist progress in its rawness of inequality, barrenness and violence towards nature and human.

That Laugier would not guard an image such as this for us today, tells us about the second discrete and concrete phenomena that usually escapes interpretation. We cannot understand it without being familiar with the first phenomena above described, for in fact one depends on the other. Both illustrations find part of their inspiration if not most of it, in the colonial Atlantic experience of the day.[26] The mistranslation of Laugier's *cabane rustique* to primitive is owed to this most obvious of connections between the Jesuit and the indigenous population of so many exploited or soon to be exploited natures. Some inclusively argue that Laugier's notion of architecture's ever present state of grace reflects earlier religious discussions on the presence of the soul in non–christian, usually considered "primitive" populations.[27] In this sense, Laugier decides to provide grace to all, without actually including the populations which inspired his ideas. On the other hand, his attempt to pacify human technology with its destructive effects could have very well been informed by the maroon rebellions taking place in British, French, Spanish, among other, colonies throughout the 1730s and 1740s. These rebellions organized by mostly escaped slaves and coalescing into a protracted war, brought to the fore the extent of the exploitation being advanced by European powers in the Atlantic, as well as the needs for class and colonial control that such a regime of commercial growth implied.[28]

25 For an original and incisive account of the producing and cheapening nature of early capitalism see Moore, Jason W. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. London and New York: Verso, 2015.
26 For an essential take on the Atlantic trans–cultural landscapes formed of the early colonial experience see Linebaugh, Peter and Rediker, Marcus. *The Many–Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2000.
27 Ching, Francis D. K., Jarzombek, Mark M., Prakash, Vikramaditya. *A Global History of Architecture*: 593.
28 Linebaugh, Peter and Rediker, Marcus. *The Many–Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*: 174–209.

Ledoux's abri du pauvre apparently could not be further from such an extended network of landscapes, agents and powers. His history is told in France, about France and supposedly regarding French citizens. But could we not argue that not only the image and probable experience of being marooned, but also his notion of nature, as well as the pagan universalism of his ideals, owed much to the interculturally of the colonial Atlantic? This does not seem too much of a stretch, afterall French society, as most European societies at the time, was highly international and internationally read, its elites acutely aware of the business opportunities, obstacles and social conundrums of an ever expanding web of nature's commodification. Could we not argue that Ledoux's ideas of organizational control in Chaux, the panopticon-like organization of employers and workers, as well as the moral and physical disciplinary apparatus of his ideal architectures, translate a governing knowledge accumulated from the first colonial plantations onwards. Afterall, it was not just in France or not even particularly in France where the problem of workforce control, hygiene and morality was a pressing matter of capitalist organization.

Now, this is not a situation in which Laugier's and Ledoux's ideal types are hiding an underground reality. There was nothing underground about the colonial Atlantic social experience, as there is nothing particularly occult about the cabane rustique or *l'abri du pauvre.* The problem has more to do with how these ideal types seem not to address the actual sheltering provision of architecture. Instead, we are enticed by an image of divine harmony between nature and building on the one hand, and on the other, by a scenery of deprivation and alienation. So, how can these most disparate ideal images help us answer why architecture today seems to offer no shelter? And why is it we can only think of shelter as something fragile and deprived?

3. The reckoning of panoramas

Panoramas, those nineteenth-century precursors to cinema where a landscape was painted along a circular device giving the spectator a total breath over a replication of a real landscape, were a central image-object to Walter Benjamin's critical essays.[29] These artificially constructed, life-like replications of reality, past or present, produced the illusion one was seeing everything with an aura of realness, without actually showing how it was doing so. This inspired, among other things, Benjamin's idea of phantasmagoria as a development of Marx's idea of commodity fetishism. The crux of the matter for both panoramas and phantasmagoria, is that a representation of reality is taken as a reality itself omitting its social conditions of production. Alienation, said Marx.

Laugier's and Ledoux's ideal types work in a very similar manner. In a sense they constitute panoramas of architectural thought, aiming to give a full image of the profession's raison d'être, without divulging how such an image might come to be so. This does not mean they are the sole

29 Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989.

responsibles for our persistent habit of understanding shelter almost exclusively as "primitive" shacks, but they do help us understand how it might be so. The "natural" act of building a space with available resources that might protect one against immediate material dangers is mostly a persistent metaphor in architecture, while in reality it is the living condition to which many humans are persistently forced. Laugier uses it to narrate architecture's integral relationship with nature, but never actually speaks of shelters or sheltering. The same with Ledoux, just that in his case he was even less concerned with addressing shelter, as his architectural types and models were directed towards a political utopia.

So, we wouldn't be wrong to claim that the only things Laugier and Ledoux actually sheltered with their ideal types was an idea of architecture and political utopia, and these can hardly be said to actually shelter the deprived of the world, although some may argue ideas have a will of their own. But there is something else occult in these panoramas, namely the actual social realities they emerge from. Not only is the Atlantic colonial experience, its slave trade and expopriation of "primitives," as well as the actual paupers and deprived that produced the French Revolution missing from the picture, but also the agents that made architecture possible then. For Laugier it was nature as goodness and grace, for Ledoux, all those Olympian gods above. Once again, none have actually been seen supporting architecture commissions for the poor. Many things may be said to occur in their names, but only by the grace of a very sophisticated cynicism, which perhaps was not absent in the France of then, may nature and gods stand for actual patrons of architecture.[30] So, what can architects today do with such alienated panoramic views of the discipline?

We imagine shacks the way we do because they are never part of architecture, they are either natural or a nuisance. We imagine them so concisely because Laugier's "primitive hut" or what may pass as its many variants are what pops-up when the word shelter is typed in any search engine. We are incapable of imagining shelter as something other because we cannot imagine that the people being sheltered belong somewhere else. We are thoroughly entrapped in the webs of meaning our ancestors and then we have created for ourselves. Colonial ghosts, class violence, a general and global predatory injustice in our production of nature, both human and natural. So maybe we should start cutting down some of these webs.

But why is it difficult for us today to think of architecture as a sheltering act? Why doesn't it seem to offer any calm to those that live in Ledoux's disquieted sea? The answer is not that we live in neo-liberal times, although that may be tempting. And, of course, there are architects and architectures committed to addressing the many deprived, dislocated populations that

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30 For a historical decomposition of the *ancien regime*'s social environment among the wealthy and powerful see Reddy, William M. *Money and Liberty in Modern Europe: A Critique of Historical Understanding.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

continually exist as though produced through cycles of deprivation.[31] These architectures, however, are reserved a special place in the discipline's thinking and most modern society's representation, "social" and "emergency" projects, transigent things, not actually standing for the firmitas of architecture. The truth of the matter is that Ledoux's pagan gods never actually came down from those clouds or opened them enough to shine such a reason on the pauper as to make his illumination change the world. And one reason for this is terrifying in its simplicity. It is also part of the reason for both architect's ideal types' panoramic omitting character and the powerful insight of Benjamin's phantasmagoria. Laugier and Ledoux lived then what we know to be named predatory capitalism and there is no right amount of religious, political and technical faith that can temper that enraged Neptune. In fact, part of the problem, one we carry with us from Laugier and Ledoux, is the belief that a refoundation of the discipline in a new faith, be it in a state of grace with nature, be it in the powers of technological development or what might be called faith in good design, can eventually shelter humans from nature's and its own violence.

For a long time now the human search for a state of grace is not a fight against or with natures, but with a particular way of managing and producing these. So far the process we know as modernization has been about cheapening everything and this, of course, has cheapened our relationship with almost everything.[32] To conceive architecture as a provider of a shelter is also cheap, it can be ordered online for a small amount of capital. Yet, it is not only the loss of value of this foundational process that makes it unfounded today. The idea of sheltering humans from nature also needs to be reframed. What is natural about our current pandemic? Its image in the microscope? Its biological impact on our organisms? The networks through which it has conquered the planet? David Harvey once wrote "(...) there is in the final analysis nothing unnatural about New York City."[33] We are not sheltering humans from nature anymore, the frontier has long been blurred. We are sheltering ourselves from urbanity or urban modes of being.[34]

31 We are not referring here to any particular definition of cycle, there is a great variety of agents, patterns and chains of effects in the production of deprived populations in what is usually referred to as global times. The last two decades are a clear example of this, between the early 2000s destabilization of the Middle East, to the growing impacts of the second and third wave of debt-fuelled development programs in Africa, to the financial crash of 2008 and now the far-reaching class inequalities of the pandemic. Although not a comprehensive explanation of the agents of these cycles, Saskia Sassen's take on the power of financial cycles and their spatial patterns enlightens the cycles of exclusion proper to advanced capitalism. See Sassen, Sakia. *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy.* Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2014.
32 Moore, Jason W. (ed.) *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism.*
33 Harvey, David. "The nature of environment: dialectics of social and environmental change" in Miliband, R. and Panitch, L. (eds) *Real Problems, False Solutions. A special issue of the Socialist Register.* London: The Merlin Press, 1993: 28.
34 On the hegemony of the urban over all other categories to describe the support of life on the planet see Lefebvre, Henri. *Lá Révolution Urbaine.* Paris: Gallimard, 1970. On the idea of modes of existence see Latour, Bruno. *An Inquiry Into Modes of Existence: an anthropology of the moderns,* tans. Porter, Catherine. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2012. There is here an interesting discussion, yet to be fully developed, between Lefebvre's notion of the existential hegemony of the urban and Latour's hypothesis of the modern acting through the power of particular modes of existence: the urban would be here a complex cognitive and spatial apparatus, extending our biology into new efficiencies and modes.

Laugier and Ledoux were already living in this blur and their engravings point, by opposition and omission, to two elements with which we have not yet learned to live with: there is no ideal communion with the natural world and there is no equitable production of human nature. In the face of a predatory social system with global ambitions, such as early modern capitalist societies, a belief in nature as a pure foundation (Laugier's nature) or in an exterior derived enlightenment (Ledoux's gods shining light) are essentially pyrrhic ideals: synthetic ideas that apparently solve architecture's problem with the foundation of style (confronting Baroque hubris) but that hide the overwhelming victory of the cheapening and alienating of natures, as well as the fact that reason is politically produced. Their ideal types of architecture providing shelter do not help us to confront these forces. We never left that disquieted sea. Given we are clearly that pauper in Ledoux's engraving, at least most of us, perhaps we should ask when architecture, as a way of thinking and changing the world, will ever face up to our predatory relationship with both human and natural nature. It is quite obvious that those pagan gods aren't coming down from the clouds or even that there is any faith left in them. We should get a move on.

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Figure References

Figure 1 – Engraving of the *cabane rustique* by Charles Elsen in Laugier, Marc–Antoine. Essai sur L'Architecture. Paris: Duchesne, 1755.

Figure 2 – Engraving of the *cabane rustique* by unknown author to Laugier's essay's english translation: Essay on Architecture. London: Gray's Inn, 1755.

Figure 3 – Claude–Nicolas Ledoux, *L'Abri du Pauvre*, L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation. Paris: H.L.Perroneau, 1804.

Figure 4 – Claude–Nicolas Ledoux, perspective of the Cénobie, L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation. Paris: H.L.Perroneau, 1804.w