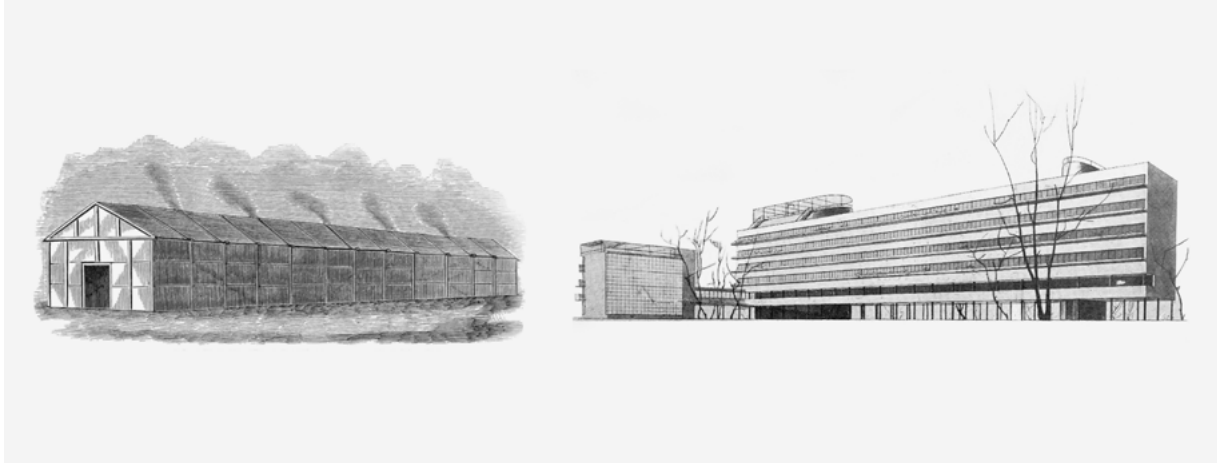


Never Innocent

Architecture, Anthropology, and the Concept of House-Type

Jolanda Devalle



Two Longhouses. Left: The Haudenosaunee longhouse. Henry Lewis Morgan, *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines* [New ed.] (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965). Right: Perspectival sketch of the Narkomfin Building. Ginzburg and Milinis, *Sovremenniaia Arkhitektura*, no. 5, 1929.

Modern architecture and anthropology both came of age during the Enlightenment. Despite their distinct focuses, each discipline grappled with the challenge of explaining and understanding a wide array of cultural expressions and societal structures observed in the wake of European colonial expansion. The tension between the pursuit of a unified principle and the acknowledgment of human diversity influenced the theories and methods adopted within both fields. In architecture, the concept of *type*⁰¹ was introduced to uncover the essential forms that underlie disparate physical manifestations. Meanwhile, anthropology used *house form*⁰² as a means of analysis to understand different cultures, compare them, and explain the variations observed in human societies across time and space.

The interest in *type* and *house form* often intersected in discussions regarding pre-modern and non-European dwellings. These discussions were part of an effort to define and validate Western identity through a systematic study of the “other,” whether temporally or geographically remote. I propose to term this convergence of interests as the study of *house-types*. It is not a singular concept, or clearly defined field of research, but rather a series of instances where the pursuit of essential forms and the aspiration to construct a social theory came together, merged, and mutually influenced one another.

01 *Type* is an architectural concept born out of the late Enlightenment thought. While earlier Enlightenment thinkers like the abbé Laugier aimed to establish single and universal principles of architecture, the subsequent generation, led by figures such as Quatremère de Quincy, attempted to reconcile the pursuit of these singular principles with the evidence of the diverse and highly relative nature of human culture. At this juncture, the concept of *type* comes into play, providing a framework to make sense of everything’s difference. See Mari Hvattum, *Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 39-42.

02 *House Form* is an analytical category and heuristic device used in the social sciences in the study of human societies. Its use can be traced back to eighteenth century proto-ethnographic studies and later gained prominence in the nineteenth century when it became, as Büchli argues: “the most significant category with which to consider questions of origins and ideal forms of human society and human habitation both in the past and the future.” See Victor Büchli, *An Anthropology of Architecture* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 20-21.

The inherent capacity of *house-type* to reflect social structures, beliefs and modes of production made it a highly influential concept. On the one hand, it served as a window into past or distant ways of life, stimulating speculation on the origins and ideal forms of human society. On the other, it was a practical tool to shape and control human behavior. This potential attracted a wide range of agendas, resulting in the use of *house-type* for diverse purposes. These included supporting theories of social evolution, promoting nationalistic narratives, speculating on more equitable social structures, and serving as an ideological tool for reform and colonial governance. Thus, I argue that the use of *house-type* was always instrumental, never innocent.

Today, the concept of *house-type* holds even greater relevance for its capacity to challenge our approaches to living, reproduction and cohabitation. To fully utilize this concept, it is crucial to be aware of its historical legacy. The following paper retraces the *house-type's* trajectory by examining the three currents of typological understanding outlined by Anthony Vidler in his 1977 essay, "The Third Typology." According to Vidler, the *First Typology* corresponds to the Enlightenment's search for natural principles of architecture, the *Second Typology* looks at the Modern movement's idea of *type* as serial production, whilst the *Third Typology* addresses Neo-rationalism and its exploration of *type* as a search for meaning within the fabric of historical cities. While Vidler's essay emphasizes the distinct differences between the three, and the radical novelty of the last, this paper aims to subvert this narrative and reveal the underlying continuity of ideas that connects all three and extends into the present. Following this historical analysis, the paper puts forward a few points towards recalibrating the specific methods of typological research.

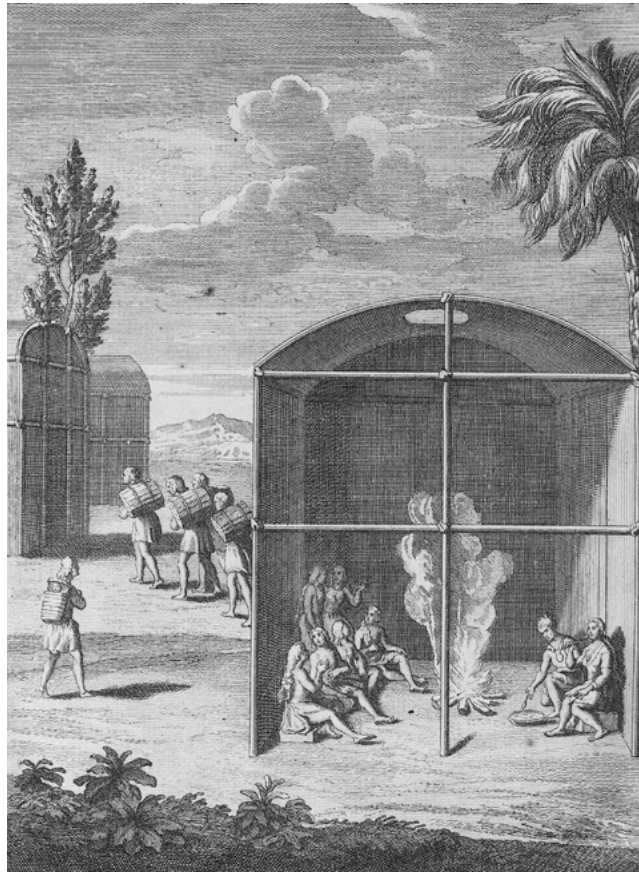
THE FIRST TYPOLOGY: THE INVENTION OF THE "PRIMITIVE" HOME

Our inquiry begins in the early eighteenth century when a growing body of literature, amassed by explorers and missionaries in the New World, revealed a previously unknown diversity of peoples and building cultures. In these accounts architecture played a crucial role, as descriptions of indigenous dwellings and settlement patterns often served as their starting point.⁰³ One influential figure during this period was Joseph-Francois Lafitau, a Jesuit missionary and pioneering ethnographer (1681-1746). Between 1712-1719, Lafitau focused his studies on the Haudenosaunee, also known as the "Iroquois" society. He analyzed their customs and material culture, paying particular attention to their types of domestic construction.⁰⁴ In the work of Lafitau, and other contemporary travel literature, it became evident that dwellings were more than just physical structures but also profound reflections of the cultures they belonged to. However, Lafitau went beyond simply describing; he used domestic architecture as a central element in his comparative analysis between the Native populations of America and the Ancient Greek world, which he saw as belonging to the same "stage" of development.⁰⁵ His work, and that of others, began to position dwellings as an interpretative tool through which attempts could be made to map out the "growth" of civilization.

03 Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, *Native American Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 834.

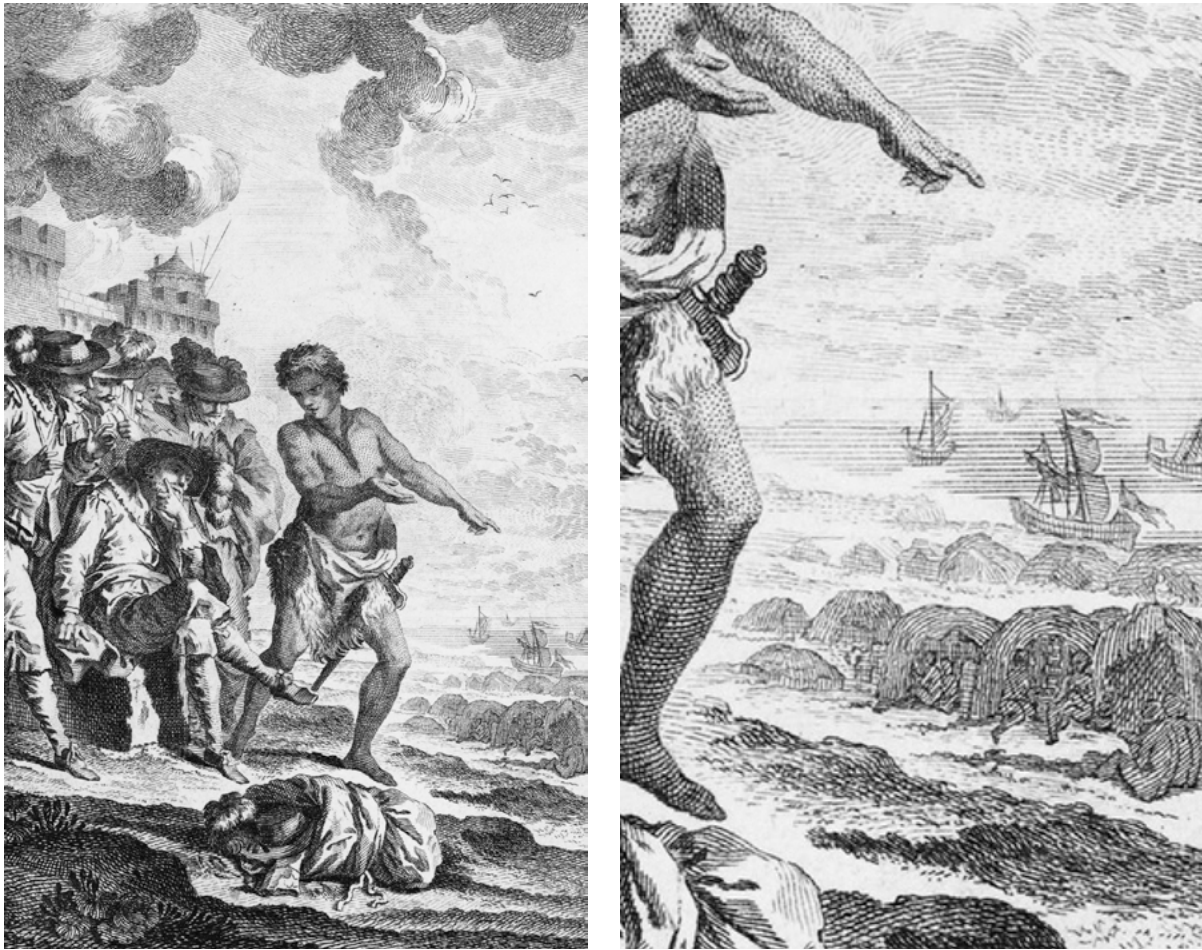
04 His book is entitled *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times* (Paris 1724)

05 Anthony Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1989), 9.



Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times* (Paris: Saugrain l'ainé & Charles Estienne Hochereau, 1724), Plate 19.

The use of *house form* as an analytical tool for studying different cultures was part of a larger project attempting to redefine European identity and validate its forms. This endeavor coincided with the emergence of the cult of domesticity, resulting in the domestic spaces becoming an important differentiating principle and a sign of “civilization.” This reading is made obvious by the frontispiece of Rousseau’s, *Discourse sur l’origine de l’inégalité*, published in 1755, in which an illustrated story posits the incompatibility of “primitive life” with “civilized mores.” In the image, a Khoikhoi person (Hottentot) who had been raised by Dutch missionaries on the Cape of Good Hope, asks the Governor of the Cape and his aides to return to his community whilst gesturing to a group of huts along the shore. Here the hut, as a type of house, becomes a symbol of the presumed “social happiness” of those living in a natural state uncompromised by the forces of civilization.⁰⁶ Rousseau uses the *house-type* as a symbol, illustrating the insurmountable gulf dividing the “civilized” and the “savage” in his argument.



“He returns to his equals”. Frontispiece engraving designed by Charles Eisen, 1755. From Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1755).

By the late eighteenth century, reports by missionaries and explorers revealing humankind’s remarkable variety, helped undermine the Enlightenment’s dream of finding universal principles.⁰⁷ Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), an architectural thinker, grappled with reconciling the pursuit of foundational principles with the influx of empirical knowledge.⁰⁸ Quatremère produced a theory that traced all architectural production to three origin types: the *hut*, the *cave*, and the *tent*. Each type corresponded to a specific social organization and building tradition: the *cave* for the hunter or fisherman, the *tent* for the herdsman, the *hut* for the settled farmer. According to Quatremère, the only “principled type” was the hut, as it served as the precursor to “civilized” Western architecture. This theory transformed the perception and significance of built structures; as Sylvia Lavin notes: “from now on, any architecture—whether good or poor—could be seen as revelatory of human civilization and thus as a profoundly social phenomenon.”⁰⁹ Importantly, the principle that acted as a framework for this understanding was a residential archetype.

An important continuation in the theory of type and its historical significance was the work of Gottfried Semper (1803-1897). Semper developed his theory by drawing inspiration from anthropologist Gustav Klemm’s cultural theory and Georges Cuvier’s anatomical taxonomies.¹⁰ He proposed that the complexity and diversity of the physical world could be reduced to four prototypical elements: hearth, roof, walls, and

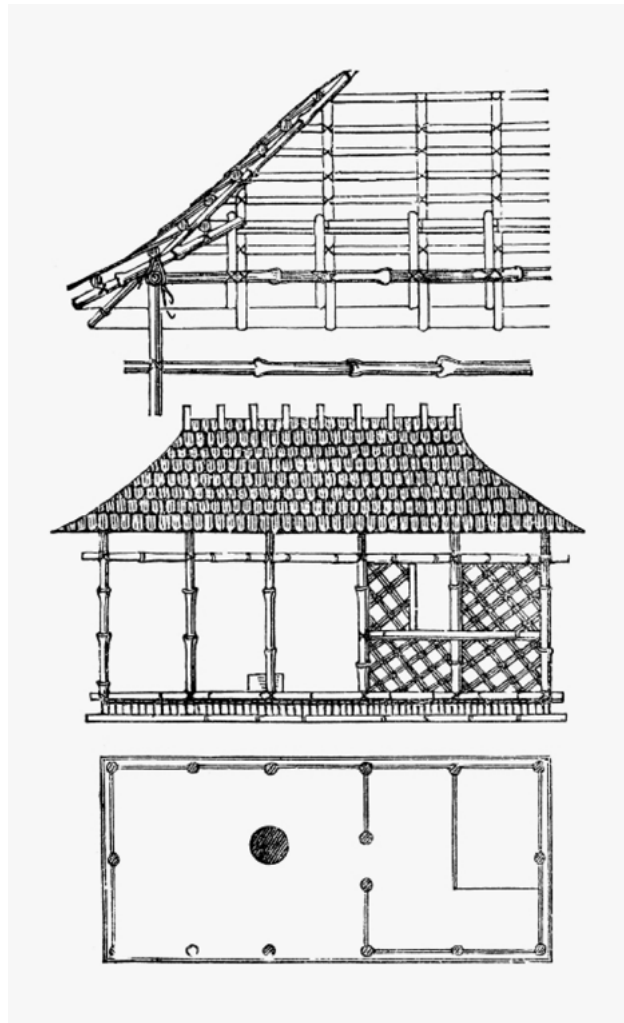
07 Mari Hvattum, *Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 37.

08 Hvattum, 39.

09 Sylvia Lavin, *Quatremère de Quincy and the Invention of a Modern Language of Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), 70, as quoted in Hvattum, 42.

10 Hvattum, *Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism*, 24 & 43.

the mound.¹¹ These elements were both stable and adaptable, capable of accommodating changing geographical and historical circumstances. Implicit in Semper's theory was Klemm's idea that all of artistic and architectural production stemmed from of a universal human need to give order to reality, a "Kunsttrieb." Semper supported his theory through the systematic study of ethnographic artifacts, the most famous example being the "Caraib hut," exhibited at the Crystal Palace during the Great Exhibition of 1851. Semper's theory is significant as it solidifies three key concepts that serve as recurring motifs in our inquiry: the notion of, "psychic unity of mankind,"¹² the moral significance of the domestic sphere,¹³ and the use of the domestic "primitive" as an analytical tool for unfolding and interpreting history.¹⁴



Gottfried Semper's reconstruction of the "Caraib Hut". From *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten oder Praktische Ästhetik*, 2nd ed. vol. 2 (Frankfurt, Verlag für Kunst und Wiss., 1878), 263.

11 See Elena Chestnova, "The House That Semper Built," *Architectural Theory Review* 21, no. 1 (2017): 44–61.

12 A nineteenth-century concept attributed to German anthropologist Adolph Bastian. Büchli defines it as "all peoples in time and space ... possessing one common humanity but in terms of varying degrees of technological progress." See Büchli 30. See also Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 37.

13 According to Elena Chestnova, Semper and other contemporaries, took the Victorian notion of domestic and projected it back in time, framing it a sort of moral-cultural ground-zero for all architectural evolution. See Chestnova, 48.

14 Harry Francis Mallgrave, "Gustav Klemm and Gottfried Semper: The Meeting of Ethnological and Architectural Theory," *Res (Cambridge, Mass.)* 9, no. 9 (1985): 68–79. 76.

These studies on *house-type* took on a political significance in the latter half of the nineteenth century, amid nation-building debates and the emerging *housing question*. Germany in particular witnessed a growing interest in documenting and studying typologies of regional domestic types. Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, a folklorist and proto-sociologist, played a key role in this context. Riehl believed that studying the traditional architecture of farmhouses provided valuable insight into the social and cultural history of rural communities. Such research he argued, could inspire, and guide the development of new national policies in Germany. In his book, *Land und Leute* (1857), Riehl analyzed and classified different types of German farmhouses, considering their regional variations, construction techniques, interior layouts, and symbolic meanings. The *Saxon farmhouse*, a pre-modern German house type, held a particular significance due to its layout that accommodated extended families and fostered a sense of community and social cohesion through shared spaces and close-knit living arrangements. This conservative exploration of pre-modern domestic types, as suggested by Isabel Rousset, significantly influenced the development of Modern architecture. It established the domestic sphere as a privileged area for research and societal intervention, positioning the pre-modern dwelling as a source of inspiration for those exploring alternative housing models.¹⁵



Fig. 17.

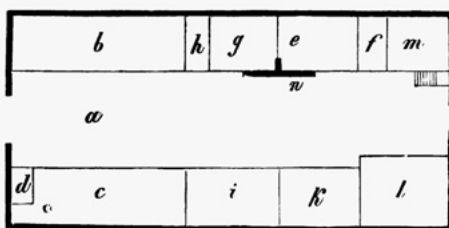


Fig. 18.



Fig. 26.

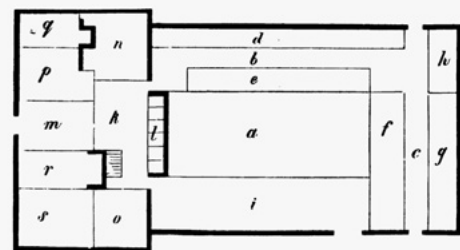
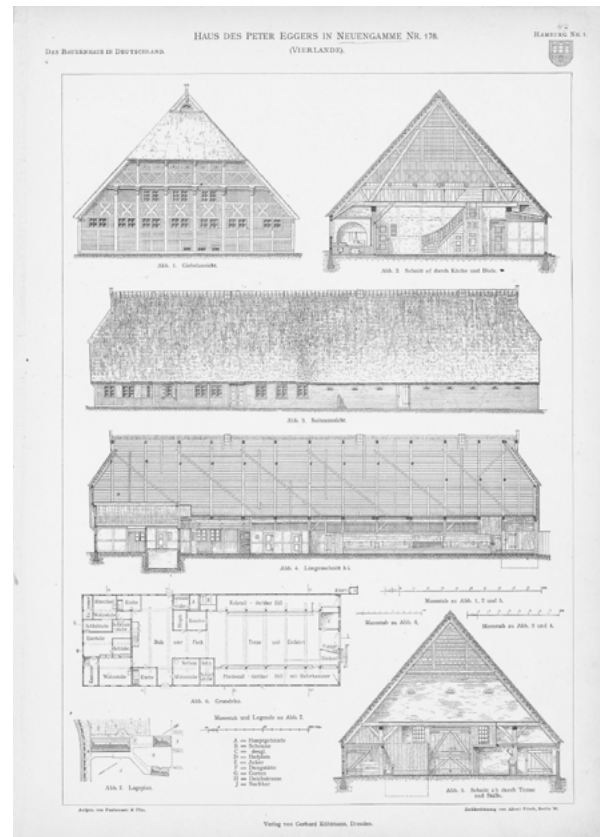
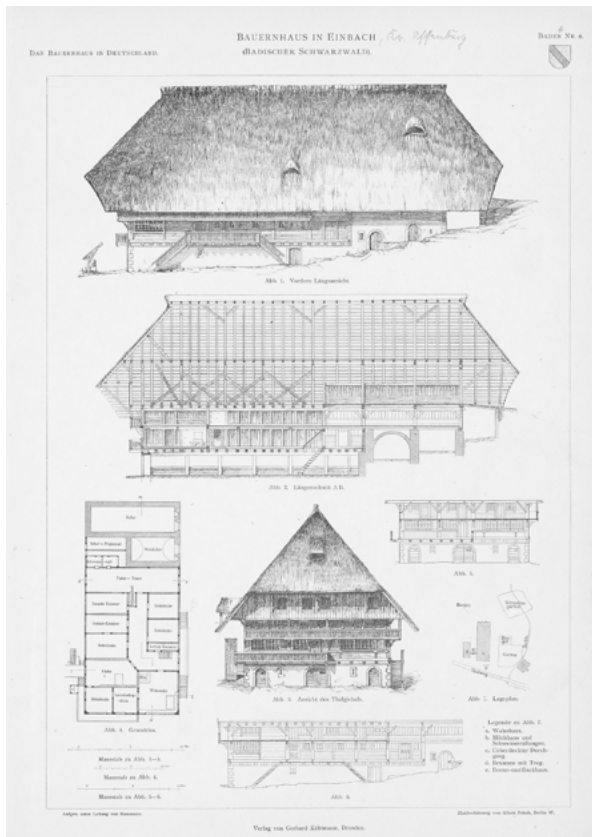


Fig. 27.

Saxon and Frisian farmhouse types.

From Rudolph Henning, *Das deutsche Haus in seiner historischen Entwicklung* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1882), 30, 34.

15 Isabel Rousset, *The Architecture of Social Reform: Housing, Tradition, and German Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 15-21.



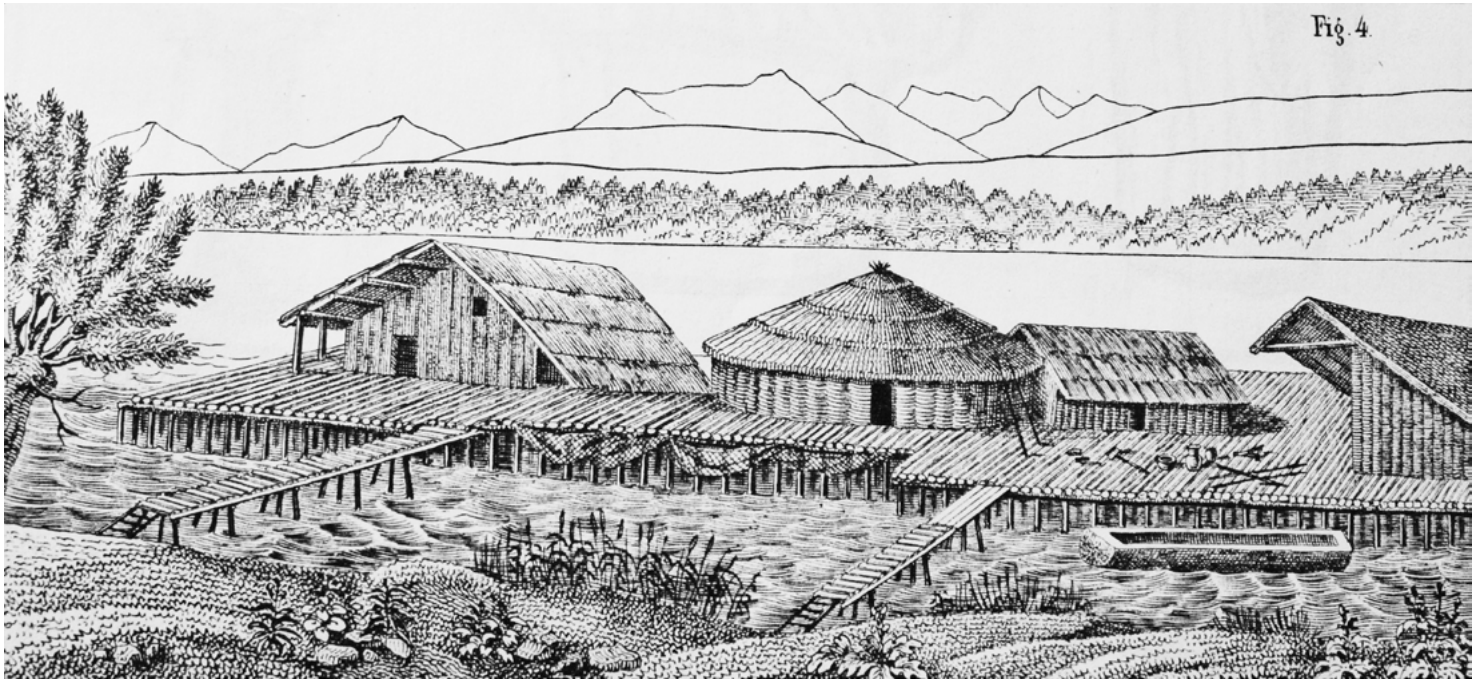
A SWISS “NEW GUINEA” AND “COMMUNISM IN LIVING”

A significant event occurred in 1854 when unusually low water levels in Lake Zurich led to the discovery of artifacts from a prehistoric village. These remains, known as *lacustres* or *palafittes*, appeared to be constructed on raised platforms. Ferdinand Keller, a Swiss anthropologist (1800-1881), speculated on their appearance, creating an illustration that was heavily influenced by images of houses from Pacific Island cultures.¹⁶ It was a bizarre image of New Guinean dwellings transplanted into the Swiss alpine landscape. This imaginative hypothesis gained immense popularity and sparked a lasting fascination known as, “lake-dwelling fever,” which persisted into the twentieth century.¹⁷ Anthropologists like Keller interpreted the typological similarities between the Neolithic Obermeilen site and the Pacific as evidence of a shared progression or development in human culture. This interpretation was based on the notion that similar tools implied similar needs, which, in turn, implied similar, “states of culture.”¹⁸ Consequently, the *house-type* could be used as an indicator to determine a society’s position within a universal and linear technological development.

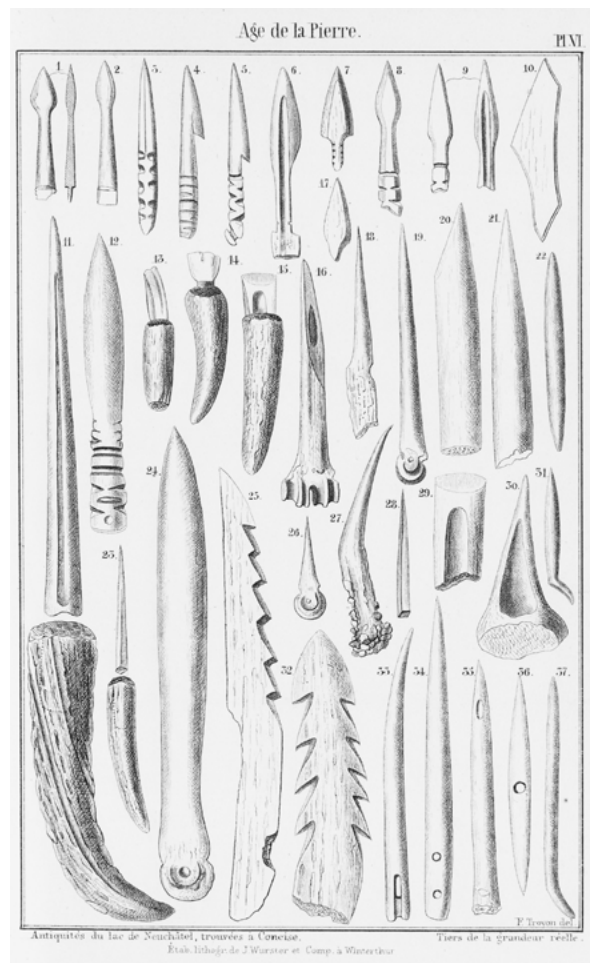
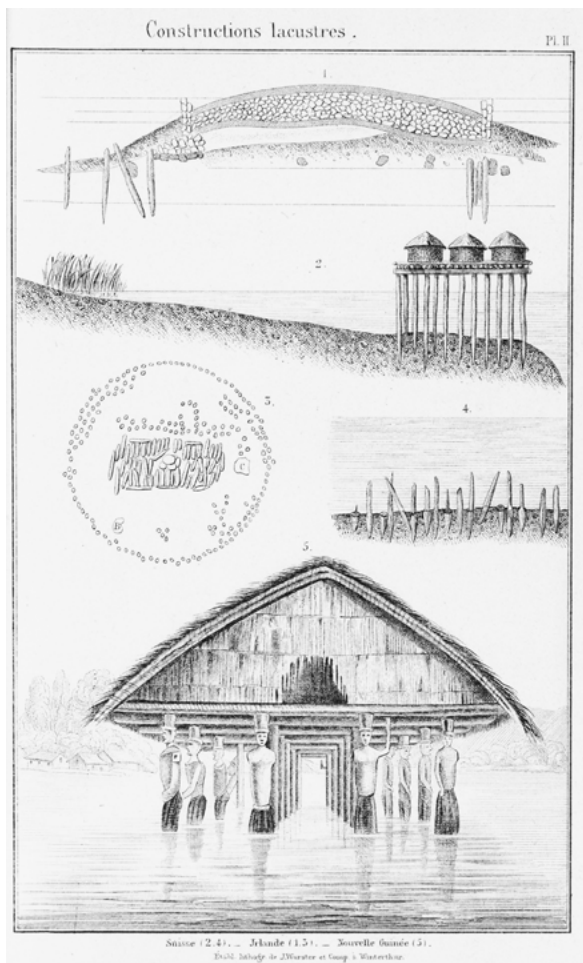
16 Adolf Max Vogt, *Le Corbusier, the Noble Savage: Toward an Archaeology of Modernism*, trans. Radka Donnell (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000), 18.

17 Vogt describes the enduring fascination with this image: “Overnight it became the most popular picture in both the German and French parts of Switzerland and remained so for several decades, at least until WW1 and again during the 1930s.” See Vogt, 227.

18 Ferdinand Keller defended his analogy as follows: “Since a similar state of culture always elicits ... similar needs and consequently produces similar tools for life’s various purposes, we can derive a clear idea of the state of civilization of the colony at Meilen most plausibly when we compare its products ... with the descriptions we owe to the travelers who have visited those peoples ... situated outside ... of the region of European civilization.” As quoted in Vogt, 232.



Ferdinand Keller's illustration of the lake-dwellings in Obermeilen.
 From *Die keltischen Pfahlbauten in den Schweizerseen* (Zürich: David Bürkli, 1854). © ETH-Bibliothek, Zürich.



Left: A comparative study of the lake-dwellings of Switzerland, Ireland, and New Guinea.
 Right: the artifacts found in lake of Neuchâtel. From Frédéric Troyon, *Habitation Lacustres des Temps Anciens at Modernes* (Lausanne: Imprimerie Georges Bridel, 1860). © ETH-Bibliothek, Zürich.

This functional-evolutionary reading is best exemplified in the work of American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881). In *Ancient Society* (1877) he developed a theory of progressive societal development. According to Morgan, each stage (Savagery, Barbarism, Civilization) was driven by technological advancements reflected in changing family structures as well as house designs. In the final volume of his work, *Houses and House-life of the American Aborigines* (1881),¹⁹ Morgan examined various typologies of Native American domestic architecture to support his evolutionary theory. Morgan argued that Native *house-types*, such as the Iroquoian longhouse, embodied a principle he termed, “communism in living.”²⁰ In this arrangement multiple generations lived collectively, sharing resources under the leadership of the clan mother. The design of the Iroquoian longhouse came to represent an alternative social paradigm, where lineage and property were passed through the female line, men joined their wives’ households and could be easily expelled for misconduct, and women held considerable autonomy and power in both household and village decision-making. According to Morgan, this mode of living and habitation among the Iroquois reflected an ancient matriarchal past that had vanished in the Western world due to the West’s advancement along the ladder of “social progress.” Through drawing and descriptions of these types of houses, Morgan turned them into object-symbols that conveniently aligned with his ambitious evolutionary theory.²¹

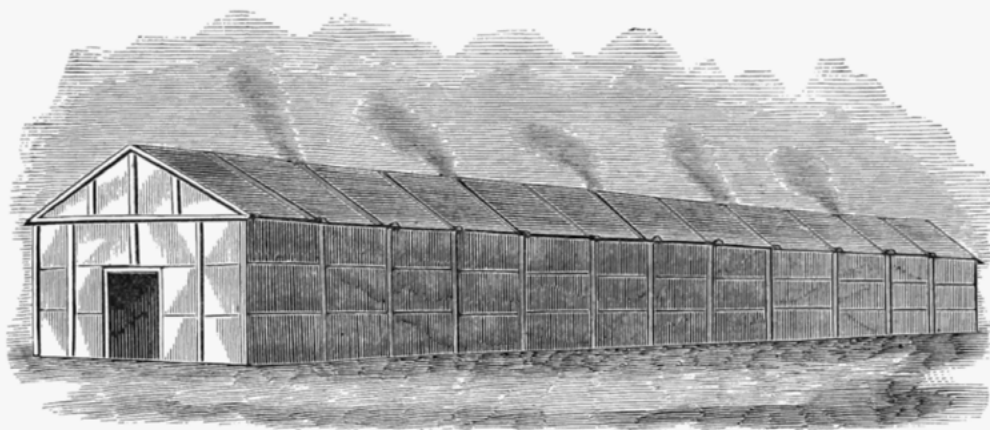


FIG. 12.—Ho-de'-no-sote of the Seneca-Iroquois.

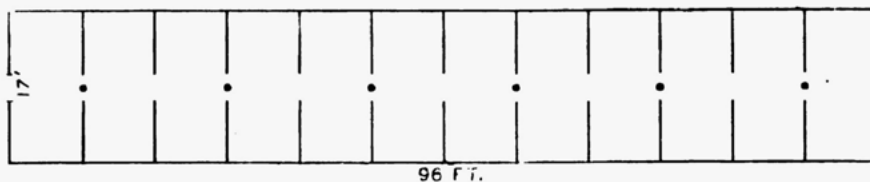


FIG. 13.—Ground-plan of Seneca-Iroquois Long-House.

Plan and elevation of a Haudenosaunee longhouse. From Henry Lewis Morgan, *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines* [New ed.] (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 125, 126.

19 Numerous scholars have traced the tradition of anthropological house-studies back to Morgan and his *Houses and House-life*. As Nabokov argues, Morgan’s approach was revolutionary in that it sought to interpret material culture in terms of social organization. See Büchli (2013:32), Carsten & Hugh-Jones (1995:5), Waterson (1991:xv), Nabokov (1989:836).

20 Henry Lewis Morgan, *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines*, [1881] (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1965), 121.

21 Victor Büchli, *An Anthropology of Architecture* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 34.

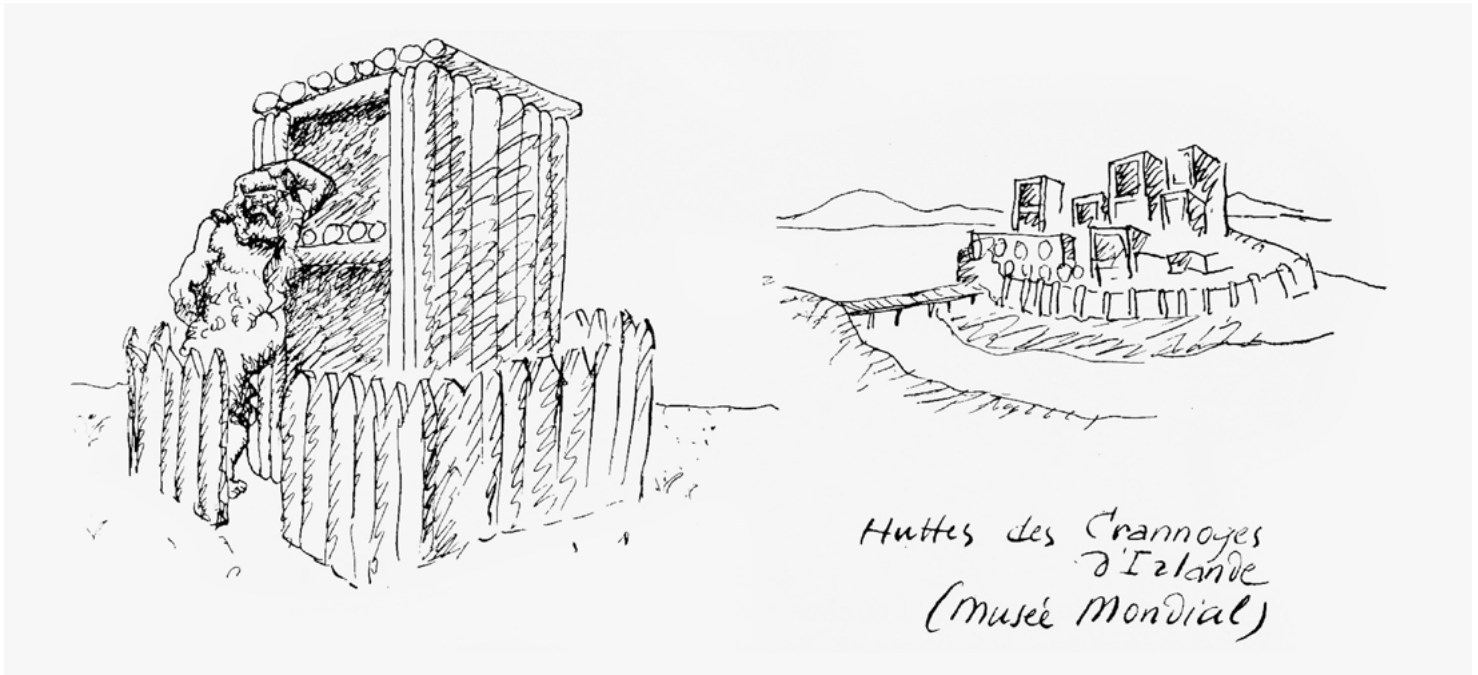
During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, these pre-modern egalitarian structures described by Morgan and others had a significant impact on political imagination. Morgan's work became a major source of inspiration for Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as it provided anthropological evidence that supported their materialist view of history. By emphasizing the historical contingency of social structures, Morgan's work was instrumental in dispelling the myth that certain forms, such as the nuclear family, were inherently timeless and "natural." This opened the door for scrutiny, analysis and even the possibility of radical reorganization.²² Unintentionally provocative, this research served as a foundation for influential works like Engels', *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), as well as subsequent feminist and socialist writings. These idealized pre-modern forms became a means of envisioning the next stage of social and political evolution. They were embraced by progressive social movements as well as architects who sought to challenge prevailing norms and develop new models of social organization. Following this, a direct line connects Morgan's longhouse to Ginzburg's Narkomfin.²³

THE SECOND TYPOLOGY: FUNCTION AND THE SEARCH FOR PRIMARY STRUCTURE

Within the *Second Typology*, the concept of *type* shifted from being a search for origin principles to becoming a prototype for mass production. Modern architects aimed to improve and reform society through the standardization of housing. In this new approach, debates on pre-modern *house-types* re-surfaced once again as a source of renewal in architectural theories. Le Corbusier, as argued by Vogt, extensively studied archeological forms, and drew inspiration from them for his architectural innovations, such as the *cellule* and the *pilotis*. The Swiss lake dwellings on stilts that surrounded his birthplace notably influenced his designs. In Le Corbusier's theory, "primitive" houses were a homogenous solution, produced serially and well-adapted the technical processes of their time. Similarly modern architecture needed to reclaim its former role as a "typal instrument."²⁴

Standardized mass-produced housing served not only as a tool for societal reform, but also as a means of colonial governance. The emphasis on "function" was shared by anthropology, which moved away from an evolutionist perspective on the study of houses, towards a structural-functionalist approach. In this new current,²⁵ the focus was on understanding how social structures, such as institutions, customs, and beliefs, fit together and worked to maintain social order and stability. It is well established that the underlying purpose of this research, what Stocking defined as the "function of functionalism,"²⁶ was to understand how native systems worked in order to aid colonial governance and strategies of "indirect rule." The converging of modernism and colonialism resulted in the use of standardized housing in colonial territories as a means to promote modernization, development and assimilation.

- 22 Tristram Hunt argues that the historization of family forms "demolished the bourgeois myth that the modern, monogamian, 'nuclear' household had existed since the dawn of human society and was the only 'natural' form." See Tristan Hunt, "Introduction," in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, [1884], 2010, 11.
- 23 Victor Büchli discusses how, through the work of Soviet Marxist historians, Morgan's longhouse was an influential trope in Soviet architectural theory and practice.
- 24 Raphael Moneo, "On Typology," *Oppositions a Forum for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture*, no. 13 (1978), 27.
- 25 Structural Functionalist flourished between the 1930s and the 1940s, its main proponents were figures like Bronislaw Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown.
- 26 George W. Stocking, *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology, 1888-1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 368. As quoted in Büchli, *An Anthropology of Architecture*, 41.



Le Corbusier's drawing of crannógs, prehistoric lake dwellings of Ireland. From *Une maison, un palais*, (Paris: G. Grès, 1928), 39.

Moisej Ginzburg's book, *Dwelling: Five Years on the Problem of Inhabitation* (1934), charts the evolution of housing types in relation to changing social organization and modes of production. When discussing Mesoamerican architecture, Ginzburg observes that they had “degenerated” from communal structures to “ordinary formations” with the shift to a “goods-based society.”²⁷ Ginzburg extends this analysis to the Existenzminimum plans developed in Germany during that period. He argues that despite their outward appearance of innovation, the floor plans were regressive because all the bedrooms opened directly into the living room, thus preserving the idea of the bourgeois family as an economic unit, with certain family members financially dependent on others.²⁸ Ginzburg's interpretation of Mesoamerican architecture and his critique of the Existenzminimum plans echo the legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan and his study of the Iroquoian longhouse. From this perspective, different dwelling types corresponded to specific “eras” and their respective modes of production, suggesting the need for a new modern housing archetype on par with the new era of mechanized production.²⁹

Karel Teige's book, *The Minimum Dwelling* (1932), presents the idea of stadial evolution, where changes in social content and environment correspond to new forms of housing. He identifies three stages: the single space in “primitive” dwellings, the functionally differentiated rooms of the bourgeois dwelling, and the collective dwelling.

Starting with the primitive dwelling, the tent of the nomad, the igloo of the Eskimo, or the peasant's cottage—all of which are characterized by their universal dwelling space, devoid of any specialized and differentiated functions (e.g., the primitive live-in kitchen). In time, these became divided into separate living and service functions, and eventually into single specialized functions, such as cooking, food storage, laundering, sleeping, eating, intellectual activities, and so on.³⁰

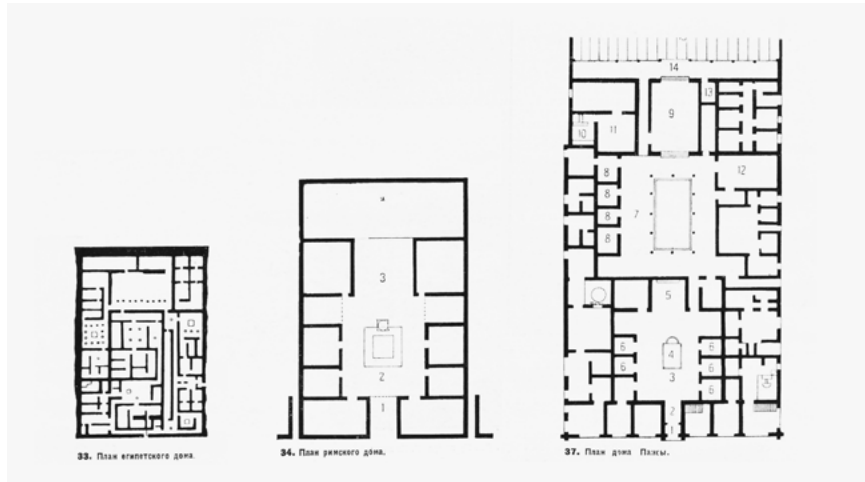
27 M. I. A. Ginzburg, *Dwelling: Five Years' Work on the Problem of Habitation* (London: Fontanka Publications, 2017), 10.

28 Ginzburg, 40.

29 Marina Lathouri, “The City as a Project: Types, Typical Objects and Typologies,” *Architectural Design* 81, no. 1 (2011): 24–31.

30 Karel Teige, *The Minimum Dwelling*, [1932] (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 2002), 14.

Teige saw the need to usher in a new stage of collective dwelling as a re-invented and improved version of the “primitive” dwelling, defining this process as the “reproduction of the former non-specialized, unified dwelling on a higher level.” Just like Le Corbusier and Ginzburg, Teige turns to pre-modern forms of dwelling to find those primary structures, the pragmatic and authentic ways of living and building that had to be regained.³¹ Underpinning Modernism’s primitivist stance and obsession with housing were enduring themes of universalism, modernization and the “philosophy of progress.” Themes which make up the *fil rouge* in this trajectory of *house-type*.



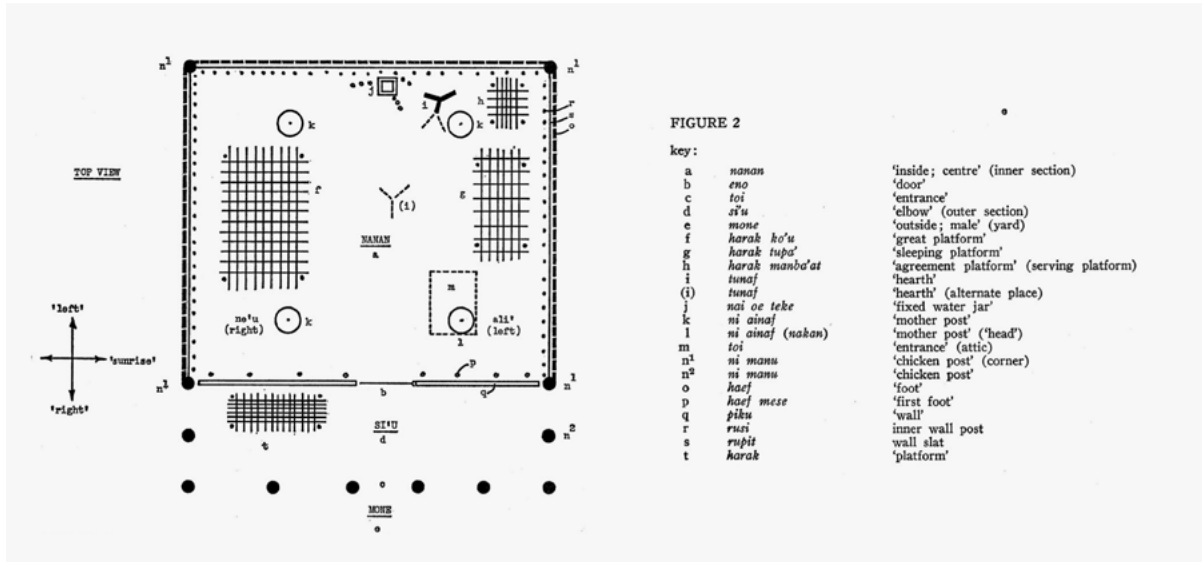
Floor plans of an Egyptian house; Roman house; House of Pansa in Pompeii.
From Moisej Ginzburg, *Dwelling: Five Years' Work on the Problem of the Habitation* (USSR: Gosstrojizdat, 1934).

THE THIRD TYPOLOGY: A QUEST FOR THE ESSENTIAL

The postwar discourse saw a renewed interest³² in both material culture and the form of houses across both architecture and anthropology. From the 1960s to the 1990s, a significant body of literature emerged, focusing on the study of houses as a heuristic device for understanding human societies, that is, non-Western ones. Some notable works in this literature are Clark E. Cunningham’s, *Order in the Atoni House* (1964), Pierre Bourdieu’s, *The Berber House or the World Reversed* (1970), Caroline Humphrey’s, *Inside a Mongolian Tent* (1974), and Stephen and Christine Hugh-Jones’ work on the house of the Amazonian Barasana (1979). This research tradition culminated in the publication of books and anthologies such as, *De la hutte au Palais* (1987), *The Living House* (1990), *Inside Austronesian Houses* (1993), *About the House* (1995) and, *Beyond Kinship* (2000). However, by the end of the twentieth century, the discipline began to critically reassess this tradition from a post-colonial perspective. Irene Cieraad, in her introduction to, *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* (1999), provocatively questioned why anthropology, despite its long-standing tradition of scholarship on “the house,” had never studied Western domestic space. She attributes this to what she termed the “silent opinion,” held by symbolic-oriented anthropologists, trapped in the “old evolutionistic link between symbolism and primitivism,” according to which Western societies were believed to have lost their authentic symbol-

31 Adrian Forty, “Primitive: The Word and Concept,” 2006, 3–14.

32 The interest in material culture studies and architecture waned in the wake of early-twentieth-century social anthropology’s preoccupation with social structure and only later reemerged in the post-war period. See Victor Büchli, *An Anthropology of Architecture* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 2.



Plan of the Atoni house. From Clark E. Cunningham, "Order in the Atoni House," in *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 120, no. 1 (1964): 34-68.

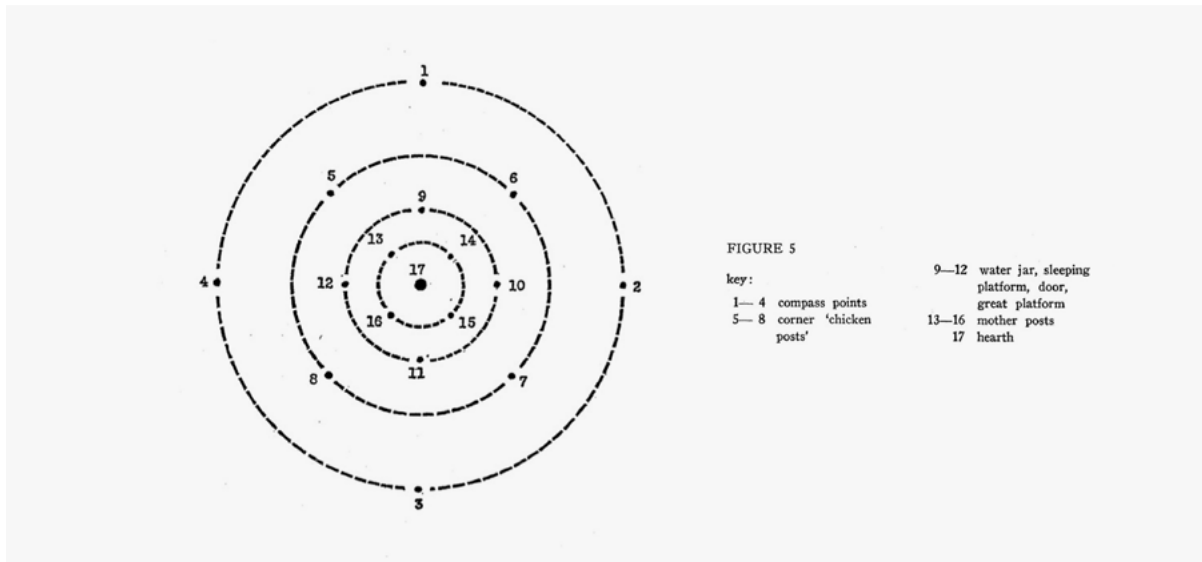
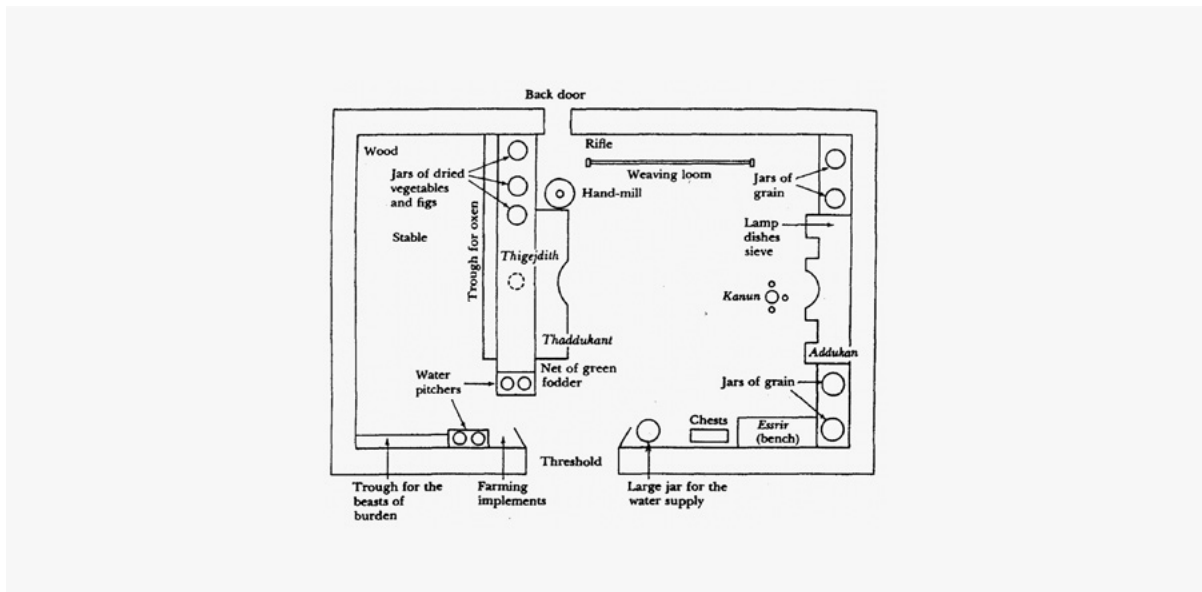


Diagram of the Atoni house. From Clark E. Cunningham, "Order in the Atoni House," in *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 120, no. 1 (1964): 34-68.



Plan of the Berber House. From Pierre Bourdieu, *Algeria 1960: Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

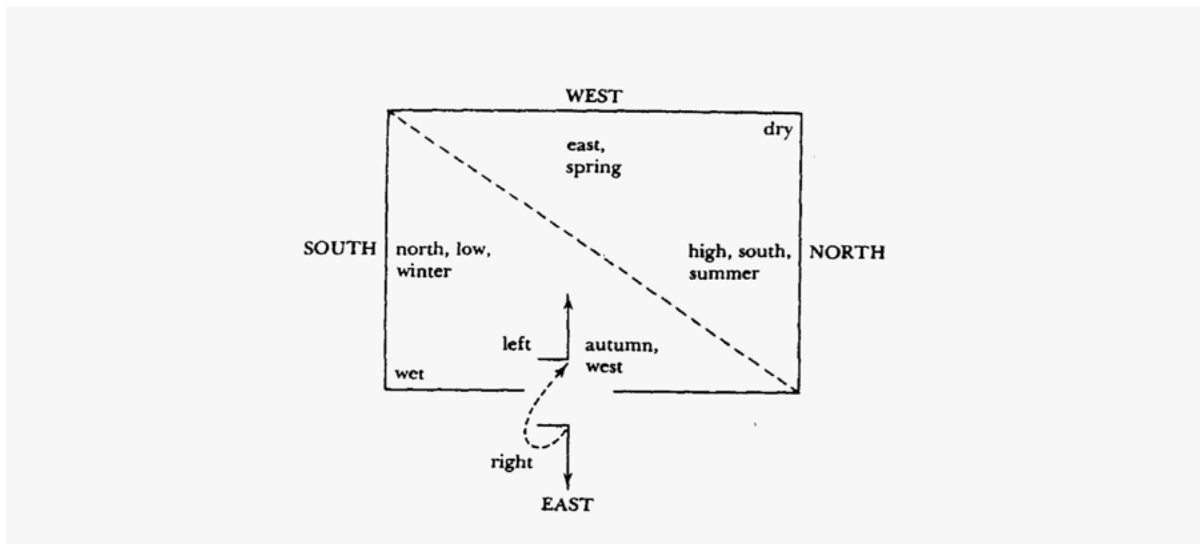


Diagram of the Berber House. From Pierre Bourdieu, *Algeria 1960: Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

ic drive, “somewhere in the course of the civilizing process.”³³

The renewed interest in the form of houses within the discipline of architecture appears to have been entangled in similar “silent opinions.” Traces can be found in the enduring search for renewal³⁴ in the so-called “primitive” that underscores the works of Edward T. Hall, Henry Glassie, and Paul Oliver, Amos Rapoport, who were leading this resurgence. Rapoport, in his book, *House Form and Culture* (1969), was the first architectural historian to conduct a cross-cultural comparative study of *house form*. In the book’s introduction, he defends his choice to study “primitive” houses during the space age, arguing that: “comparisons of this type can offer an insight into the basic nature of shelter and ‘dwelling,’ of the design process and the meaning of ‘basic needs.’”³⁵ As noted by Büchli, Rapoport’s views echo those expressed by Lewis Henry Morgan a century earlier:³⁶ “All the forms of this architecture sprang from a common mind, and exhibit, as a consequence, different stages of development of the same conceptions, operating upon similar necessities.”³⁷ The postwar research into house-types echoes the nineteenth-century ambition to uncover that original essence shared by humanity through the cross-cultural and cross-temporal study of dwelling types. What underlies this continued pursuit of universality and the theories built around it is an ever-present agenda of modernization and development.³⁸

33 Irene Cieraad, “Introduction: Anthropology at Home,” in *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*, [1999] (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2021), 2.

34 Joseph Rykwert in his book *On Adam’s House in Paradise* (1972) argues that the idea of the “primitive hut” repeatedly resurfaces in architectural history in response to a need for renewal. See Rykwert, Joseph, and Carl Laanes. *On Adam’s House in Paradise: the Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972

35 Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*, Foundations of Economic Geography Series (Englewood Cliffs (N.J.): Prentice-Hall, 1969), 12. As quoted in Büchli, 52.

36 Büchli, 52.

37 Morgan, *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines*. xxiii. As quoted in Büchli, 52.

38 Büchli, *An Anthropology of Architecture*, 52.

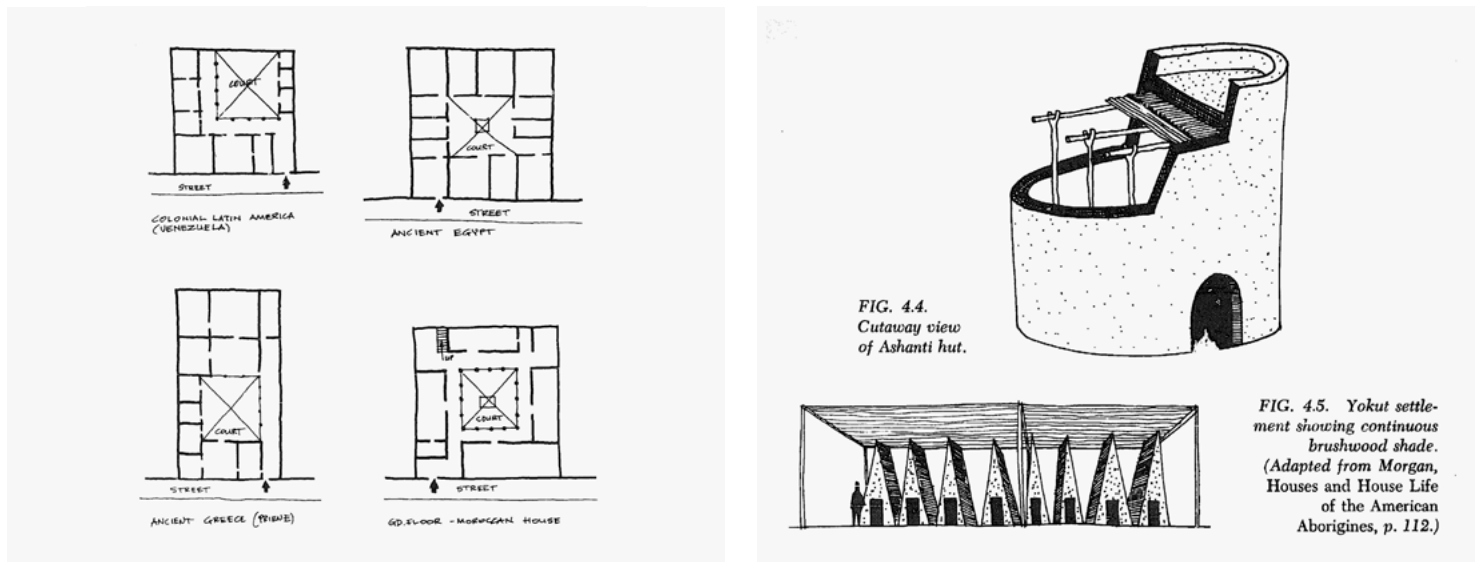


FIG. 4.4. Cutaway view of Ashanti hut.

FIG. 4.5. Yokut settlement showing continuous brushwood shade. (Adapted from Morgan, *Houses and House Life of the American Aborigines*, p. 112.)

Left: Cross-cultural comparison of courtyard houses. From Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969)
 Right: Types of roofs and shading. From Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

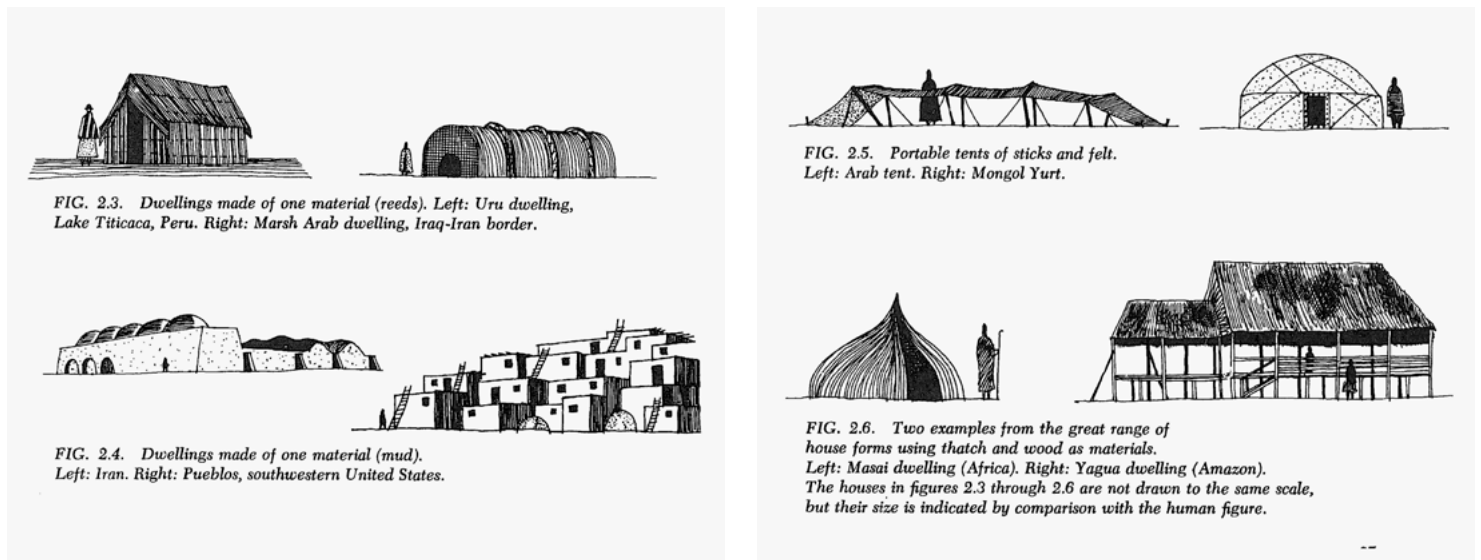


FIG. 2.3. Dwellings made of one material (reeds). Left: Uru dwelling, Lake Titicaca, Peru. Right: Marsh Arab dwelling, Iraq-Iran border.

FIG. 2.5. Portable tents of sticks and felt. Left: Arab tent. Right: Mongol Yurt.

FIG. 2.4. Dwellings made of one material (mud). Left: Iran. Right: Pueblos, southwestern United States.

FIG. 2.6. Two examples from the great range of house forms using thatch and wood as materials. Left: Masai dwelling (Africa). Right: Yagua dwelling (Amazon). The houses in figures 2.3 through 2.6 are not drawn to the same scale, but their size is indicated by comparison with the human figure.

Left: Materials and House Form Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).
 Right: Materials and House Form. From Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

The discourse on *type* that occurs in the Italian context reflects similar themes, albeit with a specific focus on the pre-industrial European city. Aldo Rossi in his book, *The Architecture of the City* (1966), advocates for a systematic and comparative study of artifacts to identify “essential themes.” Rossi finds inspiration in the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss.³⁹ By applying the structural method⁴⁰ to architecture, Rossi aims to uncover the underlying principles and patterns that shape the built environment, much like how linguists and anthropology analyzed the structures of language and society. Rossi writes:

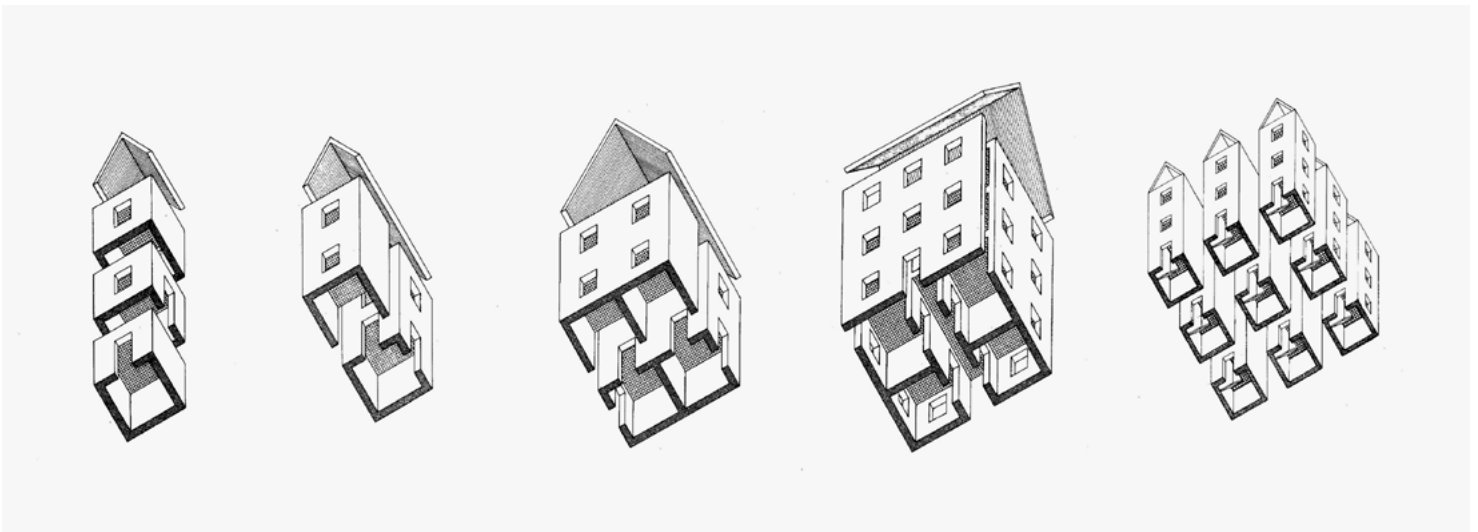
39 Rossi writes that “the points specified by Ferdinand de Saussure for the development of linguistics can be translated into a program for the development of an urban science.” See Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, American ed., [7th printing], Oppositions Books (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 23.

40 According to Levi Strauss the main aim of structural anthropology is to compare seemingly diverse phenomena to reveal those common underlying deep structures. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Scope of Anthropology, Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France*, January 5th, 1960, 34.

The researches of modern anthropology on the social structure of primitive villages also raise new issues relative to the study of urban planning; they demand a study of urban artifacts according to their essential themes. The existence of such essential themes implies a foundation for the study of urban artifacts and requires a knowledge of a larger number of artifacts and an integration of these artifacts in time and space—more precisely, a clarifying of those forces that are at work in a permanent and universal way in all urban artifacts.⁴¹

Within this search for, “essential themes,” is an attempt to find deep meaning as an “essence” of architecture that transcends contingencies and requirements. Rossi infused his idea of type with an anthropological dimension, viewing type not solely as a result of functional or technical reasoning, but as a reflection of a way of life. This idea is echoed by N. John Habraken in his essay, “Type as Social Agreement” (1988), particularly in relation to domestic types. Habraken argues that neither climate, available materials, family structure, nor use tell us why a particular house is shaped the way it is. *House-types* defy functional explanations and are best understood and described in architectural terms.⁴²

Rossi shares this perspective, which is evident in his criticism of Modernist housing projects. He comments on the “rapid obsolescence” of the *Siedlung* which he defines as, “a sociological model even before it is a spatial one.” He attributes this to a “presupposed static relationship between a certain style of life—hypothetical even if statistically verifiable—and a certain type of lodging.... It revealed itself to be a spatial conception that was too particular, too tied to specific solutions to function as a general element available for wide use in housing.”⁴³ He rejects the strict causal link between *house-type* and social order as an axiom destined for failure. Anthony Vidler echoes this critique in his article, “The Third Typology” (1977). He argues that for the Neo-rationalists: “no longer is architecture a realm that must relate to a hypothesized ‘society’ in order to be conceived and understood.” The notion of *type* should be emptied of specific social content from any particular time and allowed to speak simply of its own formal condition.⁴⁴



House-types from the Canton Ticino, Switzerland. From Eraldo Consolascio, Aldo Rossi and Max Bosshard, *La Costruzione del territorio nel cantone Ticino* (Lugano: Fondazione Ticino Nostro, 1979).

41 Aldo Rossi, 24.

42 John N. Habraken, “Type as Social Agreement,” 1988, Seoul, Korea: Third Asian Congress of Architects, November (n.d.).

43 Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 81.

44 Anthony Vidler, “The Third Typology,” *Oppositions a Forum for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture*, no. 7 (1977), 14.

These anthropological undertones endure in typological inquiry well into the 1990s.⁴⁵ Carlos Martí Arís in his work *Variations of Identity* (1990) states: “Through their work, the architect investigates the structural similarities that might exist between the archetypal manners of human behavior and the forms of the material world.”⁴⁶ The study of type is not just of architectural form, but also a study into lifeways, rituals, and human activity, a link which is best expressed in “traditional cultures”:

Every ritual is linked to a form, and the operation through which the activity taken on a stable form constitutes architecture. This explains the close connection between architecture and ritual. This applies not just in traditional cultures, in which spatial organization is a transparent reflection of a ritual linked to a cosmological order, but also in the modern world, in which human attitudes continue to be connected to anthropological roots, even though architecture has lost its sacred status.⁴⁷

The proponents of the *Third Typology* turn to *type* to ground the production of architecture in a principle that is deeper and more meaningful than the perceived naiveté of “function.” By doing so, they resort to methods of analysis, terms and procedures that bear resemblance to past inquiries, bringing along familiar tropes, ideas, and pitfalls.

TOWARDS A FIFTH TYPOLOGY: OVERCOMING THE COLONIZING ENDEAVOR

As we have seen, debates on *house-types* surface and re-surface in times of crisis as a means in Western society’s search for self-understanding. Today we are poised at yet another moment in which the interest in typology, domestic space and indigenous forms converge. This convergence has prompted a need to reevaluate the terms and methods used in researching *house-types*. In light of the growing interest in integrating anthropology and architecture,⁴⁸ the following section considers critiques developed within the social sciences and their potential for recalibrating architectural procedures.

Synchronic / Diachronic

Typological analysis is commonly understood as a synchronic procedure,⁴⁹ comparing buildings as static “snapshots” across time and space. However, anthropologists have critically examined this approach, particularly in the study of houses, arguing it objectifies houses and overlooks their dynamic and idiosyncratic qualities.⁵⁰ Tim Ingold warns that treating houses as static artifacts runs the danger of turning “native productions into ready-made objects, ripe for analysis and interpretation”⁵¹—a process he views as a *colonizing endeavor*. To address this, a diachronic perspective should be integrated in typological research. This approach views *house-types* as products of deliberate and historically situated practices, rather than fixed expressions of cultural values handed down from the past.

45 Carlos Martí Arís writes that the methods of analysis of structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss could be taken literally to establish the methods of typological analysis in architecture. See Carlos Martí Arís, *The Variations of Identity. Type in Architecture*, [1993] (Cosa Mentale, 2021), 130.

46 Martí Arís, 110.

47 Martí Arís, 111.

48 Claus Bech-Danielson Marie Stender Aina Landsverk Hagen / Marie Stender, Claus Bech-Danielson, Aina Landsverk Hagen, *Architectural Anthropology: Exploring Lived Space*, Routledge Research in Architecture (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2021).

49 Carlos Martí Arís notes at various points in his book that the method of typological analysis must be synchronic. See Martí Arís, *The Variations of Identity. Type in Architecture*.

50 Roy Ellen, “Microcosm, Macrocosm and the Nualu House: Concerning the Reductionist Fallacy as Applied to Metaphorical Levels,” *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 142, no. 1 (1986): 1–30.

51 Tim Ingold, “Foreword,” in *Architectural Anthropology: Exploring Lived Space*, 2021, xiii.

Visual / Non-Visual

Typological analysis primarily focuses on form, comparing structures through simplified plans drawn to a consistent scale. However, as critics have noted, this formal emphasis carries a visual bias inherent in Western culture.⁵² When studying houses in pre-modern or non-Western contexts, the significance of form may not be so self-evident. In fact, elevations, plans and even three-dimensional drawings are not universal but culturally relative representations of space. Not unlike the category of “domestic space” itself.⁵³ Applying Western architectural drawing conventions to the study of houses that were not originally conceived with those tools can lead to potential misrepresentation or misunderstanding.⁵⁴ This raises an interesting question: can we expand typological analysis beyond its emphasis on form and explore analogies that are rooted in the *use* of space or other sensory registers, such as non-verbal, tactile and olfactory aspects?

Human / non-Human

Typological analysis of domestic architecture has always been a catalyst for discussions about social structures, family forms and gender dynamics. However, this paper suggests that the study of *house-types* can and should extend beyond debates on human sociality and offer insights into more ethical ways to relate to ecology, land use, materials, and resources. Furthermore, by embracing a more-than-human perspective, the study of house-types can challenge the notion of human exceptionalism and facilitate discussions on coexistence with other species. For instance, the research conducted by the collective Feral Partnerships examines dwelling types where humans and animals share the same roof, their typological study is a way to announce the possibility for future cohabitation.

Abstraction / Contingency

Given the intrinsic anthropological nature of houses, discussing them in abstract terms, or reducing them to neatly delineated objects of study, becomes a challenging task. The tension between the “flattening” abstraction of same-scale floor plans and the intricate complexity of dwellings demands an approach that combines diverse methods and mediums. Recognizing these limitations, the choice of representational language becomes a crucial aspect to consider in any typological research.

The study of *house-types* has historically been an engaging and thought-provoking field of study, which continues to hold its appeal today. Types of houses offer an alternative point of view from which to question what we often take for granted: what it means to dwell, reproduce, exist and co-exist in this world. Today, such a challenge is more urgent than ever. To fully harness the potential of study of *house-types*, it is imperative to critically reassess its past methods, terms and tools.

52 Buchli argues that, “the preoccupation with form based on visualist ideologies of observation and documentations is what enabled a comparative discipline toward the establishment of unities such as the nineteenth century psychic unity of mankind and the universalist aspirations of twentieth century developmental agendas.” See Büchli, *An Anthropology of Architecture*, 70.

53 Many scholars have echoed this point. For example, Irene Cieraad argues the concept of domestic space and its conceptual counterpart “public space,” evolved in a Western historical setting of rising urbanism, tracing back to seventeenth-century Europe. See Cieraad, “Introduction: Anthropology at Home,” 3.

54 Ellen Roy argues that applying Western concepts, categories and conventions of graphic representation to non-Western houses is problematic: “Houses are experienced both as lived-in wholes and in terms of the relations between their parts. But the relations between those parts are not necessarily congruent with the conventions of Western architectural drawing. We are in danger of reifying a particular kind of representation.... We formalize by dividing and separating, thereby denying certain connections, reifying others, and eliminating the uncertain.” Ellen, “Microcosm, Macrocosm and the Nualu House: Concerning the Reductionist Fallacy as Applied to Metaphorical Levels,” 25.

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Edited on 11 October 2023