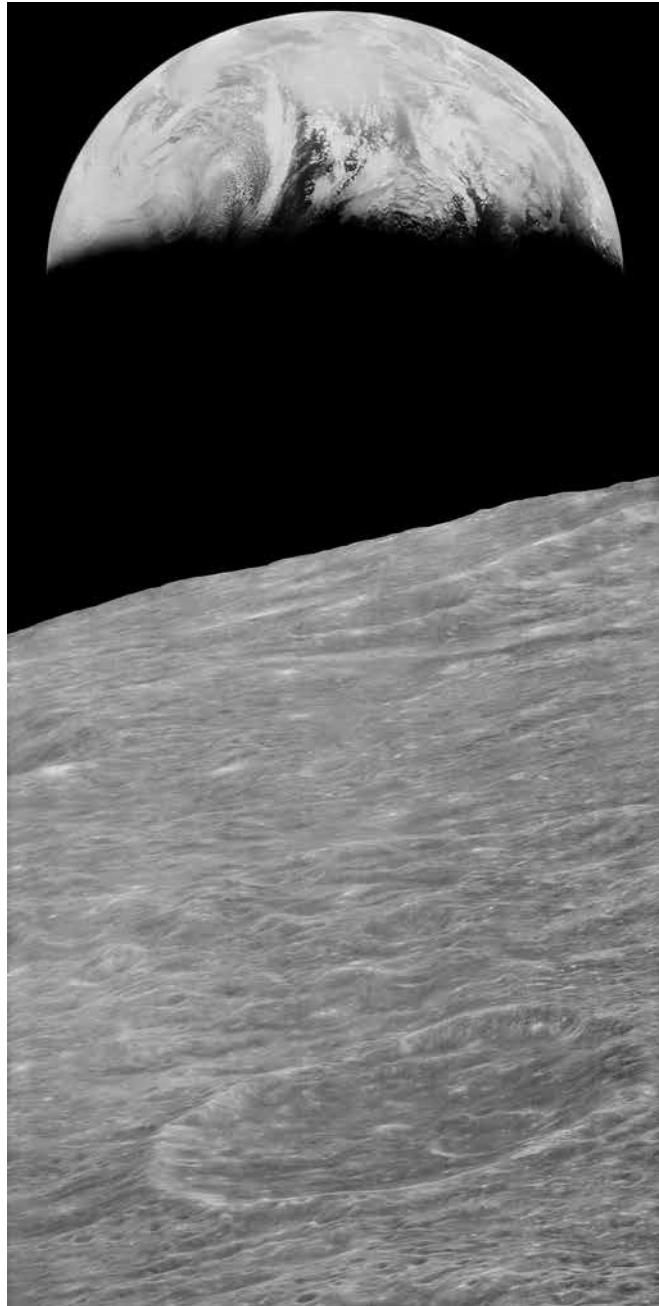


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An Ideological City
Koolhaas' Exodus in the
Second Ecumene

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Introduction

In 1968 the Apollo 8 spacecraft became the first manned vehicle to orbit the moon. This mission is perhaps most famous however, for a photograph called *Earthrise*, taken by astronaut William Anders. Deemed by Life Books as 'the most influential environmental photograph ever taken' (Rowel, 2003, p. 172), it is purportedly the first photograph of our globe in-the-round. Earthrise had been preceded, however, by a 1966 black-and-white image taken by the Lunar Orbiter 1 robotic probe. Marking a seminal shift into an era signified by universal globalization, the world's first view of Earth appropriately originated from beyond its surface.

Six years later in 1972 when Rem Koolhaas created his theoretical project, 'Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture', he created an architecture against geo-economic forces of globalization. Critical to Exodus is an opposing spatial impenetrability designed to keep people in, while keeping goods, capital, and politics out. Both architecture and city, Exodus ideologically resists a newly emergent globalized world, manifest in an interconnected world-city that Greek architect Constantinos Doxiadis prefigured as 'Ecumenopolis'. Using Peter Sloterdijk's spatial analysis of globalization, I will place Exodus within this economic and historical context – a counter-cultural space at odds with global architecture and cities. As a discordant proposition, however, Koolhaas provides a place in which humans enter into an ontological space: Sloterdijk's *Sphären* (Spheres).

The Global Second Ecumene

Originally published in 2005 as *Im Weltinnenraum des Kapitals* and later translated in 2013, *In the Interior World of Capital* outlines a philosophical account of the history of globalization. In this book, Peter Sloterdijk posits that humanity has entered a new epoch he terms the Second Ecumene. Sloterdijk borrows this term from Eric Voegelin's *Order and History* vol. 4: *The Ecumenic Age*. Voegelin's ecumene is largely tied to religion and faith, Christianity in particular, and exhibits similar characteristics to Sloterdijk's First Ecumene. Sloterdijk, however, posits that a new conception of civilized humanity has taken hold: a Second Ecumene.

Eric Voegelin's 'ecumene', one might surmise, stems etymologically to Hellenistic Greek. *Oikumene* is the classical name for 'inhabited world', and first came to signify development of cities, religion, and law in early eras of human history. Sloterdijk claims this First Ecumene is characterized philosophically as a period of time where humans became 'ontologically unified as members of a species that shares a single world secret beyond their respective local symbolisms' (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 144). For Sloterdijk (2013, p. 145) species unity is critical for the development of a spatial collective. Ancient Rome is the emblematic city of the First Ecumene, insofar as Rome spread a spatial conception of an inhabited world around the Mediterranean Sea. Consequently, the Second Ecumene likewise is defined through a unity

Frontispiece Lunar Orbiter 1: August 23, 1966 at 16:35 GMT, *Moonviews*.

Source: Retrieved 22 April 2014 from Official website of the Lunar Orbiter Image Recovery Project (LOIRP) <http://www.moonviews.com/lunar-orbiter-1-i-or-a/>.

of the human race (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 147). In the Second Ecumene the inhabited world has achieved an alternative level of species unity – one that moves beyond religion and is collectively whole throughout the global world. The Second Ecumene unites the various peoples of earth through a new global language: the universal language of money.

The Second Ecumene may be understood economically as globalization. By globalization I mean a process through which a world-capitalist economy has been incorporated into a single decentralized, interconnected, and dependent system that stretches beyond traditional national boundaries. As a means of extracting capital, globalization forms uninterrupted networks from one part of the newly-conceived globe to another. According to Sloterdijk, the ‘most effective totalization [of the globe], is the unification of the world through money’ (2013, p. 7). Paradoxically, it was a unilateral, asymmetrical taking of the world (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 10) that European powers sought to universalize Earth’s population through a singular economic system.

The spread of capitalism via colonialization homogenized societies into universal sameness under the guise of equality. Through globalization we see not only perpetual capitalism, but also dependency as a means of ensuring continued economic benefit. While Sloterdijk posits the result of globalization is the logical synthesis of humanity, I argue, rather, it is the purpose of globalization driving this self-same synthesis. Whereas Sloterdijk implies that globalization is the result of European capital imperialism, whose effect has been a universalization of world cultures and economic systems, I would argue that world universalization is at the root of European expansion from its onset – which began as religious homogenization and evolved into economic pursuits. The result of this synthesis of humanity, European powers anticipated, is an increased participation and reliance on a world-economic system. The more interconnected and universal the system – through the movement of goods, capital, and persons – the higher the impossibility of isolation from it. Furthermore, the apparatus through which globalization operates (commodities, banks, politics) is sublated into this larger and global milieu.

A globalized world has secondary consequences beyond economics, effecting social, cultural, and political spheres. The Second Ecumene bears similarities with Hardt and Negri’s theoretical apparatus, *Empire*. Hardt and Negri describe Empire as a spatial coalescence of global societies, where the ‘divisions of the three Worlds (First, Second, and Third) have been scrambled so that we continually find the First world in the Third, the Third in the First, and the Second almost nowhere at all’ (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xiii). Whereas Martin Albrow’s *Global Age* (1996) proposes that globalization has concluded, and Jean-Luc Nancy (2007) states that it can never actually be reached, Hardt and Negri agree with Sloterdijk that an interconnected globalized Empire begins an ahistorical epoch – ongoing in perpetuity.

Globalized¹, however, differs from the process of globalization, insofar as the process has become ever-reaching and absolute. Sloterdijk indicates that '(w)hat the sixteenth century set in motion was perfected by the twentieth: no point on the earth's surface, once money had stopped off there, could escape the fate of becoming a location' (2013, p. 140). Sloterdijk (2013, p. 10) feels that after five centuries of slowly globalizing, humanity reached a saturation phase in the mid-twentieth century. World War II reconfigured spatial territories across the globe – destabilizing and de-territorializing colonial societies – ending colonization and bringing forth equilibrium². The result was the end of colonization, and the completion of the process of territorial globalization³. The years immediately following WWII is an era marked by Sloterdijk as post-historical and globalized. He says if 'one takes the definition of 'history' seriously, it follows that only the sequence of events between 1492 and 1945 can be characterized thus, while the existence of peoples and cultures before and after this does not display 'historical' qualities – though the exact dates remain open for debate' (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 157). Architect Constantinos Doxiadis describes this changing temporal and spatial conception – the way in which humans cognize their spatial existence – when he says civilization enters 'a completely new phase of its history and a system of life with completely new dimensions' (Doxiadis, 1974, p. 272). At such time, the tropes of modernity retracted into remission. A global ideology emerged. Terrestrial colonization ended. Space exploration began.

Ecumenopolis:

Doxiadis (1968) proposed a speculative future city in *Ekistics*, written in 1968, he called 'Ecumenopolis', in which we see a totalized interconnected world-city with a globalized world-view. Ecumenopolis (Fig. 1) is a city that literally spans the lengths of the globe, creating a complete circulation, communication, and trade network manifest in a one-city world. Doxiadis claimed in *Ekistics* that humans are irreversibly moving toward an inevitable Ecumenopolis. He points toward four futures, which coalesce into a singular and interconnected world-city.



Fig. 1 Doxiadis' Ecumenopolis (1968).
Source: Retrieved 10 November 2017 from
<https://funnelme.wordpress.com/2012/01/03/doxiadis-04-ecumenopolis/>.

Through the lens of Sloterdijk one might interpret Ecumenopolis as a city of interconnected points without place. It stretches across the surface of the earth, finally reducing the last remaining sphere – our globe – to a singular world-existence.

Sloterdijk's perpetual desire for immersive enclosures cannot be separated from his notion that interiority is itself a spatial creation. As he describes in *Bubbles* (Sloterdijk, 2011b), humans build existential shells or spheres for protection, grounding us within a place of another with others. Sloterdijk's (2011a) theories claim that architectural space, through encapsulation, enclosure, or containment, is crucial to human existence. Architecture itself is immersive as it produces an environment into which its inhabitants enter – mind and body. The globalized Second Ecumene, however, differs, insofar as it offers no place. No longer do humans live or dwell within a given place; rather, location is marked by points on a map – a point among points – all of equal value (Sloterdijk, 2013, pp. 27–28). Doxiadis contributes to this spatial conception with his portrayals of Ecumenopolis. Drawings of the city are devoid of form, human scale, or place, instead Ecumenopolis is represented via world maps showing abstract information such as densities, flows, and movement.

As a utopic representation of a continuous globalized society, Ecumenopolis is symptomatic of the emerging ideology of its time: homogenous globalization. Terry Eagleton, in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1992, p. 3), suggests that aesthetic objects run parallel with dominant ideologies, especially when these involve the masses. Although stemming from a Marxist position, Eagleton maintains that modern ideological sentiment is appropriated in forms of art, whether in a capitalist or socialist society. As the globe has been consumed by the movement of money, goods, and people, the city and its representation, transform their structure to meet this new global spirit. Ecumenopolis projects a globalized ideology into the first truly global city. It is an urban representation of the globalized Second Ecumene, which is emblematic of the similar notion that all people are synchronized as 'points in the homogenous space' (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 147). An unequivocal perspective of the planet as the sole globe brought about a singular 'shared situation' (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 147) of its inhabitants. Ecumenopolis is a city where all life happens equally.

Four years after Doxiadis published *Ekistics* – stemming from the same global situation – a young architect proposed an alternate, polemical ideology in London.

Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture:

Exodus is a proposition, not a built project. As Rem Koolhaas says, it requires a 'fundamental belief in cities as the incubators of social desires, the synthetic materializations of all dreams' (2005, p. 253). To Koolhaas, our world is a phantom world that bears little resemblance to reality. A social commentary about the state of global London, Exodus is an

ideological project in narrative, collage, and drawing form. A supposition that individuality can resist collectivity, Exodus offers an alternative urban space to the global and universal sameness beyond its walls.

Antoine Picon, professor of architecture of Harvard's Graduate School of Design, suggests in "Learning from Utopia" that Exodus is utopian, but not a utopia. Exodus exhibits utopian engagement but is not itself a utopian city, as utopias are 'about social change and the possibility of a radically different future, ideology tries to stabilize the dominant features of the present' (Picon, 2013, p. 21). Utopias began as an iteration of 'an island far away, on which an ideal society had developed, a perspective which owed a lot to the discovery of the New World, a giant remote island where strange societies could be found' (Picon, 2013, p. 17). As Picon (2013, p. 17) elucidates, architecture's discourse shifted toward utopic and ideological speculation in the 1960's and 1970's. No longer was architecture an isolated object within a given urban context; rather, architecture began to address its own estrangement from growing political and social concerns. Architecture once again became a means of revealing, often satirically, the current state of affairs.

A city disconnected from a newly-forming global network of cities, Exodus operates in two opposed directions. Its function is a prison, which is designed to keep people in. Exodus inverts this role, on the other hand, insofar as its ideological purpose is to exclude. Its two walls keep the traffic of goods, capital, and politics out. This principle of exclusion likely stems from Koolhaas' time in Berlin, where he was struck by the naive notion that the wall did not run from North to South; rather, that it 'encircled West Berlin' (De Cauter & Heynen, 2005, p. 263). Like West Berlin following World War II, Exodus is an inverted prison.

Unlike Doxiadis' Ecumenopolis, which forecasts a utopic future world, Exodus comments on global affairs of its present. Exodus offers an interpretation and resistance to a global-socioeconomic ideology that is biased and limited. As such, Exodus is more ideological than utopic. Contrasting with the points, lines, and abstract maps of Ecumenopolis, the series of eighteen representations of Exodus are spatial. In spite of its large-scale urban strategy, Koolhaas represents Exodus at the scale of place, using three-dimensional drawings and perspective collages⁴.

Physically and programmatically, Exodus (Fig. 2) differs from globalized urban structures. Contrary to De Cauter and Hilde Heynen's claim in "The Exodus Machine", that Exodus infers some resemblance to 'familiar urban forms', Exodus is a complete upheaval of normative society: a critique on the universal banality of the Second Ecumene (De Cauter & Heynen, 2005, p. 265). The project is divided into separate, distinct parts: the central strip, the secondary strips, the walls, and the voluntary prisoners themselves. The central strip is separated from old London by two walls which 'enclose and protect this zone to retain its integrity, and to prevent any contamination of its surface by the cancerous organism which besieges it' (Koolhaas, 2005, p. 239).



Fig. 2 Aerial view of the central strip of Exodus (1972) interrupting London. In the distance are the secondary strips that extrude into the slums. Source: Retrieved 26 April 2014 from <http://socks-studio.com/2011/03/19/exodus-or-the-voluntary-prisoners-of-architecture/>

Each of the ten square zones within the central strip are particularly programmed spaces in which people exist – if you will – through a narrative beyond the remit of capitalist apparatus. There is no market, bank, or stock exchange. There are no office buildings. The squares of Exodus, whether it be the reception area, the baths, or the park of the four elements, carry a certain character in opposition to symbolic connotations of the global.

The reception area of Exodus (Fig. 3) is where newly volunteering prisoners enter the prison. The roof of which is a viewing platform where incoming inmates view the ‘decay of the old town’ (Koolhaas, 2005, p. 243). Koolhaas’ representation of Old London is a repeated montage of identical Empire State Buildings – conjuring direct metaphors with the equalizing singularity of capitalism, herding society like identical sheep. Even the humans are wearing indistinguishable uniforms of white, as if to reinforce this agricultural metaphor of automation. Humans outside no longer exists; they are automatons in

a controlled society of sameness – each person a blip amongst other blips, forming a population of the larger city Doxiadis' prefigured in Ecumenopolis.

Koolhaas' aim was to promote diversity and contrast (De Gauter & Heynen, 2005, p. 264). Although collective and communal, the activities that take place in Exodus remain voluntary and individual. Located near the reception area, the baths further rid inmates of the invisible shackles of socio-cultural protocol. Inmates perform debauchery on stage, where 'the freshness and suggestiveness of these performances activate dormant parts of the brain, and trigger off a continuous explosion of ideas in the audience' (Koolhaas, 2005, p. 245). As with the rest of Exodus' individual zones, Koolhaas glorifies the morally wretched parts of society. All that is claimed morally virtuous remain outside of the walls. Inmates act on their own accord.

Fig. 3 The viewing platform in the reception area with Old London in the Background.
Source: Retrieved 26 April 2014 from <http://socks-studio.com/2011/03/19/exodus-or-the-voluntary-prisoners-of-architecture/>.



An Ideological Ontology

In the same year Doxiadis published his initial thoughts on Ecumenopolis, and only four years prior to Koolhaas' Exodus, NASA disseminated the now infamous picture of Earth rising from behind the barren moon. Supposed to represent Earth as our one and only globe, the accounts of *Earthrise* are confused. In the photograph we see not earth's 3-dimensionality but its demoted reproduction as a 2-dimensional circle, bereft of scale, place, and life. In the distance of *Earthrise* rests the earth, like in Superstudio's Continuous Monument, now reduced to a flat image in the background of activity⁵. Its spherical origins only a circular residue.

In the shadow of Doxiadis' Ecumenopolis and *Earthrise*, Koolhaas presents a world where there is no globe, only remnant illusions: connected points and lines of infinite magnitude small and large. Relying on the form, urban strategy, and grid of the Continuous Monument, Koolhaas promotes the idea of the globe itself disappearing, only to be replaced by a flat, infinite grid. Except for one perspective, each collage used to portray Exodus includes a circular image representing either the moon or Earth. In one of these (Fig. 4) we see an indirect reference to a missing eleventh zone called the 'Square of the Captive Globe'. Walls on either side, this image includes actual globe models of the earth and moon. In this illustration, the globes are confined within a second boundary fence. Inscribed on the right side of the collage is written, 'an ode to the architecture that forever encloses them'. While one might presuppose this comment refers to the male musicians in the collage, it is possible it also refers to the globes themselves.

Fig. 4 Collage of Exodus with globes. To the right of the image includes the text '... an ode to the Architecture that forever encloses them...' Rem Koolhaas, in *Exit Utopia_Architectural Provocations 1956-76* (Prestel Publishing, 2005). Source: Retrieved 26 April 2014 from <http://socks-studio.com/2011/03/19/exodus-or-the-voluntary-prisoners-of-architecture/>.



Present in Koolhaas' thesis, yet removed from early publications of Exodus, the 'Square of the Captive Globe' was later transferred to *Delirious New York* as the 'City of the Captive Globe'. The Captive Globe is confined in a square and will not permit ideologies to consume the world (Koolhaas, 2005, p. 243). A microcosm of Exodus itself, the Captive Globe's role is to promote social change and to 'destroy and restore the World of phenomenal reality' (Koolhaas, 2005, p. 243). In the dialogue between Exodus and *Delirious New York*, we see both a metaphorical and literal disappearance of the globe, one that was subsumed by globalization, represented by Doxiadis, and later described by Sloterdijk.

Urban and architectural forms, while not causing the globalized-world, gives an emergent spatial conception shape – both representational and illegible – through its type. Counter to globalized cities, Exodus represents an alternative spatial conception through an ideological space. As a thick-walled container Exodus melds physical space with existential place through ideology. It ideologizes ontologically.

Through its representations, Exodus articulates a globalized society consumed by capitalism; on the other hand, Koolhaas creates programmed architectural space that resists this self-same capitalism. As a discordant proposition, Exodus acknowledges the global ideology in London proper, but counters these geo-economic forces of globalization through the creation of opposing ideological place. While Koolhaas is not intending to present an ontological or existential proposition, in his resistance to a globalized society devoid of place-fulness, he inherently creates place. Resistance is most-aptly offered in the form of direct opposition. In other words, to oppose what Sloterdijk (2011b, p. 25) calls the 'shellless' or placeless Second Ecumene, Exodus creates its antithesis: a shell in which to be – in an ontological sense. Exodus is therefore both an ideology and an ontological place. Through its polemical standpoint, Exodus creates a possibility for a world in which to exist.

Like Sloterdijk's existential spherical enclosures, Exodus is an ideal provocation with spatial consequences. Exodus offers a critique of the Second Ecumene – asserting a polemical alternative to alienating shelllessness in global, postmodern cities. Resulting from its opposing position, Exodus intrinsically imbibes qualities of spatial immersion, which affords place-fulness. The inmates of Exodus are citizens of a new city. They vanquish limitations and protocol of moral suffocation, and open their arms to an incarceration of re-emerged physical presence. As such, Exodus is not merely restricted to the context of its time. Through a certain ideology, architecture can instantiate the context itself. In other words, Exodus resurrects place and time.

- 1 → Sloterdijk also uses the term “globality” in passing when describing a globalized world (2013, p. 156), which was a term that has been traced and cited back to 1942 by William Safire in his book, *No Uncertain Terms* (Safire, 2004).
- 2 → In Chapter 32 ‘Post History’ of *In the World Interior of Capital*, Sloterdijk gives an account of how quickly decolonization flowed across the globe (2013, p. 166).
- 3 → Sloterdijk also mentions that the end of territorial globalization could be considered to have ended in 1944 with a gold-based monetary system, and at the latest in the 1960s and 70s with global communication satellites (2013, p. 12).
- 4 → Exodus was developed by four individuals: Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis as designers, Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis as illustrators. Koolhaas’ name is used here for simplicity (De Cauter & Heynen, 2005, p. 263).
- 5 → Superstudio produced an image with the Continuous Monument extruding out into space with the earth in the background. This image bears resemblance to *Earthrise*.

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