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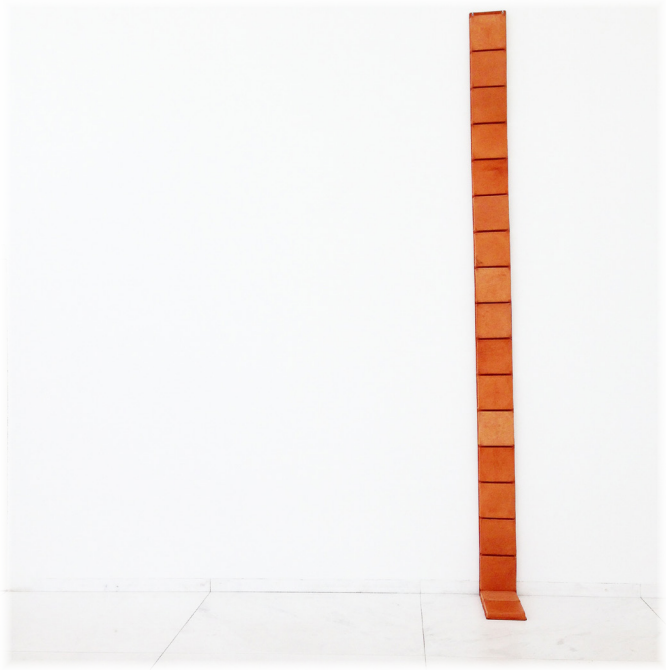

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with
Maribel Mendes Sobreira

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Of canopies and roofs.
The global interior and the outside

Giorgio Ponzo
Leeds Beckett University
G.Ponzo@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Abstract
In his book *In the World Interior of Capital* Peter Sloterdijk (2013) describes how Western civilization managed, over the course of a process that lasted about 500 years, to build up a global system of communication and exchange that ended up enclosing the whole planet into one "psychotechnical" construction.
The process of Globalization, implemented through a series of material and immaterial constructions — defined by Sloterdijk as "canopies of globalization" — determined both the (work) ethics of Modernity (devoted to exploration, research, and innovation), and the essential character of modern space as an interior.
In February 2015, Google presented the project for its new headquarters in Mountain View, California: a series of gigantic transparent canopies frame both large stretches of natural landscape and the space of production, the "workspace," seemingly embodying Sloterdijk's narrative of the construction of the global interior. On the one hand, the new Google campus appropriates and transfigures the character of past radical projects, from 1954 Mies' Convention Hall Project in Chicago, to 1969 Superstudio Continuous Monument and 1970 Archizoom No Stop City. On the other hand, it is seems to call for the construction of a new outside (even if not a real one) that will be able to break the boredom of life within the global interior and re-activate the processes of discovery and innovation that are essential to modern enterprises.

Keywords
Canopy; Google; interior; Sloterdijk

The global interior

In February 2015, Google presented the project of its new headquarters to be built in Mountain View, California. The project presents a series of lightweight structures, gigantic transparent canopies stretched above American suburbia, that aim to provide the community of the Googlers an enclosed and controlled environment capable of replicating the complexity and the diversity of both the natural and the urban settings, constituting a persuasive alternative to the outside.

The attempt to build this kind of substitute worlds, all-encompassing, enclosed and controlled yet explicitly built to foster innovation and change, is not new neither within the history of architecture nor to within the history of capital ventures.

On the contrary, the endeavour to build a totalizing environment, enveloping all human activities, is recognized by Peter Sloterdijk as the most typically modern enterprise: the construction of the "global interior of capital."

Looking at the ways in which this process historically unfolded can give us useful insights about the character of this space (the global interior), about the nature of the activities that they host (modern work or the process of construction of the global interior itself), and about the character of the subject that lives in them (the modern subject, the global worker).

Modernity as interiorization project

In *In the World Interior of Capital* Sloterdijk outlines the "grand narrative" of the formation of the world we live in; it is a 500 years long process that started with the geographic discovery of the globe in the fifteenth century and ended with its total enclosure within a global apparatus of communication and transport that make us perceive the world as one continuous, global, interior.

In Sloterdijk's view, the very definition of modernity coincides with the process of globalization (modernity = globalization) and westernization of the world, implemented "practically through Christian-capitalist seafaring, and politically implanted through the colonialism of Old European nation-states" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.9).

Globalization, the unfolding of modernity, acted in parallel on two levels: on the one hand, there was the literal geographic discovery of the world; on the other hand, this "penetration of the unknown" was always accompanied by the simultaneous extension of the respective motherlands laws, cultural, social, and economic frameworks that progressively enclosed

ever larger territories. It is in this sense that modernity can be seen as a gigantic interiorization project carried out at a global scale by means of a continuous process of discovery and appropriation by enclosure.

The formation of this global interior, a construction that is at the same time psychological and material (or, as Sloterdijk would put it, psychotechnical), is accompanied by two phenomena: the emergence of the modern subject and his ethics, and the new relationship established by this subject with the environment where he/she performs.

How the global interior was built. The modern subject at work

We can think of modernity as an enterprise carried out at a global scale by a series of different subjects — discoverers, conquistadores, preachers, colonizers, merchants, etc. — each having a different agenda that steered their behaviour and shaped their character. Beyond the particular aims and attitudes of each category it is possible to notice the emergence of common features that, all together, contributed to the construction of the generic modern subject. These features are still recognizable in present times, especially if we think of the way we work today; in fact, many of the rhetoric of work that accompany both our daily life and the successful business models are shaped on a type that can be traced back to the unfolding of modernity.

The modern subject is the active agent of modernization, the one who carries out "the penetration of the unknown." Direct exploration (of the globe) and the discovery of previously concealed truths can, therefore, be considered the typically modern enterprises: "the essence of the Age of Discovery remained determined by the expedition as an entrepreneurial form" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.95).

It is important to underline that, for Sloterdijk, "not everyone [...] is a subject, but rather one who takes part in the experiments of modernity, in the psychological formatting of entrepreneurial energies" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.57). Those who do not take part "in the experiments of modernity" are non-modern subjects and their attitude and behaviour can be taken as reference for practices of resistance to the process of globalization.[1]

1. If, on the one hand, Sloterdijk presents globalization as a historically unavoidable process, throughout the book, he presents a few possible forms of resistance. I would like to mention them, because they might be useful, as it will hopefully become clear at the end of the essay, when there was the need to break the monotony of life within the global interior. Moreover, Sloterdijk often devises anti-modern heroes whose attitudes seem able to undermine the globalization process.
The first of these forms of resistance is *skepticism*: a fixation in an "endless reflection" that does not allow the subject to become modern, performing the transition from theory to practice that lies at the basis of the modern construction. Hamlet, with his impossibility to be entirely convinced by anything, is the hero of this "chronic inhibition to act" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.61). The second form of resistance is *pessimism* as opposed to the optimistic future projection of wealth that anticipates

Modernity, at least in its unfolding, does not subjugate individuals; rather, it is constructed, through exploration and appropriation. Even if this may sound almost like an oxymoron, the modern subject is, therefore, an active figure: it is the subject that makes modernity and not the other way round.

In a way this implies, that there is not such a thing as "the project of modernity:" modernity defines its goals in its making, while it is constructed by those who take part in the endeavour.

This (work) ethic, heavily projected towards action, is a crucial quality of the modern subject: the modern subject has to find motivations to act. Disinhibition, the liberation from "what constrains us from action" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.60) and most importantly self-disinhibition,[2] becomes a fundamental aspect of modernity. In this sense also the very notion of theory, finds, in the modern era a new definition: the modern subject "theory, of course, no longer means the quiet gazing of thinkers before the icons of being; what is now meant is the active establishment of sufficient reasons for successful deeds" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.62).

Discovery and research, as well as the documentation of their making, become the key features for any venture, gradually shifting from their original geographical context towards less material fields. The original rush of European states into geographical discoveries through exploration takes, later on, the shape of the competition for innovation (and the opening of new markets) among businesses of different sorts.

Innovation, the promise of a future condition that is better than the present one, is the key factor that calls to action and that is able to perpetuate the cycle of discoveries (even in our geographically saturated world). When certain routes become ordinary paths entangled within (global) traffic, the innovator explores innovative directions.

Looking at the process of construction of the global interior it is possible not only to delineate the character of the modern subject but also to look at the qualities of the space where he performs.

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any (modern) deed. In this case the characters embodying pessimism are the mutineers on the ships. The third form of resistance to globalization devised by Sloterdijk is the attempt to re-establish the distance between different points of the globe and re-affirming the presence of an uncompressible context between them: "*participation, situatedness and indwelling*" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.255) seem able to oppose the spatial compression realized by globalization.

2. In fact, if traditionally the transition to action happens by means of a command, modernity succeeded in placing this "command to act" within the subject itself. Along these lines, Sloterdijk notes how the "awakening of a taste for the passion" (seen as *imitatio Christi*, Sloterdijk, 2013, p.60) within non-religious practices becomes operational in this process of transition to practice and shows how a "sequence of adverse events can be experienced as a passion, [and] suffering is converted into ability." (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.60). We can see how it is not incidental, in our society, the recurrent invitation to have (a) passion, to be passionate about what we do: passion delivers the necessary motivation to act, and the suffering that passion provides is a reward in itself being the imitation, or mirroring, Christ's passion.

Beyond the Crystal Palace

According to Sloterdijk, throughout globalization two radically different kinds of spaces confront each other: the "pure outside" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.109) and the interior.

As anticipated above, globalization is the process that succeeded in interiorizing ever larger domains of the "outside," literally wrapping them into the (social, political, and technological) construction of western civilization. Modernity, as interiorization project, consists in making inhabitable (and exploitable) previously hostile, indifferent territories by means of a pattern of progressive discovery, appropriation and inclusion.

The final outcome of this process is the completion of terrestrial globalization where the world becomes spatially saturated (the picture of the world is completed) and deprived of the possibility of further expansion (there is nothing left to discover). This saturated condition constitutes the fundamental aspect of the era we live in, the Global Age, or the age of Electronic Globalization.

If modernity succeeded in constructing the global interior, the next era (in this sense post-modernity) cannot but be permeated by a sort of claustrophobic feel, being a space where it is impossible to devise any way out.[3]

The global interior, this all-encompassing construction presents a very peculiar quality: it is not an entirely original, new, construction. On the contrary, it clearly presents features of the previous "outside." The interior appropriates the outside, mirrors and replicates it. However, what the interior presents is not an exact replica of the outside: the outside is domesticated, deprived of any dangerous element.

Modern architecture delivers multiple examples, either realized buildings or theoretical architectural projects, that make apparent the process of interiorization of the world and seem able to materialize the construction of what Mark Pimlott has called "the continuous interior" (Pimlott, 2009).

The Crystal Palace built for the 1851 World Exhibition in London is probably one of the most spectacular structures that renders the literal interiorization of the world: "with [the construction of the Crystal Palace] the principle of the interior overstepped a critical boundary: [...] it revealed the timely tendency to make both nature and culture indoor affairs" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.170). The Crystal Palace was not simply a "magnified arcade" (as Walter Benjamin saw it) aiming at sheltering bourgeois urban life and its commodified relations, but, much more ambitiously, "anticipa-

3. Isn't this the feeling we have at times when we perceive ourselves entangled in a world entirely saturated by information technology, communication devices, more or less social networks?

ted an integral, experience-oriented, popular capitalism in which no less than the comprehensive absorption of the outside world in a fully calculated interior was at stake" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.175).

Since the construction of the Crystal Palace, the technological developments have enabled the construction of ever larger buildings that aim at producing not simply large interiors, but rather environments, ingeniously controlled despite the sheer size, that are able to reproduce the complexity, the richness, and the diversity of the outside world.

In the early 1940s the journal Architectural Forum commissioned Mies van der Rohe a project for a Museum for a Small City. The project represents a seemingly infinite field where the artworks — a collection of recently completed contemporary masterpieces — seem to float in an uninterrupted horizontal space extended towards the horizon beyond a transparent pane. Ten years later, Mies developed a project for a Convention Hall in Chicago. The scale of the building dwarves the visitors gathered under the gigantic steel structure of the roof, supported by the perimetral columns that leave the interior completely free from any vertical structure. A similar structure, where a square roof is supported on its perimeter by few monumental columns, finally gets built in the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin (a project that appropriates a scheme originally conceived for the headquarters of the Bacardi company in Santiago de Cuba): the permanent collection of the museum is gathered in the semi-underground lower level, while the entrance floor simply frames a portion of the surrounding urban context. In these projects the roof, or the floor, simply highlight certain forms of life that they host, establishing a direct continuity with the uninterrupted space outside.

It is important to underline that these structures simply forget, or better, erase "the outside." Even in the drawings elaborated for these projects there is little space for the representation of the facades and for the relationships with a surrounding context: life happens inside, and the features of the outer space are merely replicated in the interior, a place where one can find everything.

Besides Mies' projects, the idea of building a gigantic roof, under which the most diverse activities can "freely" happen, was widely implemented in the typology of the American shopping mall and in the construction of large infrastructural hubs such as airports. In both cases, the original freedom of use that the open plan was supposed to provide is significantly twisted: these large constructions become environments where activities are carefully controlled, and where the "public" becomes a crowd of consumers.

Along these lines, and with the provocative boldness of a purely theoretical project, in the late 1960s the group Archizoom developed the model of No-Stop City. It is a "city without architecture" that refuses "all

the design criteria still linked to figurative codes" and aims at producing a "knowledge of architecture in exclusively quantitative terms" (Branzi, 2006, p.70). In No-Stop City the artificially ventilated and lit environments of factories and commercial malls extend to include all the activities of the city; and the city itself becomes "a conglomerate of habitable parking lots, [...] a system of typological storages and free residential forest": No--Stop City "no longer had an external form, but had infinite interior forms" (Branzi, 2006, p.71).[4]

We could say that No-Stop city and "the Global Interior of Capital" described by Sloterdijk converge in a space where one can find "everything under one roof" (Pimlott, 2009).

Mountain View.

In a video published on YouTube,[5] in February 2015 Google presented the project for its new headquarters in Mountain View, California.

The project consists of a series of buildings, a campus, wrapped within gigantic transparent canopies stretched over large areas of the typically suburban landscape of the Silicon Valley. Under these canopies, the actual buildings aim to be constructed in a way that will easily enable reconfiguration of programs and activities to adapt to the future changes of the working environment.

Even if, in the presentation video, three speakers — Dave Radcliffe (Google's Vice President of Real Estate), Bijarke Ingels, and Thomas Heaterwick (the odd couple of designers chosen by Google) — alternate in describing the features and the goals of the new Google campus, it is possible to say that there is only one discourse,[6] generally charged by a rhetoric that revolves around a series of contemporary architectural commonplaces about "environmental sustainability" and the need to create inspiring environments for creative and innovative activities.

However, it is interesting to see how one of the companies that most clearly represents the character of the globalized capital describes the project for its headquarters entirely along the lines of the "global interior." In fact, it is possible to read the description of the project for the Google campus as a comment to the projects presented above, from the Crystal

4. The social and cultural context that anticipated No-Stop City project are thoroughly described and commented in Aureli, Pier Vittorio (2008). *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism.* New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

5. Google's Proposal for North Bayshore. 2015. YouTube video, 9:51. Posted by Google. 28 February 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3v4rIG8kQA

6. In the following lines the quotes are transcriptions from the video presentation; for the purpose of this essay, they will not be attributed to the actual speaker but will be considered as parts of the same homogeneous communication.

Palace to No-Stop City.

One of the most compelling parts of the video refers to the relationship — mediated by the porous boundaries of the campus and by the transparent canopies — between the Google campus and the surrounding environment, either natural or urban.

As far as the natural landscape is concerned, the Google headquarters aim to establish a symbiosis with the natural environment even re-creating nature where it was erased by previous developments. Nature will seamlessly extend inside and outside the buildings, described as "greenhouses that will protect [one might ask: from who?] pieces of nature" and "create wildlife [sic] habitat." Here one might say that *natural* nature does not exist anymore: nature, in the global interior, is a construction.

Also the relationship with the surrounding urban context is marked by the attempt to establish a productive exchange. Literally productive: Google cannot afford to "shut away the neighbours," therefore "the buildings [...] allow both the public as well as employees to move through them: [...] part of our work is to try to find ways to make places that you would go and have a conversation and go for a walk with great pleasure, and choose in a weekend to be. So in that sense, our idea for the Google campus is really to give it the diversity, the liveliness that you find in an urban neighbourhood so that a lot of the traditional distinctions in an urban setting or in an office environment will have evaporated or at least been blurred significantly." Production and consumption, work and leisure, the city and the workplace finally coincide thanks to an architecture that is at the same time an office, a piece of neighbourhood, and a nature reservoir.

The seamless continuity between the natural environment, the city, architecture, and the modes of production ("the way we work") is further made clear: "in nature, things aren't over-programmed or over-prescribed. And in a way, if our cities or our work environments could have more of this flexibility or openness for interpretation, they would become more stimulating and more creative environments to live and work in. [...] The desire, really, is to try to create pieces of environment you can work in, in multiple ways. Suddenly, within this, the architecture of the building becomes almost like giant pieces of furniture that can be connected in different ways. […]. You can just pile them up and assemble them differently, with basically no new materials."

Again, instead of looking at the project for Google campus, we should read these words and simultaneously look at the work of Superstudio, whose projects Continuous Monument (1969), Supersurface (1972) and the later furniture design products seamlessly connect landscape, architecture and domestic space.

The project of the Google campus makes apparent that the project of No-Stop City is accomplished: both nature and the city are interiorized,

the architect looks at the city as pieces of furniture meaning that scale relationships do not matter anymore, program is incidental and can change at any time in any location.

The real outside (does not exist)

We have seen how modernity coincided with a progressive interiorization of the world and how a series of architectural projects made apparent this process. We have defined modern work as the activity that aimed at appropriating ever larger expanses of previously unknown territories, finally realizing globalization. Then, looking at the Google campus project we have seen a series of semi-transparent structures "colonizing" the sub-urban American landscape and framing nature and working environments within gigantic canopies.

The figure of the canopy is particularly interesting.

The "canopies of globalization" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.120) are a series of material (e.g. the ships) and immaterial (e.g. the insurance system) constructions — "psychotechnical figures" — that helped European states to displace their power across the globe, exporting value(s) and meaning(s) of motherlands into previously inhospitable spaces (the oceans and the unknown continents).

The canopies were, in the first place, instrumental to build a familiar framework; otherwise, outside these canopies, the modern subject was confronted with a physical and moral state of absolute deterritorialization with no attachment to objects and no need to respect any house rule. In order to escape this condition of spatial alienation (being "displaced bodies in an abandoned space", Sloterdijk, 2013, p.110) the modern subject had to find ways to inhabit the outside: "the living arts of modernity aim to establish the non-indifferent within the indifferent" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.115).[7] It was precisely the activity of constructing, dismantling, displacing, rebuilding settlements into the unknown, in a repeated cycle, that characterized the realization of the project of modernity as continuous effort to explore, discover, appropriate, and innovate.

Eventually the canopies of globalization grew to enclose the whole world. With a side-effect: both the Crystal Palace (as read by Sloterdijk) and Archizoom's No-Stop City ended up producing boredom. The construction of the Crystal Palace aimed at presenting the world as an object to be exhibited, entirely tamed and pacified: inside the crystal palace "hu-

7. Initially, the ship was one of the technical devices that work in this sense. The space of the ship is an extension of the motherland (as long as it carries the flag of a crown). Once landed overseas its qualities will transfer into the unknown space by a series of other light, mobile, and more or less provisional "interior" spaces spawning from it (canopies, tents, caravan, cars, etc., Sloterdijk, 2013, p.122)

mans are cheated of their ecstasy, their loneliness, their own decisions, and their own direct connection to the absolute outside, namely death. Mass culture, humanism and biologism are the cheerful masks that [...] conceal the profound boredom of an existence devoid of challenge" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.172). Similarly, according to its authors, No-Stop City deliberately internalized "the catatonic dimensions of the market" (Branzi, 2006, 71). If the construction of the global interior was the goal of modernity, its accomplishment brings mankind into a new era — post-modernity or post--history — and sets a new goal: the crystallization of this status and the generalization of boredom.

But, looking at the Google campus project, why would canopies be needed within the global interior? What are these canopies doing?

There is one property of the canopy that should not be overlooked. By drawing a protective boundary, the canopy actually draws an outside. We believed that there was no outside anymore, and that spaces of different nature were seamlessly connected at a global scale. Now, we are confronted with a series of structures that re-establish an outside, even if it is, as in the case of the re-created wilderness of the Google campus, a constructed — a fake — one.

It seems that there is a need for re-inventing, re-cognizing, and re--constructing an outside as if this friction between the inside and the outside was the fundamentally productive activity, the zero degree of (modern) work, the only process that is actually able to innovate, break boredom, produce value; re-establishing an outside would create "inexhaustible horizons for projection and invention in the face of a geographically exhausted world" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.115). In order to breach contemporary monotony "the task of philosophy would then be to shatter the glass roof over one's own head and directly make the individual the monstrous once again" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p.173).

If this is the task of philosophy, what is the task of architecture?

Two different strategies could aim at re-establishing an outside.

The first looks at practices that could be defined in a hybrid disciplinary territory between art (installations and performances), architecture, and political activism: temporary projects, subversive occupation of public or abandoned spaces can activate certain sensible spots constructing within the otherwise frozen and ossified condition of the global interior. It can be noticed that this is not an original strategy, but — I would argue — needs to be re-initiated from time to time picking up a tradition that can be referred back to the activities of the collectives Ant Farm (in the late 1960s and early 1970s) and, more recently, Raumlabor.

The second strategy takes a more theoretical or psychoanalytical (post Lacanian / Zizekian) direction investigating the perverse need to construct a fake outside (a projected one, a non-real one) in order to re-

-initiate the productive process of exploration, discovery and innovation; it seems that we will have to pretend that the global interior does not exist and put at work the mechanisms that regulate the relationships between the symbolic, the imaginary, the real in the Lacanian triadic construction of the most radical interior space: our unconscious.

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