The *Nomos* of the Cloud

But historical forces wait for science, no more than Columbus waited for Copernicus. Each time, through the impulse of new historical forces, new lands and seas enter into the horizon of the collective consciousness, the spaces of historical existence are transformed. At that moment arise new measurements and dimensions of political-historical activity, new sciences, new orders, new life or reborn peoples. Seneca: the hot Indus and the cold Araxes converge, Persians drink from the Elbe and Rhine. Thetis will reveal new worlds. And Thule will no longer be the outer edge of the Earth.

—Carl Schmitt[1]

The space of the globe is a circle of circles. Time is imprisoned in the solar system where one may distinguish circles of circles by transfer, rotation, by helices and spirals.

—Michel Serres[2]

We began with an architectural question and then worked toward a political theory. In this chapter, we begin with a political theory and work up toward a technological predicament. As argued, The Stack emerges not only as a global technical system but also as geopolitical geography. It is able to do so because it also emerges from modern political space and its capacities to site, subdivide, and occupy "new worlds." First, we consider the geographic history of sovereignty through (and against) the notorious German legal theorist Carl Schmitt's notion of *nomos*. For Schmitt, the physical incision of the line into the earth precedes the empty abstractions of mathematized grids and naval liquidity and is essential to any proper sovereign form. We will examine Schmitt's binary opposition between the land and the sea, the physical and the virtual, with regard to The Stack, first to put it to use and ultimately to break it apart and likely leave it behind. In the chapter following, we define the institutional logics of platforms in general by considering their technical processes as political technologies. We then consider examples of how platforms (specifically *stacks*) have been employed to compose economies and societies in their own image. Finally we will examine the specific layers and logics of The Stack as developed in subsequent chapters.

4.   Dividing Sovereignty

In starting with and from political theory in this first part, it is important to acknowl-
edge in advance that "sovereignty" is positioned as a question, not as a given conclu-
sion. The implication is not that software is new and sovereignty is timeless, thereby
leading one to ask how sovereignty now works through software, but rather that both
are now mutually contingent and that the work of software at a global scale itself pro-
duces unfamiliar sorts of sovereignties. Even so, the many connotations of sovereignty
are highly contested in political philosophy, and this book is unlikely to temper this
and may disappoint anyone looking for the definitive explication of the concept.
Even so, we can say that in the most prosaic sense, state sovereignty is drawn out by
rules of an international system that is itself guaranteed by the federation of states.
According to this, a state would have a right to the legitimate exercise of control and
governance within an exclusive geographic domain, usually of land, including cer-
tain monopolies over legitimate violence and the recognition of and by international
law. This arrangement is predominant but incomplete. It is characterized, at the very
least, by its own continuous breaching. In relation to this system are other several spe-
cific sovereignties in play: the legal sovereignty of states recognizing one another; an
interdependence sovereignty of stable global flows of resources and capital; domestic
sovereignty, and the state's authority over its own internal mechanisms and institu-
tions; and Westphalian sovereignty, that states have the right to separately determine
their own domestic structures of authority.[3] The Westphalian mode is, as I've sug-
gested, also predicated on a particular and arbitrary geographic design of political
space defined primarily as zones of land, named by and as states. Sovereign decision
has, of course, been a focus of renewed attention, from Jean Bodin's definition of the
sovereign as the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth through to the
more Hobbesian definition of the sovereign as "he who decides on the exception."[4]
The exception is that which is on the face of it undecidable by the law, but which the
sovereign assumes the right to adjudicate nevertheless. The sovereign is he who has
the power to suspend the regularity of the law and issue enforcement into the indeter-
minate state of this "emergency." Giorgio Agamben's reading of Carl Schmitt moved
this "decisionism" close to the primitive core of political authority (particularly after
9/11, when irregular jurisdictions and executive actions were announced regularly as
the new normal).[5] His work also convened a lively discourse on sovereignty, including
resistance to its forms, in relation to constituted and constitutive violence, drawing
heavily on Walter Benjamin's 1934 essay, "A Critique of Violence," as well as Agam-
ben's own employment of Schmitt's terminology to identify the *camp* (specifically the
concentration camp) as "the *nomos* of the Modern."[6] Sovereignty here is not limited
to the work of states. In his later-career lectures on biopolitics at Collège de France,
Foucault outlined his idiosyncratic history of neoliberalism, which for Foucault was

itself a unique subspecies of capitalism. He argued that one of the things that makes neoliberalism unique is that markets do not operate in conjunction with or in conflict with sovereign states, but rather that sovereignty is itself shifted from states into markets. For sovereign markets, rights of economic exchange supersede the governance of public order at the level of the individual and the collective.[7] Abstracted calculation supporting the strategic financialization of assets, both real and speculative, takes on new importance, and so at least in this regard, the historical emergence planetary-scale computation and neoliberalism are intertwined. However, as we examine in some detail with regard to platform sovereignty, that pairing is neither requisite nor inevitable.

For The Stack's sovereign products, the decision over the exception remains crucial in several ways, including in relation to where and when the law is suspended on behalf of the drama of violence, but also where and when boundaries of Westphalian subdivisions have jurisdictional preeminence versus other spatial orders. Most importantly, it is the *reversibility* of the exception that makes it so fraught; it is at once outside the law yet determined by the authority of law itself and available for retroactive normalization at any time. For The Stack (and for other orders), this may work through reversibility of geographic lines of segmentation, gathering an interior at one moment and guarding against an exteriority in the next. Those segmentations may divide physical space or separate layers in a larger machine, and from this conjunction, we can trace an infrastructural sovereignty that is produced less by formal law than by the shared physical postures of political subjects in relation to common infrastructure. Within that broader framework, we can also identify *platform sovereignty* as a still immature combination of legally articulated political subjectivity (one sometimes determined by geographic position and sometimes not) and an infrastructural sovereignty produced in relation to the platform infrastructures of planetary-scale computation, regardless of whether these are privately or publicly owned. We'll see that platform sovereignty operates within territories that are composed of intersecting lines, some physical and some virtual, and for this, deciding exceptions is no less critical. The exceptions to be decided, however, are over what geographies those lines describe and what conditions they inscribe. Is one side or the other the inside or outside? Is this a camp or enclave?

Modern state polities are defined as interior to their own circumscribing geographic partition, and their sovereignty is produced in the fragile image of that line's stability, even as that line remains reversible (all extrastate actors rely on that inversion and its convolutions). In the end, this economy of reversible partitions supersedes the integrity of external and internal borders, such that any polity is always an incomplete complex of smaller subpolities, defined for itself according to its own private exceptions, both inward and outward-facing: capital cities, special economic zones, overseas territories, embassies, local ordinances, and so on. Even with these buffers, the stability

of state polity is always in question, because to the extent that the state suppresses its original constituting violence (war, revolution, settler colonialism), all future agents of subsequent exceptional violence against that state become ghosts of those first rites of legal absolution and self-exception, their most exacting patriots in a way. But the political work of the geographic line and its violent reversal precedes and exceeds formal states into both their past and their future.

Consider that with the first agriculture also came more permanent settlement patterns, more formal authority structures, as well as the compelling fortification of place, cordoning it off through symbolic boundaries and by real walls and bunkers. The zone of habitation more forcefully encircles itself, now less a territory on an open plain (or plane) than one gathered into a proto-urban interior. With agricultural settlement as the driver, it is food—those parts of the world that we ourselves interiorize through ingestion and digestion—that guarantees this biopolitical economy of space. The digestion cycle envelops inhabitants into themselves; over time, a city consumes its inhabitants as the inhabitants consume the city (and in this way at least, all settlements are cannibalistic). The boundary lines that define the inside of that neolithic biopolitical economy are inscribed walls that outline and absorb what is wanted into its own corpus, filtering out what is not. As these partitions are membranes between the inside and the outside of a real social body, they are also skins, and it is in relation to the sensibility, intelligence, and vulnerability of skins and surfaces that these systems govern movements between enclosure and mobilization. In time, urban economies of eating and not eating, and including and excluding, will multiply and diversify such skins, deploying some as abstracted infrastructures and others as exposed flesh to be disciplined, sacrificed, capitalized, augmented, consumed over again. But for all that, it is still undecidable in advance what will finally constitute the interior or the exterior of any linear boundary, and so a specific sovereignty of that decision must necessarily be invoked, implicitly or explicitly, and even programmed and automated. Lines (and surfaces) provide tension by setting opposition between the negative spaces to each side (and inside and out), but they cannot ever fully control how either side is charged in relation to the other at any given moment: which one is dominant and which is subordinate, which is gathered in and which is excluded. This holds equally true for Stack partitions, both spatial and technical, such as *City* grids locking off bound cells from the linear flow, or *Interface* surfaces drawing together *Users* and systems, negotiating on the fly who and what is driving any interaction. While this primordial dynamic remains essential for the apparently irregular geographies of The Stack, we will see that platform sovereignty also relies on genuinely novel developments emerging through the reversibility of "lines" that are equally geographic and technological, folding the world in and out and up and down its layers, over and over again.

5.   Over (and under) the Line

Globalization both destabilizes and enforces borders, tethering retronationalisms and technological integration into the same contradictory dramas, populated by state and nonstate actors, czarists and androids, switching sides without moving an inch. Consider this odd and perhaps quintessential episode. During the Yugoslavian civil war of the 1990s, a squad of Serbian paramilitaries had captured a large group of Bosnian Muslims and held them in open-air prison camps. Now-famous photographs and film footage of these detainees, standing behind barbed wire looking out at the camera, horrified the world and mobilized opinion against the Serbian nationalist campaign and perhaps in favor of military intervention as well. The image of concentration camps, now again in Europe, crossed some red line and triggered demand for action. The Serbs claimed, however, that the global interpretation of the footage was all wrong—backward in fact.[8] According to them it was the *photographer* who was "inside" the camp, looking "out" at the curious Bosnians who had gathered around the perimeter fence to look in on him. This claim (albeit decided to be false in British court) demonstrates how easily such lines can invert themselves when an inversion suits the strategic perspective at hand. The line may be drawn on the ground as clear as clear can be, but the quality of the space that it draws—what is inside and what is outside, and who or what governs either side—is always in question (especially for those who die on one side of the wire). As the utopia/dystopia of the Berlin Wall (known as the Anti-Fascist Protection Wall in East Germany) also made clear, the camp and the bunker, detention and the enclave, are inversions of the same architectural form. One is an architecture of internalization and the other of externalization, but they share the same material profile. While one works to contain the danger within its walls, the other draws the same physical partition to keep the world at bay and expelled outside its safety membrane. Any exceptionality of the camp is actually exceptional not only because it is authorized by a sovereign decision that is both inside and outside the law, but also by a preceding decision to differentiate that enclosure from its own double, the bunker. Each is built into the other and their shared reversible design; the outside-in camp is not the only figure of this *nomos* of the modern as the inside-out bunker is an equally essential posture taken in relation to the same line. We will consider how the flip-flop of one into the other can be normalized and even automated by platforms and how the "exception" of linear reversibility itself becomes unexceptional.[9]

   First, we need to recognize how different kinds of lines, segmenting and generating different geometries, accumulate to realize different kinds of geopolitical effects. Schmitt has more than a little to say about this. Drawing the world is a work in progress. In Ptolemaic cosmology, the Earth was kept under a crystalline bubble, dividing two worlds, ours on the inside of this glass vitrine and one on the outside, the heavens looking in at us. From the fifteenth and sixteenth century claims on the New World,

to longitudinal zones derived from Greenwich mean time, to the subdivision of broadcast spectrum, modern geopolitics is always based on a particular and arbitrary compositional alignment of territorial and governmental layers into a particular architecture: no topography without topology. Lines that are linked, folded, and looped become a frame, keeping things in or out, but like all other frames, they also present a certain section of the world and put it on display. The modern nation-state is itself also function of a cartographic projection that conceives the Earth as a horizontal plane filled with various allotments of land in which individual sovereign domains are circumscribed by jagged lines. Some are drawn as irregular hexagons (like France), some are regularized rectangles (like Colorado), some are discontiguous clusters of spiky circles (like Hawaii), but all these shapes are derived from the basic topology of *loops*. Also there is no geography without first topology, and so as we'll see, also no *nomos* without *topos:* no stable geopolitical order without an underlying architecture of spatial subdivision. This loop topology is normative but not mandatory. As we know, other subdivisions of the Earth are not only possible; their lines already proliferate. While some lines and frames are more physically tangible than others, for the political geography of The Stack, it is the physicality of abstraction that is at the center of things. As a kind of master architecture (in the making), The Stack model is also perhaps also a contemporary version of what Schmitt called the *nomos*, and perhaps it is what retires the Schmittian *nomos* altogether. This slippery concept refers to the historically evolving structure of the world order (more specifically for him, an *Earth*-order) and the corresponding partitioning of political space according to which sovereign entities are constituted. Is there a *nomos* of the *Cloud*? We may conclude that The Stack is the *nomos* of our moment, or a better grasp on the architecture of The Stack may establish that there is no real *nomos* after all.

My extended discussion of Schmitt and this term, *nomos*, needs some explanation. My interest is not to make a new contribution to the already well-trod domain of Schmitt studies or to suggest that we cannot develop a practical theory of sovereignty and political geography without first steering clear passage through his thought and legacy. Instead, some of Schmitt's problematic concepts are used for both the particular things that they may illuminate and also for what is to be learned by what they obscure, and how and why they do both of these. In this sense, his concepts stand in for other related perspectives that deserve criticism, specifically those that begin from and end with a basic distinction between the physical and virtual when trying to make sense of computation and space, let alone geography. Implicit or explicit, this lazy association of analog systems, with physics and nature, and digital systems, with artifice and artificiality, dulls and confuses our debates about technology in ways we cannot afford. A corollary to this is a discourse on "the political" that fetishizes oppositional antagonisms, and another that can comprehend technology only as an instrument or topic of governance, and not as its actual form.[10] The *nomos*, however,

is one of his concepts ("exception" is another) that might be twisted and reused in such a way as to force it toward very different conclusions that he intended. But what is *nomos* exactly?

In his 1950 work, *The* Nomos *of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum Europaeum*, the legal theorist offered a sweeping history of Western geopolitical architectures. The work focuses on how Roman, British, and Germanic legal empires drew the geometry of territory—specifically European territory—into a stable of political geographic orders from which spatial sovereignty over land, sea, and air was derived.[11] Schmitt defined *nomos* as "the Greek word for the first measure of all subsequent measures, for the first land appropriation understood as the first partite and classification of space, for the primeval division and distribution, is *nomos*."[12] It is a both a structural logic in accordance with the primal first act of territorial inscription that gives rise to its subsequent formalization; it is a making of a territorial order through the execution of a territorial claim and physical occupation that precedes it. It also refers to a set of "principles governing human conduct" regarding war, space, and governance, but Schmitt makes use of *nomos* to suggest something both more concrete and transcendental than the abstractions of law. *Nomos* is described as prior to every legal, economic, and social order;[13] it is constituted by appropriation, distribution, and production, and only through this can it move from the particular to the universal: from arbitrary territorial capture, to representations of spatial delineation and to a geopolitical order. It is at once a physical oppositional arrangement, a discursive order, and an organic naturalization of this. Fredric Jameson offers another interpretation on Schmitt when he writes,

The concept of the *nomos* is a periodizing and structural category (whose family likenesses, besides one to the Marxian "mode of production," might also include one to Foucault's historical *épistemes*) then inevitably brings with it the problem of the break, not particularly solved by the notion of a "transition." In Schmitt, however, the fact of the break is an energizing one: first, because it suggests that each break, the historical disintegration of a given *nomos*, will call for a historically original production of a new legal superstructure or *Novum*. This call then lays in place the notion of an active moment of constitutive power…[14]

Schmitt wrote *The* Nomos *of the Earth* following World War II, during which he served in Nazi Germany, and the "break" that concerned him was the end of a European order and the rise of an American era that he views with deep suspicion. He was pessimistic that the US was capable of such responsibility—and even if it was, that its reign would be desirable given "the nature" of "North Atlanticist" conceptions of space. As the US and the other Americas became a more central geopolitical actor, both the global omniscience of British-Greenwich naval ubiquity and the Roman-Germanic legal order of grounded jurisdiction were displaced by other forms of transactional sovereignty. In Schmitt's history, this shift also validated transnational claims

of sovereignty over entire continental zones, such as the Monroe Doctrine, which Schmitt greatly admired as a model of how a multipolar *nomos* should work. The catastrophes of World War I and II led to the establishment of a binary architecture held in place by the extranational domains of the US and Soviet blocs, their hierarchies of client states, their proxy battles over postcolonial nations, their transformation of Berlin into an enclave inside an enclave, and so forth. Today another multipolarity between China, the other BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) economies, the North American Free Trade Agreement, ASEAN, the European Union, and the Eurasian Economic Union, among others, plays out both in and over types of space that are equally geographic and technological.

Schmitt's history of the origins of that European *nomos* is staged through the continental encounter with the supposedly unpartitioned New World, and the "free soil" it presented to the European jurisdictional imagination. (We know full well that the very idea of an "empty American continent" is itself an invitation to genocide. For our purposes, we rehearse Schmitt's theoretical argument but not the validity of its worldview.) Schmitt claims that recognition of an "unwritten" territorial outside confronting a European interior motivated competing common laws and juridical traditions to respond by formalizing political geography. The pressing challenge of giving order to the "free soil" made the current heterodox and ambiguous state of jurisdictional affairs in Europe somehow intolerable by comparison. That solution ratified the subdivision of loops of land, but not sea (and largely ignoring air and the *z*-axis altogether), in favor of a master Archimedean point from which this political cartography would be consolidated and naturalized, as symbolized by the Westphalian compromise half a century after Columbus's first expedition. Today the continuing (if still incipient) emergence of planetary-scale computation may represent a similar break and a similar challenge to the political geographic order. It does so not only because the *Cloud* is a new continent to be colonized, but because, as a kind of space, it trespasses the Schmittian metaphysical distinction between solid ground and liquid sea as the essential poles of geopolitical space and theory.

This puts us today neither at the end of the liberal world-state nor as subjects of a consolidated and self-transparent empire, but, rather inside something much harder to map because it is not entirely certain which space is which, what referent is physical and what distinction is abstract, the fiber-optic line or the pulse of light? This is not only a crisis of legitimacy; it is also a crisis of addressability, and one that initiates a break between one order and another, *nomic* or not. Our own encounter with a new world of unaddressed space generates a productive confusion over what type of Earth is to be claimed: land, sea, air, and now information; each of these seems to always be allocated, addressed, owned, and unowned differently. But this also is where we begin to depart from Schmitt's framework altogether. He historicized the fate of Westphalia and the European *nomos* through his two metaphysical modes of geospatial

governance: the opposition of an authentic grounded order and organic habitation versus an inauthentic maritime and aerial lawlessness extending over the line. The latter's promiscuous forms are governed not by immediate occupation over time but by abstractions, located by flags, mathematical geologistics, and a vectorial relation to starry neighbors.[15] The industrial militarization of aerial space with World War I destabilized this essential opposition, and with it, according to Schmitt, the basic foundation for not only European geopolitical architecture and threatened the possibility of a renewed *nomic* order to come. From the sky, a pilot's survey and visual capture of land smoothed the ground over and made it perceptually flat, oceanic, optical, geometric, quantitative. The drifting swirl of aerial warfare overcomes the distinction between grounded habitation and liquid movement through abstract space. Later, Virilio would echo (in terms not so unlike Schmitt's) the significance of this shift and extend the analysis to include the arrival of information spaces that govern and are governed through an even more radical visual abstraction of planetary space and time, and the even more unnatural mathematization of territory manipulated from afar.[16] Jameson again: "Yet the prophecy of an air-power return to total war, with the friend-foe pairing replaced by self and other, human and subhuman, is only partially correct, for it is no longer a question of air as an element, but one of cyberspace. Information is the new element that re-problematizes the spatial."[17]

The Stack also contributes to a geopolitical order and is a manifest representation of that order, but what sort? The Stack does not neatly fit into Schmitt's historical model or vice versa. Its appropriations of irregular territories and complications of geographical distinctions suggest more than modern political geometry outfitted with fast processors. Planetary-scale computation may need to be understood as a successor to these other modes of geographic governance—land, sea, air—each with its own logics of partition. But unlike the US Department of Defense, which also recognizes "cyber" as the fourth spatial domain of war but describes it as necessarily subordinate to existing forms of state jurisdiction, I suggest that other shifts are at work, perhaps even a break, that will prove more difficult to accommodate and contain. It is neither that the spaces of The Stack are enrolled into established systems or simply stamped with a new governing system of addresses all at once; rather, an accumulation of interactions between layers in an emergent structure is producing the scale, dimension, and contours of this supercomputational geography in the first place.[18] First and foremost, The Stack is occupying itself. Schmitt's opposition of the "land versus liquid" logics of sovereignty ("Eternal Rome" versus "Eternal Carthage") does not hold, any more than the distinction between the physical and the virtual.[19] For planetary-scale computation, the practical issues of addressing the world cross-divides of solid and fluid, the material and the informational, between sand and bits, between things and actions, between objects and enunciations, archived pasts and simulated futures and the structures that would govern all those exchanges as they bloom into new

forms. If addressability is also some form of accountability, all this congeals toward what kind of geopolitical space?

6. Land/Sea/Air/Cloud

To approximate an answer, it will first be necessary to show how this collapse of the Schmittian distinction between land and sea (and all that it implies for the ultimate career of states as they move into the *Cloud* and The Stack) is accomplished not only by a radicalization of the "aerial" into even more vaporous "information space," but equally as much through a radicalization of the physical line carving into territory and guaranteeing its own enforcement. As The Stack emerges as both the machine and the geography, the territory and the map at once, yet more smoke escapes from the ears of Schmitt's direct and indirect heirs. Schmitt's spatial thought is aligned with the German philosophy of his historical moment. He writes approvingly of Heidegger's dictum, "*Die Welt ist nicht im Raum, sondem der Raum ist in der Welt*" (The world is not in space; rather, space is in the world) as a path out of the "nihilism of empty space."[20] Jameson conveys that "the origins of (*nomos* of the Earth's) 'spatial thought' ... [follows] Husserl, whose critique of modern abstraction ... locates the fall in the separation, the occultation and/or repression, of geometry from the existential praxis of land surveying in ancient Egypt. Schmitt diagnoses a similar degradation in the dissociation of the juridical tradition from the brute geographical fact of *Landnahme*, that is to say, the seizure and occupation of land as such." The geographies of land, from sea, from air, are arranged by Schmitt not just as different projects and techniques, but as a tragic dilution of a prelapsarian origination of ground toward increasingly legalistic, geometric, and virtual abstractions. In considering a *nomos* of the *Cloud* by counting the transoceanic fiber-optics also digging through the countryside, data centers buried deep in mountains near dams, the exotic minerals pulled from African rivers to make cell phones, alongside the engineered hallucinations of augmented reality, an inability to stay true to the dirt-venerating provincialism of Schmittian *nomic* priorities is seriously challenged. No workable distinction between ground and water, between *Cloud* infrastructure and *Cloud* interactivity as mapped across some spectrum from tangible to virtual, can survive much poking and prodding. Even so, there are *nomic* claims on the undetermined territory of the Cloud, as recent revelations regarding state surveillance programs and state versus state cyberwarfare make plain, for example. Even so, the residual confusion of jurisdictional divisions of land, sea, air, and cyber is itself worth mapping forensically. From its buzz and howl, perhaps alternative governmentalities for the decades that lie beyond might cohere.

The Schmittian primal scenes are the plowing of a field, taken and defended, and the state's duty to build good walls around it. These sovereignties over place are materially substantiated by a defended occupation of place that is supposed to outlast the

prosthetic logistical visions of Roman surveyors who have come and gone. Two lines: the ox draws its line into the absolute place of this soil, whereas the itinerant emissary of empire superimposes his invisible geometry—one a true fact and the other a temporary mathematical conjecture. For Schmitt (and for Heidegger and any number of subsequent political programs, both left and right, irredentist and esoteric), "the very possibility of legal relations is dependent upon an original act of collective appropriation of land which establishes the material matrix—literally the ground—of those legal relations."[21] Even forgetting that this is the same ox plow that Jacques Derrida used, once upon a time, to prosecute for writing against ontologies of presence, it should be obvious that "facts on the ground" absolutely do not defend sites against revision and innovation.[22] It should be said that for Schmitt, if not for Heidegger, it is the physical taking and defense of land that matters most, not the transgenerational claims of autochthonous bloodlines that may have lost out against new forces. These political conundrums are still on our plates, and the ecological absolutes staring back at us are based not in the simple honor of defending homelands, but in the *physicalization of abstraction* and the *abstraction of physicalization*. The *Cloud* is not virtual; it is physical even if it is not always "on the ground," even when it is deep underground. There is nothing immaterial about massless information that demands such energy from the Earth.

Networks make space and take space, and like any other architecture, by their inscriptions into a given location, they exclude other possibilities from being there. Networks dwell differently than buildings do, however, and they exceed what a bipedal hominid would recognize as a single location, but they are nevertheless *placeful*. Network edges and lines produce interiors and exteriors, and so networks are not just superimposed on a given territory, they also produce a real territory by striating it. Consider the Montana East Line Telephone Association of the 1920s.[23] Before the federal universalization of telephone line service across the vast rural areas of the United States, farm collectives made use of a network of land demarcation and domain interiorization already in place: the miles of barbed wire that segmented the prairie. Using barbed wire fences, they fashioned crude but effective telephony using the steel lines as a signal relay channel. This network did what networks always do. The same network that links and integrates locations, house to house, in a disembodied conversation, is the same network that demarcates the distance and separation of each area by bordering them into a series of continuous positions. The same network of wire that virtualizes the presence of voice also establishes the territorial coherency of homesteads, each job easily folding into and on the other without fuss (farms, you see, are not allergic to disembodied inscriptions of informational geography). One line links across inhuman distance, and one line separates place into space, but no *real* line ever does one without the other and each allows the other to work. But any line cannot by itself constitute its own political efficacy and make its own decision about what is inside and what is outside. Schmitt

is not wrong when he argues that "the political works not by founding or composing, but by settling and dividing."[24] But when the ground itself is indeterminate, when the air and the *Cloud* are both so heavy with mass, then the composition of settlement and the division of founding crossover into one another, and so the sovereign decision over that inversion is always in play.

For Schmitt these kinds of piracies and perversities are always threatening to undermine the regulatory work of authentically grounded power as they reverberate in the void of our geopolitics. Onshore or off, the phrase "beyond the line" includes an exceptional or unregularized geography carried by maritime movements as well. Schmitt argued that "when the great pioneering powers of Europe struck out towards the world oceans, this immeasurable broadening of the known world resulted in a qualitatively new conception of physical space. The opening of the world oceans created the cultural context in which the universe could be conceived of as an infinite, empty space."[25] The internalization of this empty depth was seen in new modes of political thought, painterly perspective, literature, and philosophy. "Released from the limits and inhibitions of traditional spatial intuition, the ruling classes of Europe were mentally equipped to become the masters of the world." The emptying out of intuitive anthropometric space was the starting point for the arrival of a universal spatial order based on mathematical formalization and geographic interchangeability. Decade after decade, this groundless materialism was radicalized over again by mechanical production, industrial flight, modern chemistry, and, eventually, we now understand, digital computing. As said, from the sky looking down, the sea and the land are both flat planes full of points located in a universally matching coordinate system, virtualizing the immediate perception of geography in motion. "Air space," writes Cornelia Vissman, "seems to engender constructed images of space rather than space-experience."[26] This proto-cinematic flattening of natural dimensions, where the Earth itself is seen merely as a "thicker version of the sky," disheartened Schmitt, who saw it as a catastrophic ephemeralization of the embodied occupation of the Earth that should underwrite durable human geopolitics. Instead, that architecture would now be built on the unreliable footing of overwhelming synthetic speed and the screen of false equivalences.[27] This is because "movement makes space, rather than happens in, space"[28] and because this abstract global sphere is not properly occupied, it offers space that is merely measured. For Schmitt, it is less physically defended than divided up like an algebraic equation,[29] and it is the spacelessness of the twentieth century that the contemporary geopolitics provides, with none of the rooted limits of solid fortresses and true walls and no true distinction between friend and enemy. Without these, Schmitt warned of an era inaugurated not only by global war but of total war of all against all.[30]

According to this line of thought, the deconcretizing of space instates a geopolitical simulacrum spinning in an endlessly self-available matrix. It can never finally govern because it can never find a solid ground on which to erect institutions capable of

durable distinction between inside and out, us and them. At the same time, however, this universalism, "homogeneous … and morally and legally malleable," also has for Schmitt a certain ethnic and economic odor. It is highly functional for certain forms of capture and exploitation, namely English and American forms, which would not defeat their military enemies but instead "disqualify" them by policing moral and technical incapabilities with "universal" architectures that are in fact extensions of their own specific interests. This counterhegemonic move undergirds how some on the contemporary left, have made use of Schmittian concepts, against what they take to be a US-centric neo-Wilsonian empire building, and instead in the service of a multipolar geopolitical architecture that is heterogeneous and programmatically antiuniversalist.[31] For Schmitt, but not for most of these leftist deployments, that multipolarity is also couched in transnational *Großraum* (for ASCII, *Grossraum*), or "great spaces" or spheres of influences and domains of dominion over which dominant political cultures reserve systemic sovereignty, such as the US Monroe Doctrine claims over North and South American continental space. However, to establish what the *nomos* of the *Cloud* may or may not be, it is necessary to counter the misrecognition of the extraordinary spacefulness of global information networks, tracking their ongoing occupation, settlement, and doctrinal composition. We will observe the technically necessary and politically limited universality through which platforms can cohere polities, and toward that, we will look more closely at the *grossraum*, the type of claims it makes and could make (and how hard it is to decide its inside from its outside).

7. The *Nomos* of the Cloud?

For Schmitt, the Monroe Doctrine symbolized an end of older Jus Publicum European system of international relations and operated in a parallel domain to that arrangement of Westphalian modules, one for which multiple political geographic ordering principles abut and overlap. In that, the League of Nations was explicitly "excluded from asserting jurisdictional claims in the American Grossraum, i.e. the Western Hemisphere. … The Western Hemisphere was excluded from the purview of the League," and so represented not only another pole of power competing with Europe but another political geographic mechanism altogether. At first the model it represented appealed strongly to Schmitt, and his "advocacy of a *Großraum* world-view … grew out of his admiration for the origins of the Monroe Doctrine, when it was a *territorially delimited*, hemispherical order. From economic origins, it had found continental coherence, but had then been distorted into a liberal, universal, spaceless policy of non-intervention."[32] The model it suggested of a hemispheric multipolar arrangement of geographically natural transnational domains gave way, however, to what was for him most dubious thing about twentieth-century globalization. In Schmitt's positive vision for it, through the Monroe Doctrine, the United States is the sole sovereign in

the Western Hemisphere and its will is fiat. The doctrine reintroduced transnational territorial lines of demarcation into the body of modern international law, infusing it not just according to population and land, or space and politics, but by "land, people and idea," in opposition to liberal internationalism and "Anglo-Saxon pseudo-universalism."[33] For the older Schmitt, both Wilsonian/United Nations globalism as well as Nazi Germany's Lebensraum diluted a really "genuine" *Grossraum* solution, partially because both rejected true multipolarity and the coexistence of *Grossräume* (plural) in a stable order.

For The Stack, we recognize how our contemporary territorial and epidermal lines are multiplied, dashed, and cross-hatched as they overlap jurisdictions, and in relation to them there is no cardinal outside or outdoors per se. Their framings seem at once cacophonous and practical to the management of everyday life. To Schmitt, the "free soil" of an undernamed and undermeasured land is not the same as the sterility of abstracted global space for which he claimed to feel such *horror vacui*. It is not something that hollows out the discipline of sovereign decision, but rather something that demands it to act. So where Schmitt's original notion of sovereign exception spoke to the suspension of an internal law and its spatial imprints, it now moves to the adjudication of external geography, of the free soil of planetary-scale computation that for all its mathematics is not sterile, and of the lines that mark its starting points. In this, the sovereign decision shifts focus from the judgment of the enemy toward the design of active walls and partitions, and as it does, the figure–ground relationship between the law and the line, each framing the other, starts to wobble and oscillate. The design of what executes the interiorization or the exteriorization of any boundary, exemplified by the *reversibility* of the fence that defines the exceptional space of the camp/bunker, is not only controversial but essential. In an even partially multipolar world, the effects of these accumulating reversals are that much more complex, but not without their own governable rhythms. The ground begins to fall out from beneath Schmitt's bottom-line prioritization of geographic lines of durable jurisdictional settlement over promiscuous geometric grids and our ability to tell which is which. When the sovereign was revealed by and through his decision over the state of emergency, its identity was fixed into relief by this action, but now we are without clarity as to where sovereign arises from which decision. Is it from the decision over interiority/exteriority, or is it their irresolvable reversibility, or is it the line itself deciding the *polis* rather than other way around, or is it the programming of the line to flip-flop the open and closed according to some generative script? If we also sense that mechanisms of exception are becoming somehow increasingly normalized (and even infrastructural) by their further modernization, then it is because they are now embedded in the actual lines, envelopes, and interfaces that mediate the reversibility of the camp/enclave machine itself. Platform sovereignty may not only accommodate but require this embedding of decision-making interfaces. As technologies more than discourses, theirs is a captured decision over a now less

ambiguous interior and exterior limitation of where the outside starts and on which side of the line it sits, drawing us in or drawing us out (but even once decided, by automation or not, the active abstraction of physical geography takes over as lines reverse polarity all over again). It is here, in the automation of the exception, that infrastructural and platform sovereignties begin. As the provisional decision over the exception is designed into the technology of the line, the automated envelope and the *Interface* influences not only how the platform will address its *Users,* but also how *Users* will program the platform, and so another foundation of the Stack's political geography is established: the *machine*.

The Stack makes space by occupying it; it does so by surveying abstraction, absorbing it, and virtualizing it, which is how it is even possible to consider whether or not it expresses a *nomos* at all. If the space of planetary-scale computation is a new kind of "free soil," then that "soil" is land, sea, and air all at once, equally tangible and ephemeral. It can be both inside the line of the Westphalian state and its internal legal optics but outside its borders and sovereignty; sometimes it is both outside its borders and internalized by legal and military sight. It digs deep into the ground, tunneling cables across cities and countryside; passes across the seafloor of oceans linking continents physically as well as virtually; and bounces down from swarms of overhead satellites and cell towers. Its infrastructural profile contains all of these qualities of the earth at once, each of them dependent on the others. It smooths space by striating it with heavy physical grids of cables and server farms, and striates space by smoothing it out with ubiquitous access, sensing, relay, and processing micropoints. For its chthonic *Cloud*, data centers are housed under mountains with reliable ice cores; suburban farmland between metropolitan trading centers is redug to lay private cable for algorithmic trading concerns near the old AT&T switches in New Jersey, realizing a new topographic expression of the transport layer of the TCP/IP stack; while the wireless frequency spectrum is subdivided, auctioned, allocated, and bundled into derivatives like any other prized commercial real estate. Whereas the Schmittian "grounded" way of thinking detests dedifferentiated space and the flattening superimposition of multiple maps, valorizing instead the perspectival spatial order of human establishment, the geographies of The Stack go a long way toward collapsing distinctions between the one and the other, as its interlacing of land, sea, and air through networks of recombinant flows realizes the simultaneous physicalization of the virtual and the virtualization of physical forces. Again, ground is abstracted as abstractions are grounded, but if the platform space in question cannot be collapsed into a single type of Earth (land, sea, air, or cyber), this doesn't make it any less contested. Practical sovereignty over what its geography becomes is animated and augmented by a drive for a spectrum-dominant position within an integrated totality of enumerable, governable zones, both high and low, visible and invisible. Building out the spaces of The Stack is precisely the accomplishment of Google, the NSA, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, Alibaba

Group, and many other global cloud platforms, less by some Lockean right of ownership underwritten by cultivation than by the strategic articulation of the contours of a plastic territory. Its spaces are bent, inflated, and folded, and mapped accordingly. Inherited political orders are both circumvented and reinforced as the worlds they once described are disenchanted. That is, whereas states may be agents doing the taking and formulating of worlds, they cannot do so without transforming the anatomy of their own sovereignty at the same moment. The Stack space is not an already given vessel into which states intervene or markets mediate or political theologies invest with myths; rather it is generated in the confluence of platform logics that will recalculate the fate of all of these. On their own, the flexible terms of occupation might warrant Schmitt's warning against the permission that technical universality gives to total war (or what Virilio later called "pure war"). Unrestricted by the brakes of proper *nomos,* the absolute motivation for capture extends up and down from molecular to atmospheric scales. But for The Stack, these terms are not operating on their own untethered; they are instead as bound by their planetary situation as any other form of occupation. Even in the absence of a proper *nomos,* they congeal layer by layer into a metastructural order of a different governing order: a machine that is a state held together by deciding the spaces of technical exceptions as much as legal ones.

8.   A Google *Grossraum*?

The machine that is a state is not engineered without conflict and controversy. Today the specter of Google *Grossraum* hangs over (and under and in between) The Stack. Google's armatures, its internal and external interfaces, operate all up and down the spectra opened up by universalist computational geographies. Especially since Google is, to date, so deeply associated with the US and its interests, to what extent has the global space of planetary computation been occupied by its particular ambitions and strategies, and already established a certain claim on an embryonic political geography? Does "Google" (literally the cloud platform and the geography defined by it) represent something like a Monroe Doctrine of the *Cloud*, filling out and supervising a domain extended well beyond the North American continental shelf, across a more comprehensive composite spectrum? For Schmitt, the first Monroe Doctrine represented a break with an older order, and perhaps the new one (if it so exists) does too, but just as the first lost its validity for him by its transformation from an upright territorial claim into deterritorializing universalization, then at least, to this extent, it is possible to consider a it new doctrine because the first was itself already also so nebular?[34] The US-centricity of planetary computational space is even built into the infrastructure's own autocartography. Not only was ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), the Internet addressing authority, established in California and its relationship with the US federal authorities long controversial, but today the United States is

still (and may remain) the unnamed, unmarked center of addressable Internet space (US websites are usually ".com" not ".co.us" as they would be without this infrastructural exceptionalism). It is in this context that the National Security Agency's (NSA) comprehensive data capture, surveillance, storage, and metadata analysis programs as disclosed by Edward Snowden and colleagues are understood to represent a strong American state maneuver of sovereign control over (or, at the very least, of policing of) the spectral spaces of planetary-scale computation. The willing and unwilling complicity of major commercial *Cloud* platforms in this endeavor associates them directly with the reach of that claim, and so the Monroe Doctrine of the *Cloud* and the Google *Grossraum* are seen by some to conceal only one another. This conflation may simplify things for those who prefer easy plots, but it actually does not explain the situation very well. This decisive appropriation of "free soil" by US security services was met, of course, with outrage, including calls for alternative non-US Internets that could circumvent this capture (and in some cases also to ensure local and often authoritarian control by political, economic, and religious authorities).[35] We also know that the NSA's acquisitive line-drawing is not unique and that Russian and Chinese agencies are at least as acquisitive, if not much more, and it is also unlikely that European agencies do not manage similar if less hegemonic operations as well. Still, the unipolarity of this still unmarked universality already overflows the normal legal geography, and its militarized brokerage does more than just draw a new territory. It also occupies it. Provisional omniscience comes from making policing the primary technique of spatial approximation, such that the geographic delineations are the result of the search for criminality and transgression, and so the friend-enemy distinction between mutually suspicious states is augmented by a *User*-hacker distinction between the rights and abuses of platform sovereignty.

As is to be expected, global opinion dramatizes this in contradictory ways. With significant exceptions, the web has largely been developed through technologies and protocols of British, European, and American origin, with many of the most powerful governmental and economic players still located there (though it is certain that Chinese and Indian counterparts are at least as important in engineering The Stack that most people will ultimately inhabit). Its global growth could be read then as the creeping spread of cyber-empire and part of a larger superpower monocultural campaign, starting in Silicon Valley and Washington, DC, and spreading to world capitals like an invasive machinic species. Some European activists, on both the left and the right, describe it this way. Alternatively, the contested terrain in question, both above and below ground and across the plateaus of scale, could be seen as one that was always there but only recently activated and given shape by available technology, like the electromagnetic spectrum was before industrialization. Or instead, as seen through the slits of a Guy Fawkes mask, it should be defined as a global commons, a messy and truant public sphere for the common intellect, private speech, and social expression that

retains, and continuously regenerates, its own sovereign autonomies, and over which no security apparatus should ever claim to guarantee final jurisdiction. Or rather, for the view from Beijing (and from some of Washington, DC), sovereignty remains by right of modern national borders to retain (somehow) full control of the data that sit inside their Westphalian loop by engineering increasingly deep packet filtering at key transnational chokepoints.[36] Propositions for alternative Internets that would secede from the totality in order to retain relative political, cultural, or economic autonomy could be based on a more autonomous physical layer, regional encryption systems, or even unique addressing protocols. All of these are theoretically possible, and for some military and financial sectors, they already exist and thrive. But other proposals come from Brazil, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Schengen Area, and others that would require new platforms to process local data only on servers that physically reside inside the territorial borders of each state. Their data would be therefore (it is thought) subject to provincial policing and supposedly unavailable to other state actors (the NSA or Google, perhaps). In some cases, this may be technically possible in limited ways, but as a general politico-geographic principle on which to scale the *nomos* of the *Cloud*, it is a reactionary counter-policing that is of dubious value in the long run. Data do not really have a national career unless they are forced to produce one. Yes, information is just as bound to local and specific contexts as it is to global ones, but the idea that its transactional flows could be filtered into national flavors and pinned down in accordance with the coherent order of a fixed imagined community and its ethnic, legal, or linguistic forms invites the sort of nationalism that always ends in tears. That so many feel the design choice is between this secret police, that secret police, and cryptoanarchism shows just how dangerously immature our geopolitical theory of planetary-scale computation is at this point.

So where should the decision over the exceptionality, or lack thereof, of the spaces of planetary computation reside? For now, we observe the metalegal acquisition and cultivation of *Cloud* territory by state and nonstate platforms but understand that the depth of that territory guarantees its ongoing malleability and resistance to full capture. It's true that while the contours of such spaces are composed precisely by their occupation (entered into and so made), the armature of planetary-scale computation has a determining logic that is self-reinforcing if not self-fulfilling, and which through the automation of its own infrastructural operations, exceeds any national designs even if it is also used on their behalf. The programming of inversions between its interior and exteriors is generic to the program of the structure itself. Decision is based less on an economy of scarce sovereignty than on replicable algorithms built into the partitions of vertical and horizontal landscapes. Sovereignty is not just made about infrastructural lines; it is made by infrastructural lines. This principle of platform sovereignty is where the costume changes of *User* into citizen and citizen into *User* are worked out. In that those lines are already globally crisscrossing grids, layered one on top of the other, the

portrait of unipolar universality versus multipolar heterogeneity is far messier without any zero-sum tally to represent it. The Stack is not *the* grid but an accumulation of grids, some communicable to one another and others not, some affording one type of provisional sovereignty and others another type, some incarcerating *Users* and others offering lines of flight, and many of them reversible. The tangles thicken.

Perhaps the regional amorphousness of a "Monroe Doctrine of the Cloud" is both the wrong *nomic* precedent to claim and the wrong profile of empire to be resisted. The Stack appears to be American, and as of now, it both is and is not (it is also mostly Chinese), but in the long term, this identity may actually prove far less significant than it might seem today. The Stack will also change what "American" means in the first place, as the identity of a geopolitical actor and as a governmental service platform, and in doing so, The Stack as a whole may resemble that new national definition less and less. If the idea of one universal grid is a ruse in the service of a particular type of unipolar economy, then exponential overlaying of incommensurate grids brings different kinds of reversals and accidents. As computational edges and nodes claim some autonomy by their programmed automation, they also possess more authority as decision-making shifts from the designer to the designed. The platform sovereignties that emerge in turn generate their own unplanned productive accidents, layer by layer and in combination, and with them come other universal positions into which *Users* might dip in and out. These are not exactly cosmopolitan for reasons discussed below, but they are nevertheless not unipolar and are quite capable of bending state claims against their will. As discussed in more detail in the next chapter, another core paradox of platform sovereignty (besides its geographic illegibility and axial reversibility) is between architectures of standardization that bring together heterogeneous projects and decentralizing effects, on the one hand, and transitory dynamic interfaces, which in the accumulation of trillions of interactions enforce the authority of that standardization, on the other. With the break from one *nomos* toward something else, also *nomic* or not, comes a change in the topology of governance, from loops on a plane to something else. Platform sovereignty is derived from the *Interfacial* line, surface and partition, and how its designation influences how it will *Address* its *Users* and how they *Address* the platform and one another through it. In this regard, the amalgamation and reorganization of interactions into verticalized planes and towers is not only an event in the world but a process of making the world. Its geography is not only the allocation of lines; but is a squaring of the line into frames and a multiplication of frames and cells into grids. As grids become volumetric, the potential interiorizing reversals of their component lines multiply exponentially, and the squaring of lines over and again leads to more grids. Grids are reversible by design and the "sovereignty" of their reversibility is neither extrinsic nor exceptional; it is generic to their operation. It's what grids do automatically. Or to paraphrase Gordon Matta-Clark, a volumetric grid describes all the possible layers without implying any priority or preferences. This is infuriating to

the Schmittian requirement for grounded, human-scale order of clear-cut antagonistic oppositions arranged in adjacent set-pieces, but oh well. Grids are bent and piled up on top of each other; multilayered images of their compound margins further convolute the situation as individual grids that were designed for one specific effect are braided into a composite infrastructure with emergent plans all their own. Some of these are expressed by standardized protocols and application interfaces, interoperable standards, and service wrappers.[37] With the standardization of these, the rigidity of the grid and its isolating cells lays down the generic system that gives an addressable location to every site of interest held within its honeycomb chambers. However, its geometric lines, up and down and over and across, are also avenues of regular escape and open possibilities of relation between those addressees. This is its bargain: no more innocent outside, now only a theoretically recombinant inside.

Mobility along the grid is also the writing of another line, and as these accumulate, they wear grooves into the landscape forming new channels. This is not best described however, as lighting a path of autopoietic "freedom," if only because the lines of the grid and lines of mobilization through the grid are always reversible. Movement away is another mode of capture. Mobility is only one part of an economy of motility, from capture to camouflage, that holds no happy absolutes; as forms, these grids are the diagram of forces frozen, just as its forces are the form of the diagram made.[38] Immobilization is not what counteracts the drawing of the line of acceleration; it is what demonstrates its reversibility as a matter of normal course. For this, the decision over the regularity and regulation of slowing down or speeding up, over passage from or into the cells of the grids, can be programmed into the actual partitions of the world, and in the end it is their programmability, not their ideal geometry or geography, that affords platform sovereignty to their *User*. The geometries at work don't simply reflect governance; they perform it: from line into frame into *topos* into something else situated where we might once have put *nomos*. Whether deliberately or accidentally designed, a geopolitical architecture is cast. Information is transformed into shape, drawing an arc of algorithmic governance along braided *topoi* built of asymmetrical superimpositions; less modus vivendi than the mutual invisibility of overlapping sovereignties. All of that.

Even as the sovereignty of designation over the "exceptions" of interiority and motility are unevenly embedded into the programs (e.g., architectural programs, algorithmic programs, software programs, political programs, economic programs) of the partition, the design of its automation remains part of the ongoing assignment for the design of The Stack as a whole. Topology is still the design problem, and as ever, the drawing of the line is both inscriptive and descriptive, both immanent and projective, both a writing of an immediate site and a determination of whatever might be there instead. The drawing can mark a surface, frame a site or event, or prototype how lines, frames, and grids should be engaged in the future or elsewhere. This is how worlds

remake themselves even as they intersect and unravel. As contemporary philosophy bemoans the preeminence of "digital" technologies and how they ensure an erasure of worlds and a profanation of solidarity, some posit world-making (mondialization) as the antithesis of globalization with its "atonal" quantification and banalization of affective experience.[39] For some writers (as for Schmitt), the loss of a special coherence of articulation is also loss of all inceptive self-renewal.[40] For them, computation has smothered the possibility of radical breaks with the present condition, leaving us all to wander about in a virtual haze, having confused the entropy of ubiquity with the space of creation. However, I am not convinced that the end is upon us or that perplexed melancholy is wisdom.[41] I remain deeply curious as to how sensible oceans of planetary computation will evolve, making available a colossus deluge of connections within and across people, things, and traces, not necessarily according to the doctrines of the Google *Großraum,* but in the collateral accidents of wonderfully inhuman machines (including us) running about, in and out. I suppose that for both of these positions, universal computation does destroy the "world," and while for the former this is a dishonorable apocalypse, for the latter, it is a good starting point. But stepping back from this too-stark opposition, we do continue to understand framing (by lines, by grids) as the presentation of some part of the world to itself (or to another part of another world). That frame is a device for saying something new or to say something about what is and is not new. The design of that frame itself and its capacity to enforce its own presentation is how the sense of a full world is approximated.

Clearly any discussion of the suspension or superseding of political norms that have grown up around the horizontal subdivisions of space, from national laws to human rights to currencies, will raise more questions that it can answer. We don't know as much about what kinds of geopolitical effects vertical lines bring. We don't know how to conceive of force and justice through them, and we barely know how to image the Earth through them. How is verticality similar and different in practice than horizontal? Does it mean first and foremost just so many horizontal lines overlapping and thickening such that they now have height, or are they a qualitatively different order? Regarding The Stack, I argue that they do represent a different order, but that this order is not given in advance. We need to design what that order is and will be. We start from what we know about what layering does to horizontal lines and what layers of vertical lines and sheets of horizontal lines pierced by slopes of diagonal and oblique lines do to political geography. Drawing from the sections already presented, we can make a summary. First, they perforate horizontal lines, making their ability to contain and conceal, as camp or bunker, more uncertain. As we've seen of late, this provokes states to mercilessly refortify their topographic contours. They normalize the exception of reversibility, making the movement between inside and outside into a programmed function of infrastructural surfaces and interfaces. They multiply the quantity of lines, making dense and unresolved grids. Some grids are filled with uniform and monochromatic

cells and others with hierarchical patterns, but all afford some kind of social posture and position. Their proliferation doesn't only close off space into smaller units; it also produces new territories that are equally physical and abstract, heavy and virtual. In turn, this space is motivating a new land grab among state and nonstate actors alike; it is also forcing transformations in how geography is held, conceptualized, modeled, and defended. The order of those transformations occupies a similar location in our architectures of sovereignty as *nomos*, but because it involves grids of land, air, and sea all at once, dedifferentiating their relative weight and liquidities, the logics of this new arrangement are also perhaps very different.[42] Because these transformations are both driven by planetary-scale computation and mediated through it, any strong distinctions between a political geography supported by technical systems and technological systems spread through agonistic geographic space are undermined.

The state takes on the armature of a machine, because the machine, The Stack, has already taken on the roles and register of the state. While the proliferation of lines has normalized a certain kind of reversibility, the early geopolitics of The Stack also sees the fortification of intentional camps and bunkers, with some populations excluded from movement and transaction and others stationed in networks of enclaves absorbing capital by centripetal force. To design up and away from this outcome does not mean a reestablishment of ground for an upright primate perspective of natural place or prematurely freezing in place The Stack's most preliminary new geographies as the only options. An emergent alternative to archaic and recidivist geopolitics must be based on something more scalable than settler colonialism, legacy genomes, and Bronze Age myths and the maps of nations that have resulted from these.[43] The discussion of the layers of The Stack, and the productive accidents of each, is an outline *platform sovereignty*, a term that will appear explicitly in some parts of the following chapters but lurks underneath almost every paragraph in some way. But first, what exactly is a platform, and how do the layers of The Stack constitute one?