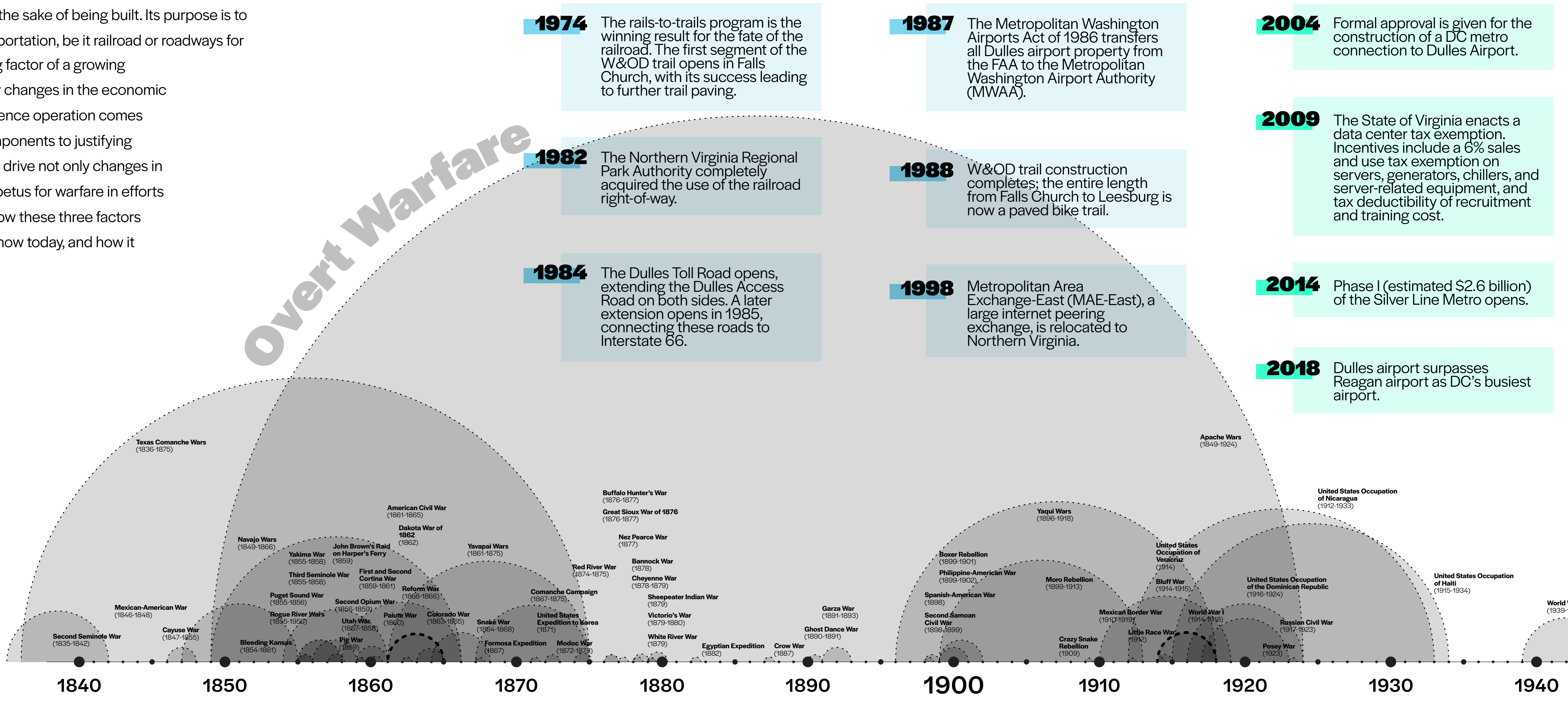


Powering Up in Northern Virginia: Transportation, Military, and Energy

This timeline explores the connections between the the buildup of United States military and intelligence capacity and transportation infrastructure development in Northern Virginia from 1840 to the present day, with the backdrop of changes in energy regimes. Northern Virginia is notable for its proximity to Washington DC, the seat of federal power while simultaneously being outside of it. In the present day, the Pentagon building that serves as the headquarters of the Department of Defense is located in Arlington; the CIA headquarters are located in the suburbs of McLean.

Transportation infrastructure is rarely built just for the sake of being built. Its purpose is to connect people to places. Adding modes of transportation, be it railroad or roadways for automobiles, is expensive, requiring the motivating factor of a growing population base, a factor that itself is motivated by changes in the economic opportunities of a region. With each war or intelligence operation comes additional funding and staffing, the two major components to justifying infrastructure buildout. Shifts in energy paradigms drive not only changes in transportation infrastructure, but also serve as impetus for warfare in efforts to secure cheap access for the country. We see how these three factors come together to build the Northern Virginia we know today, and how it might shape the Northern Virginia of tomorrow.

Overt Warfare



1847 Alexandria and Harper's Ferry (A&HF) Railroad is incorporated.

1855 Construction on the AL&H line begins under Lewis McKenzie.

1864 In the first year of the Civil War, the railroad is seized by Union forces and incorporated into the U.S. Military Railroad System. It's returned to the original owners post-Civil War, in 1865.

1870-1894 The name of the railroad changes several times, as do the owners, eventually landing in the hands of Southern Railroad in 1894.

1911 Combining with Southern Railway, McLean and Elkins incorporated the new company as the Western and Old Dominion Railway.

1903 John R. McLean and Stephen B. Elkins begin the construction of the Great Falls and Old Dominion Railroad as an electric trolley line to carry passengers between Washington D.C. and the outlying suburbs.

1932 The company could not survive the devastating effects of the Great Depression and declared bankruptcy in 1932.

late 1940's All services on the W&OD railroad are converted to diesel or gasoline.

1948 The Civil Aeronautics Association (CAA) begins exploring three sites for a second airport serving the Washington DC area: Burke, Annandale, and Willard.

1951 The W&OD Railroad Company focuses mainly on freight, ending passenger and mail service.

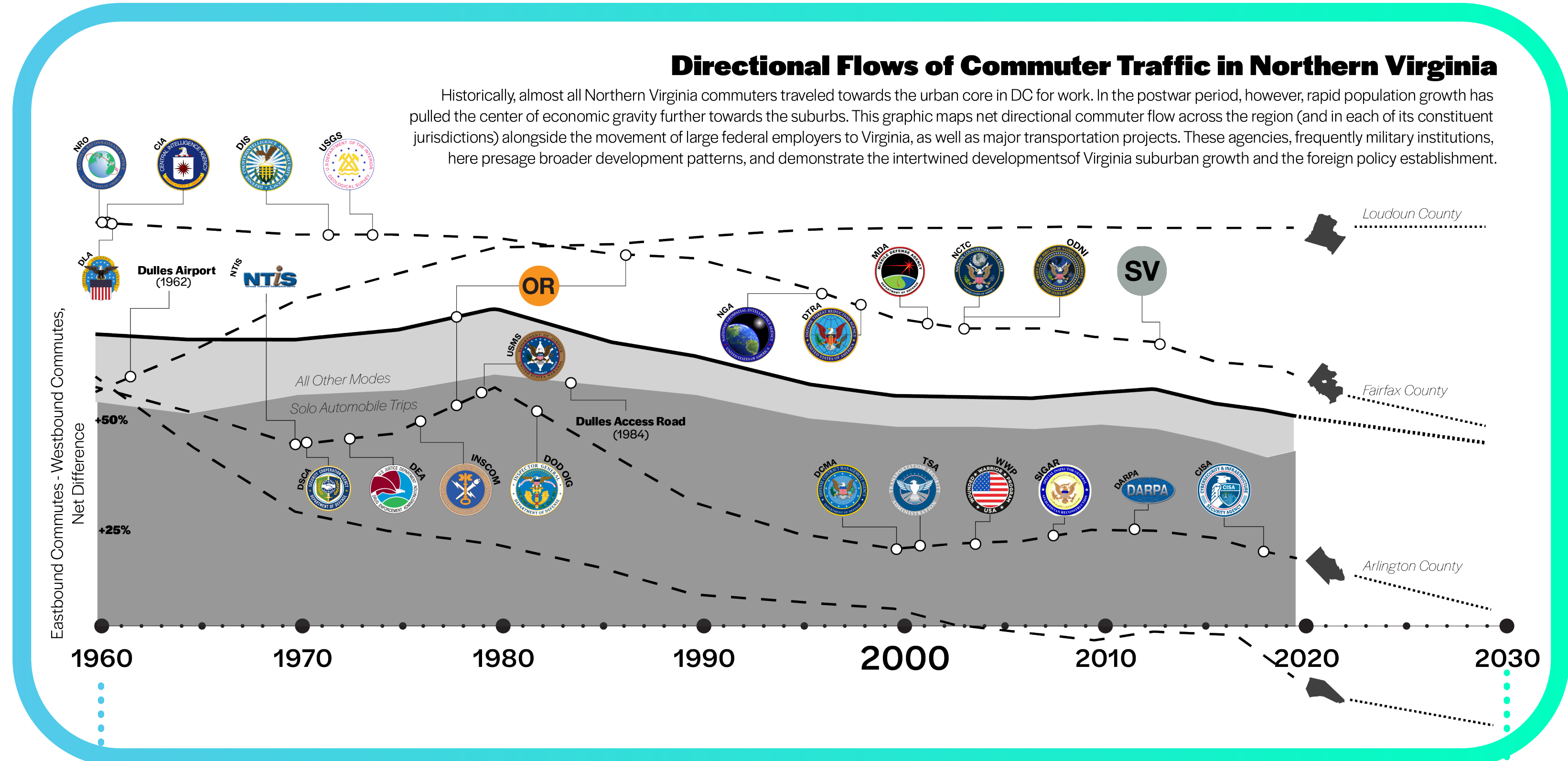
1957 Eisenhower asks Congress to appropriate funds for a DC-based jet airport, as the runways at National Airport were not long enough to handle modern jet traffic.

1958 Willard, a largely Black community on the Fairfax-Loudoun County border (present-day Chantilly), is officially selected as the site for the second airport, to be named Dulles Airport. 87 homes in the community were condemned to clear the site for airport construction. The homes were condemned without public hearing.

1962 Dulles Airport terminal opens. The final cost for airport construction up to this point was \$175 million. The Dulles Access Road (now Route 267) opens alongside the airport, running from the airport to the Capital Beltway. Its median is reserved for a potential future rail/transit project.

1966 The 600-mile 'Perimeter Rule' is set by the FAA at the National Airport to incentivize Dulles air traffic.

1968 Unable to financially sustain itself, railroad operations fully cease. The Virginia Electric and Power Company (VEPCO - later Virginia Power, and now Dominion Power) bought the right-of-way for its electric power transmission lines. The Virginia State Highway Department begins condemnation proceedings to acquire the right-of-way to the W&OD Railroad.



In the 19th century, coal was the dominant energy source. In the United States, much of the coal was produced domestically, primarily in Pennsylvania and the broader Appalachian region. At this time, many railroads began as transportation systems for coal mining companies to transport the energy source from mine to city. As coal output grew, so too did the railroad, mining, and steel production industries. Energy and production were not the only things expanding. The latter part of the 19th century saw a great deal of warfare between American settlers and indigenous peoples in efforts to secure sovereignty over the land. Fueled by gold and silver rushes, many Americans rushed westward, and in doing so expanded the edges of US empire.

Several events in the first part of the the 20th century reconfigured industry and infrastructure in the United States. The mobilization for World War II at the end of 1941 galvanized the American economy, which was ripe for restructuring following the Great Depression. Government spending accounted for 67% of U.S. capital investment. This was a tremendous expansion of various industries for the sake of the military, including that of the automobile, for example, the Ford Motor Company received massive contracts for military vehicles. Around the same time, the utility of a road system for moving military vehicles captured the imagination of presidents, and a promise of individual exploration and freedom captured the imaginations of the everyday citizen. Massive government spending went hand in hand with militarization of infrastructure and economy, all bolstered by technological developments. The invention and deployment of the nuclear bomb at the end of WWII heralded an era of struggle for global hegemony between US-led capitalist order and Soviet Union-led communist order.

Events in the latter part of the 20th century fleshed out and reacted to the expansion of federal government activity a few decades earlier. Manufacturing industries see an accelerated shift overseas, actualizing the rise of a global capitalist economy in destabilized societies — who were vulnerable, and therefore exploitable as cheap labor and resource markets — left in the wake of US anti-communist activities throughout the Cold War era. Domestically, the United States indulges in the commodity lifestyle that globalization and earlier infrastructural investment efforts. Federal authority is increasingly delegated back to more localized authorities, except in the case of the military and intelligence industrial complex.

Now in the 21st century, we see the fruition of 20th century activities. We are beginning to see the environmental and ecological consequences wrought by the prior century's global industrial spree. The abdication of federal authority (and therefore accountability) to local authorities, who in turn abdicated authority to corporations (who through extensive lobbying efforts, are largely unaccountable to anyone except shareholders, who themselves are stand-ins for "the profit motive") has made consumption king, while means of production and political economies become ever-more obscured through layers of technological, legal, and corporate bureaucracy, spread out in diffuse supply-chain webs and clouds. Transportation infrastructure projects in the imperial core are largely manifestations of aspirational lifestyles of convenience and recreation. As we continue to grapple with worsening climate change, we may yet see another shift in energy paradigms.