

methodological discontinuity. Stressing quantification helped them to present technology as a neutral, rational Western tool for ensuring safe designs and fostering economic growth. While the Cold War background was a prerequisite for this change, the orientation toward objective scientific values can also be seen in a context of professional self-interest. An often unspoken reference in these discourses and practices was the state of the autobahn in East Germany. West German civil engineers' competitive efforts to maintain and expand a freeway system superior to that of the GDR made the orientation toward Western and especially American values all the more significant and powerful. Social freedom, in this version of the conflict of systems, had to include automotive freedom.⁴³ As technology, environment, and their interstices were renegotiated and redesigned, landscape as a concept was declining in importance. In order to assert automotive freedom during the Cold War, all speed limits on the autobahn were abolished in 1955. Thus the idea of carefully tended roadside vegetation blurred into an indistinguishable mass of shrubbery in drivers' rearview mirrors.

Landscapes, at least in the case at hand, are hardly the mechanical antithesis of civilization envisioned by the Romantics. Far from it: they are both the arena for and the outcome of constant conflicts over the cultural meaning and social politics of beauty. Therefore, and paradoxically, Kraftwerk's stylized 1970s "Autobahn" image, Seifert's aesthetically landscaped autobahn, Todt's consuming vision of the autobahn, and the more mathematically grounded autobahn of postwar West Germany have much more in common than just their name.

EIGHT

Socialist Highways?

Appropriating the Autobahn in the German Democratic Republic

Axel Dossmann

It is only a human being who assigns meaning to a landscape by allowing it to trigger off in him certain thoughts, feelings or associations. Their nature is not fixed for all time but is mediated by symbols, needs to be learned and has its own history.

KARL SCHAWELKA¹

Introduction

"Modern expressways require good integration into the landscape," as an advertising brochure of the VEB Autobahn Construction Company, the German Democratic Republic's nationalized highway-construction firm, claims in four languages.² On one page of this brochure, with which the company sought to attract foreign investors in the early 1980s, are two aerial photographs of the Berlin-Rostock highway, built between 1970 and 1978. Looking at the photos with Schawelka's words in mind, one reacts with irritation, at the very least. The top photo shows the highway making a wide curve through flat, open countryside. Presumably this image was

intended to illustrate the famous "sweep of the highway through the landscape," which was the main principle of German roadway design in the 1930s.³ Next to a patch of woods is a small picnic area. But in order to stop there, the driver would have to brake sharply when coming off the highway, since the long lanes for acceleration and deceleration, already common in Western Europe at this time, are absent here. The bottom photo shows an absolutely straight section of the highway cutting through a wooded area. At one time, before the building of the highway, this forest had obviously been undivided. How well this picture illustrates the modern highway's integration into the landscape is questionable. The viewer notices immediately that the rest stops (picnic areas) have no sanitation facilities. Furthermore, there are no crash barriers, either on the sides of the highway or on the median strips. Despite these significant differences from the "international standard," which for GDR highway builders was a political as well as technical standard, the advertising brochure presents this highway as an epitome of modern engineering. The landscape remains undifferentiated but appears to be "central European."

The highway also sweeps through forest and field in the picture on the brochure's front cover (fig. 8.1). Here, the lanes do not even have a hard shoulder. As in the other photographs, only a few cars and trucks are on the highway, so its functionality as a road for traffic is secondary. Rather, these aerial views depict the highway as an artificial ornament of the landscape. The perspective of the driver behind the windshield does not emerge in these representations, but the view from above promises a rapid and pleasant drive through nature.

This tension between the symbolic and the functional characterizes the entire history of the highway system in the GDR.⁴ It also demonstrates once again that artifacts do have politics, and politics do produce artifacts.⁵ The history of highway-planning in Germany tells us much about the transcultural exchanges and political agendas that informed road design and construction in the postwar period.

The Autobahn in the Years of Reconstruction, 1945–61

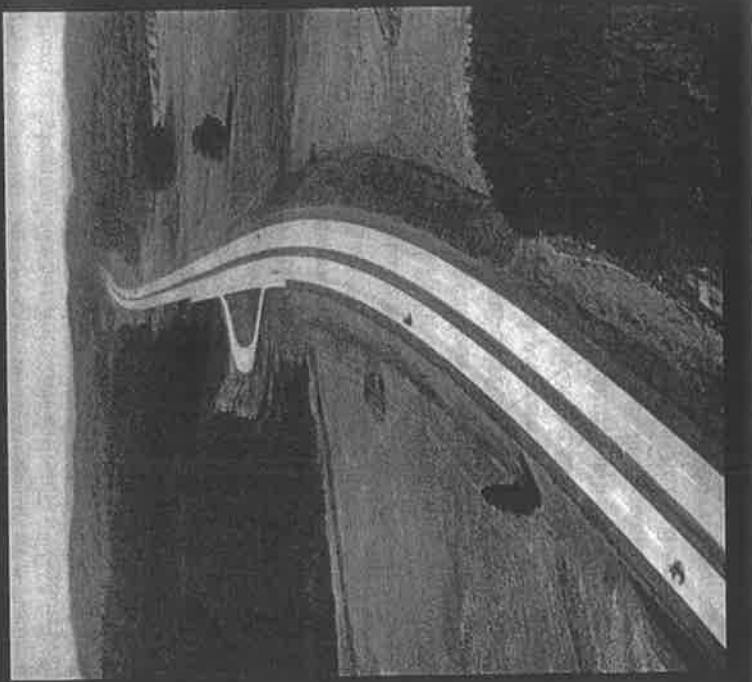
The autobahns as instruments of national and social integration (and separation) received special governmental attention several times during the



VEB Autobahnbaukombinat · DDR

Straßenbau

Road building · La construction de routes
Construção de estradas



8.1. Cover image of a brochure developed for potential foreign investors in East Germany's highway-construction cooperative, the Volks Eigener Betrieb Autobahnbaukombinat.

period of the Soviet Zone/GDR. The closing of the autobahn route from Helmstedt to West Berlin during the 1948–49 Berlin blockade is well known. Helmstedt-Berlin was the only route on which allied (and military) vehicles had been permitted to move through the Soviet Zone/GDR. After 1949 the

politics of traffic and customs checks along this Interzonen-Autobahn (later the Transit-Autobahn) served as a barometer for the general political climate, especially during the Cold War years of the 1950s.

Just after the end of World War II, infrastructural politics were dominated by a sense of pragmatism. The autobahn system, at that time unique and new, had been perceived almost as a gift from history. In fact, this legacy of the Third Reich to post-Fascist Germany was far from perfect. Because many large bridges had been destroyed, the autobahn no longer functioned as a system and demanded enormous investment for rebuilding. But by its mere existence the autobahn enjoyed a privileged position among the state's infrastructural networks. The Soviet military government tried to integrate into new positions those civil engineers and architects who had made their extraordinary careers with the construction of the *Reichsautobahn*. Senior civil engineers let there be no doubt that "their" autobahn had to be reconstructed as soon as possible. Yet the majority of these figures sought to establish themselves in the Western zones—often with success and in many cases without any repercussions from their involvement with National Socialism.⁶

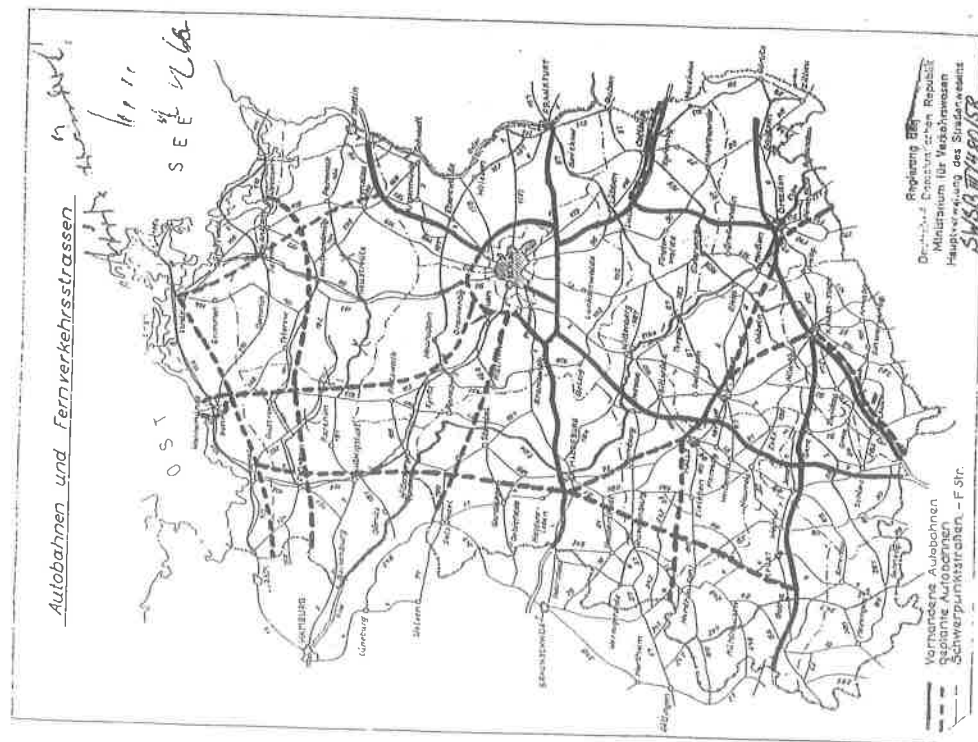
In contrast to West Germany, very few of the civil engineers who had been employed by the Third Reich continued working in the GDR. But it was these few men who most criticized the neglect shown by the state's road administration (Hauptverwaltung Straßenwesen). This central office was heavily dependent on political programs and short-term reconstruction campaigns designed by the heads of the Socialist Unity Party (SED). According to its political vision, the Communist Party would be able to successfully manage all aspects of economic and societal development, including those relating to traffic and transport. During the GDR's forty-year existence, railways were the most privileged sector of transportation policy.⁷ Moreover, the Communist leadership favored public transport over individual mobility. But among both experts and the country's citizens, consciousness of how private and commercial road traffic could promote economic development continued to grow. Yet until 1958, no such recognition appeared in official projections, which were based only on rough extrapolations of traffic patterns in highly industrialized Western European countries or the United States. Senior urban planners and civil engineers began to argue for more financial investment in the reconstruction of outdated cross-country roads and in the completion of the autobahn network.

The empirical data for their arguments were drawn from rather insufficient sources and reflected the "big-industrial nostalgia" typical of the GDR political economy.⁸

The different traffic estimates generated intense discussions between civil engineers in the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Ministerium für Verkehrswesen) and economists on the State Planning Commission (Staatliche Plankommission), an organization whose members worked closely with the Central Committee of the SED. Their discussions were kept unofficial and had only a slight impact on road-construction policies. Much more important was the ongoing economic rivalry with West Germany. This competition of political systems (*Systemkonkurrenz*) molded a cultural pattern that profoundly influenced political agendas and, not least, the planning and building of the autobahn.

The prevention of traffic jams, for example, emerged as one of the SED's chief political aims because it demonstrated the superiority of socialism over market capitalism. The socialist government was able to provide the necessary infrastructures for future traffic in a timely manner, in contrast to the so-called capitalist chaos on the roads ("Verkehrs-Chaos"). This science-fiction autobahn, with its divided lanes and without crossroads, would represent a modernity very much in the people's interest and compatible with the Communist future that was expected to arrive any day. The acceleration of industrial development could be synchronized with the acceleration of traffic and transport. Acceleration was established as both goal and metaphor for the social dynamic. In 1958 the SED used an expression associated with driving to describe the chief objective of the East German economy for the coming years in language associated with driving: "einholen und überholen" (to catch up and overtake). The phrase was coined in relation to West Germany's growing consumerism during its *Wirtschaftswunder*, or economic miracle.

It was also in 1958 that the government of the Federal Republic for the first time allotted more public funds for road construction, including plans for the new Bundes-Autobahnen. For the SED party this was yet another reason, although one kept secret, to put the construction of new roads on the political agenda—overnight, and without any public discussion. The route from Berlin to Rostock, on the coast of the Baltic Sea, would be built as the first section of a huge autobahn system (fig. 8.2). In the euphoria produced by the implementation of an agreed-upon and realistic plan,



8.2. Map of existing and planned autobahn routes in East Germany, ca. 1958. The handwritten notation in the top right-hand corner—"wird verändert"—indicates that the plan "will be changed." From the archive of the GDR's Ministry of Transportation, Bureau of Highway Administration.

engineers also recognized the officially endorsed option of reunification with West Germany. No consideration of existing landscapes can be discerned in records of this stage in the planning. The drive to integrate dominated; the actual landscape was treated strictly as available empty space between the cities and concentrated industrial areas.

In a speech in September 1959, the state and party leader Walter Ulbricht publicly announced the Seven-Year Plan (1959–65) for the first time; the Ministry of Transport, unknown to the public, had prepared it a year earlier. In 1963 the building of the autobahn between Berlin and Rostock would be designated a "Bau der Jugend," or young people's construction project.⁹ The autobahn thus became a large propaganda project of the Freie Deutsche Jugend, the state-sponsored youth organization. The younger generation would mark their new homeland with an immutable imprint through the construction of dams, ports, and factories, as well as the new autobahn. The goal was a "cultural landscape" that would display the ambition of the first generation of socialists to build a new world.

The new autobahn would not only improve the north-south transportation in the GDR but would also, in the words of Walter Ulbricht, "represent an important link for the transportation of goods at the Rostock port. This link will also be of great importance for international transportation between Scandinavia and southern and southeastern Europe. This autobahn will bring the working people in comfortable travel buses or in their own motorcycles and cars quickly and safely to the beautiful vacation and recreation areas on the coast and in the heart of Mecklenburg."¹⁰ Such a formulation recalls images that had already stimulated the desire for individual mobility in National Socialist propaganda about the *Reichsautobahn* and the Volkswagen.¹¹ But, in contrast to the Third Reich and its empty promises, the GDR—the workers' and farmers' state—would soon fulfill its promises.

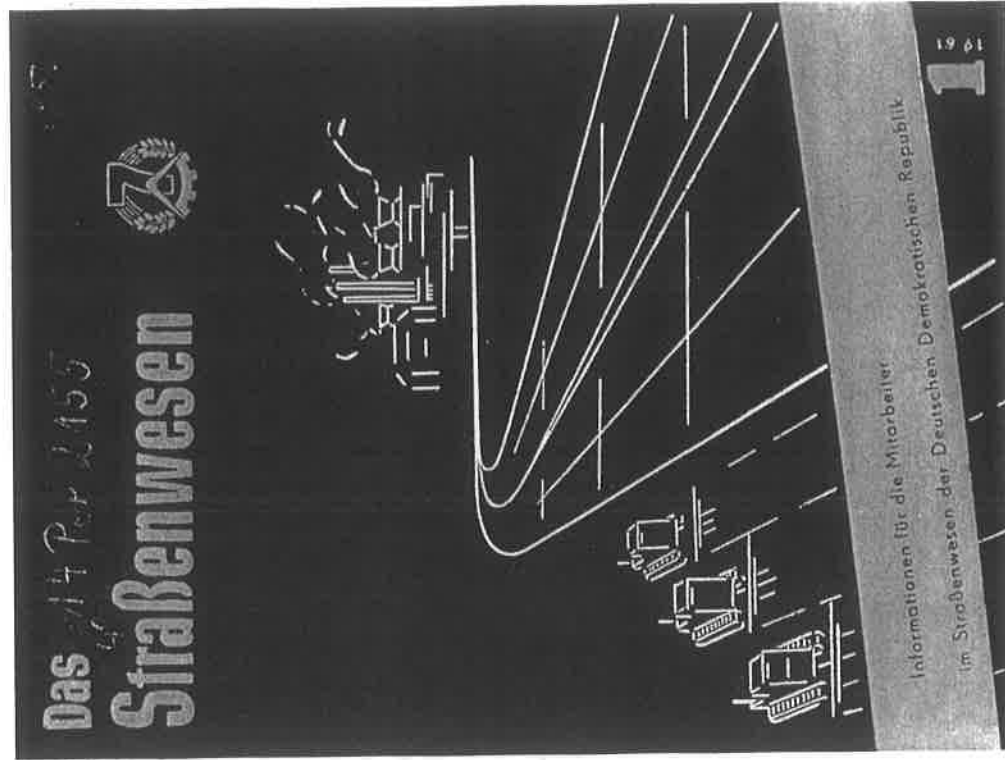
Just as the state leader had done in his speech, journalists could also create fantasies of the socialist future. A story in the popular *Das Magazin* imagined a leap into the year 1965, exactly the end of the Seven-Year Plan. In this story, a GDR astronaut returns to his homeland after a seven-year mission in outer space.¹² To his surprise, time appears to be no longer a limiting factor; everything is oriented toward speed by means of "modern technology." His car rolled down the

metropolitan majesty of the Stalin Boulevard astonishingly quickly and easily through unusually heavy traffic. . . . our hero made the trip to the airport conveniently with the high-speed train, which brought him to his destination faster and more safely than any car, with fewer stops in between. A charter plane—one of the many cheerfully colored "air-cabs" of Czechoslovakian make—stood ready

for him. Minutes later they set off on the route home. . . . Out of the dark patches of woods new industrial complexes appeared, gigantic installations assembled "at a single blow," there was nothing of the confused, dark factories pasted together over many decades. The bright bands of the new roads cut through the open land. And this land was no longer the old one: the move toward closer spatial integration really brought out a greater unity. . . . [T]he landscape . . . was undeniably brought to a higher, more rational order, a clearer structure, and therefore revealed a more colorful hygiene than he could remember.¹³

In this science-fiction fantasy more and ever-faster means of individual transport harmonize with still-more rapid and safer public transportation, and domestic flights offer extraordinary comfort to rushed travelers. The astronaut sees from his bird's-eye view industrial complexes set down "at a single blow" next to generously designed workers' quarters, surrounded by recreational areas, and everything accessible by new roads and rail connections. This conception of a homogenous, well-ordered, and literally supervised world replicates the imagined gaze of the state over its possessions: in *Seeing Like a State*, James C. Scott analyzes this perspective as an example of the authoritative claim of the "high-modernist state."¹⁴ This spectacle of a completely altered landscape would evoke emotions consistent with the positive connotations of modernity. "Ten thousand kilometers of new rail lines and streets in use. That will be technologically advanced, useful, beautiful, and modern in the best sense of the word."¹⁵ Such visions were certainly attractive to many citizens of the GDR, for whom factories, high-speed trains, zeppelins, automobiles, highways, and new cities were already being designed and built in the 1920s and 1930s. Around 1960, "modernity as a state of transportation" ("Moderne als Verkehrszustand") also became a very influential concept in the GDR, helping authorities to promise a new order.¹⁶

For the state, this new order appeared above all as "rational," since it offered the perspective of social and cultural integration of the population while enhancing opportunities for political education and control. In this respect, the autobahns as orderly channels for rapid, safe transportation fit perfectly into the picture that the GDR leadership had constructed of the nation's future. In 1961, the editors of *Das Straßenwesen* attempted to illus-



8.3. Cover of a 1961 issue of *Das Straßenwesen*, a government bulletin produced for highway engineers, construction crews, and other road workers in the GDR.

trate this future graphically on the magazine's cover (fig. 8.3). For most of the early sixties the cover image of this professional journal for GDR highway engineers showed the outline of a deserted autobahn winding away into the distance. The emptiness invited interpretation: for whom was the highway open? The destination of the journey, however, was much clearer:

on the horizon, chimneys and power-station smokestacks indicated the highly industrialized future. To the left of the autobahn, three caterpillar tractors plowed the broad fields toward the horizon in evenly spaced furrows. Their battle formation referred to the collectivization and industrialization of agriculture, which had long been programmatically connected with the "neutralization of the opposition between city and country" ("Aufhebung der Stadt-Land-Gegensätze"). While the Third Reich's folk-nationalistic propaganda photos show farmers tending the fields next to the autobahn, in the GDR pictures from the 1960s, a formation of combines drives parallel with the autobahn into the future. The GDR's technological modernity strove toward technological acceleration. If even agricultural machinery that resembled tanks could promise freedom, it was evident that no harmonizing of the pastoral ideal with modern infrastructure was sought.¹⁷ This image does not indicate the autobahn's utility as a transportation route, but it offers a seductive perspective on modernity. The imaginary landscape, lit up by the sun, also displays the symbol of the Seven-Year Plan: the GDR coat of arms with a hammer shaped like the number 7 and a circle with a garland of corn.¹⁸

Fantasies about the new autobahn system were wide-ranging. Yet in the spring of 1961, in the midst of economic and political crisis, the State Planning Commission had to defer the autobahn project. Only a few months later, in August 1961, the Berlin Wall was built. At that time Berliners ironically told each other that the SED had decided that instead of building the Berlin-Rostock route, it would set up sections of that autobahn vertically between the Soviet and Allied sectors of Berlin—just in order to dry the concrete.¹⁹

The Autobahn as Tool for the Neue Ostpolitik, 1960s to 1970s

Behind the Wall, however, the economy of the GDR seemed to flourish. This economic upturn was accompanied by better consumer options in response to rising public demand.²⁰ Growing consumerism also led to an increase in automobile tourism. In fact, the rate of motorization (the ratio of cars per inhabitants) since the late 1950s had nearly matched that of the Federal Republic, though with a big difference in absolute numbers.²¹ By the end of the 1960s it was no longer the *Auto-Suggestionen* (projections of

cars) but existing traffic, especially in the industrialized south, that legitimated road construction in the GDR and set the pace for constructing new autobahns and other cross-country roads.²² In 1969, Walter Ulbricht, at that time still the head of the SED, coined a new slogan that proposed an even more challenging maneuver: "überholen ohne einzuholen" (to overtake but not catch up).²³

Once again a big autobahn construction program was launched. The first plan projected a total of 1,375 kilometers of new autobahn before 1990, of which 800 would be completed before 1980. This meant almost a doubling of the length of the roads, which in 1966 totaled 1,390 kilometers, in a period of only fifteen years. Before 1990, thirteen of the GDR's fourteen regional capitals would be linked by the autobahn system, and 85 percent of the industry and 75 percent of the population would be within reach of a major highway. This vision of an autobahn network connecting the entire territory of the GDR promised widespread integration of economic, social, and even political perspectives. The autobahn would be the model of infrastructural suppositions for an East German "transportation land" that would be equal to its neighbors, above all its Western ones.

Because the so-called *Bedürfnisstruktur*—East Germans' need for and views of the good life—could and should be only slightly influenced, the problem had to be confronted head-on: steps were taken to link the burgeoning road traffic with connecting train routes through the autobahn.²⁴ In this period, when not only engineers were fascinated with cybernetics and automation, it was clear that the model of smooth-flowing traffic would particularly influence the planning of infrastructure. Instead of drivers having to deal with big problems, such as traffic jams, everything should be "quick and easy," like the consumption of food in self-service restaurants off the autobahn or mobility with one's own car. But how should this vision of car mobility be realized? The catchphrases for acceleration of the building pace corresponded to the central concepts of national economic reform: automation, specialization, mechanization, motorization, and, not least, brighter prospects. The enthusiasm for politically controlled self-regulation of the economy through computer-operated systems offered freedom of opportunity for technocratic inclinations among engineers, technicians, and functionaries.²⁵ After 1969 autobahn construction was a national budget priority—to the disadvantage of more numerous, no less urgent road-construction projects, which were either downsized, deferred,

or eliminated altogether.²⁶ In October 1971, the GDR's first autobahn, stretching from Dresden to Leipzig, was completed almost according to the SED's original schedule.

In 1971, with the change of party leadership from Ulbricht to Erich Honecker, a new pragmatism determined most of the political decision-making. The core of the SED's new agenda of "unity of economic and social policy" ("Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik") in the mid-1970s was a large housing program. In order to finance this program, execution of the autobahn plans made in 1968 was first scaled back and then, in 1978, just after the Berlin-Rostock route was opened to traffic, suspended altogether.

This was not the last autobahn constructed by GDR construction crews, however. Because trade between the two German states was of both economic and political importance, access and traveling conditions to and from West Berlin continued to be a key issue. The Transit-Autobahn played a decisive role in the policy of détente and the Neue Ostpolitik, the liberal foreign policy adopted by West Germany in the mid-1960s toward East Germany and especially East Berlin. In September 1971, the famous Quadripartite Agreement was signed and became the basis for a number of subsequent agreements and treaties advancing more intensive cooperation between East and West Germany. In 1972, the Transit Agreement between the two German states was finally signed. Among its points was a commitment to improve the autobahn from Berlin to Helmstedt at the border of West Germany, followed by an agreement in 1975 to construct an autobahn route from West Berlin to the West German city of Hamburg.

The rule of this domestic deal was simple but effective. It was an open secret that the GDR economy was dependent on foreign currency (*Valuta*). According to the Transit Agreement, East Germany assumed responsibility for constructing, while West Germany consented to cover the major part of the building costs and also accepted a road toll to be paid in a lump sum. Between 1975 and 1978, the Helmstedt-Berlin route was reconstructed by GDR road crews, and in 1982 the new Transit-Autobahn from Berlin to the West German border, in the direction of Hamburg, was opened to traffic.

The car had long been the "the East German's most beloved child."²⁷ At the same time, road conditions in the GDR deteriorated and traffic grew heavier. East German car drivers became familiar with traffic jams in the 1970s, especially in the industrialized south. The scarcity of new and used automobiles as well as spare parts meant that cars were rarely used for

traveling to work but were used mainly for leisure pursuits.²⁸ Cars offered the ideal means for the weekend "trip to nature" (*Fahrt ins Grüne*), freeing their owners from the Deutsche Reichsbahn's timetables and its often dirty and overheated trains. Such possibilities for escapism were limited within the reality of socialism: by the availability of cars, by the bad roads, and not least by the impenetrable borders of the country itself. For the citizen of the GDR, every carefree trip on the autobahn ended somewhere at the "wall," on the border of the Federal Republic. Desire for acceleration and the freedom of the unrestricted journey culminated, surprisingly enough, in popular criticism of the constrained life enforced by the East German secret police, the infamous Stasi. In June 1989 a report by the state security service estimated that many East Germans perceived the successful management of traffic flow and maintenance of the autobahns as validations of the socialist system.²⁹ Nonetheless, nobody expected that the "first autobahn" erected in the GDR, the Berlin Wall, would fall, as it did on November 9, 1989.³⁰

Bridges as Monuments, Dedicated to the Socialist Productive Forces

I turn now to the question of how civil engineers applied professional knowledge gained in the construction of the *Reichsautobahn* to the practices of road-building in the GDR. With the formation of postwar politics, new views of landscape were again possible. Reconstruction was a "magic formula" for a large percentage of the "generation of reconstruction" (*Aufbaugeneration*), born in the 1920s. This generation "was young enough to take up the challenge of a new beginning in post-war Germany, but at the same time it was extremely hurt by the experiences of war and defeat, and more sensitive and vulnerable to the possibilities of a new political involvement than their beaten parents."³¹

For many of them reconstruction meant building up a clear alternative to National Socialism. But what did this mean for the practical task of reconstructing the destroyed bridges of the former *Reichsautobahn*? In the early 1950s, civil engineers of the GDR undertook many initiatives to ensure authentic reconstruction (*originalgetreue Rekonstruktion*). This architectural program led to a partial renaissance of monumental natural-stone bridges.

The reconstruction of bridges in the 1950s took place under material conditions similar to those in the later phase of bridge construction during the period of National Socialism, when there was a shortage of steel and of qualified workers. Therefore, it was not only aesthetics but also the lack of modern building materials that led civil engineers to use natural stone and concrete for bridge construction. In the GDR, however, this preference for stone bridges was a boon to all those civil engineers and architects who wanted to maintain the aesthetic principles of the 1920s and '30s. They could do so because East Germany's master architects (*Baumeister*) collaborated with politicians of the SED leadership who had put the doctrine of classic design (*klassische Bauweise*) on the political agenda. With this architectural program, which was in fact a set of rather vague ideas, the SED adopted theories favored by Soviet cultural politics since the 1930s.

Within this Soviet theory, classicism was held to be a progressive epoch of art, which should be appropriated critically under the new socialist conditions.³² Already in 1943, the National Committee of Free Germany (Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland), a gathering of German Communists in Soviet exile preparing the socialist reconstruction that would take place after Nazi Germany's defeat, had oriented itself toward "national traditions." Holding onto the "sources of national pride" was a political tactic to win as many supporters as possible for a socialist Germany, along with the people who had voted for the NSDAP or belonged to national-conservative wings of German society.³³

With regard to architecture and art, the formula of integration was "to be national in form and democratic in content" ("national in der Form, demokratisch im Inhalt"), a slogan vague enough for the goal of social and political integration. For architecture this meant first of all that buildings integrating constructive elements were discouraged under the rule of the Neues Bauen.³⁴ The shift to "national heritage" coincided with a rejection of the International Style. One had to resist American cultural influence, it was claimed, to guarantee the continued existence of the German people ("für den Fortbestand des deutschen Volkes").³⁵ According to the architect Kurt Liebke, president of the Deutsche Bauakademie (which had been reestablished in 1951), classicism was "the last important realistic period of construction" and therefore ought to be perceived as a positive legacy of national culture with the postwar reconstruction in Germany.³⁶

The doctrine of *klassische Bauweise* encouraged civil engineers and architects to rebuild the damaged bridges of the *Reichsautobahn* in a manner as faithful to the original as possible and discouraged any substantive debate on national architectural styles.³⁷ This lack of serious public reflection on architectural legacies was mirrored in how reconstruction was reported in a 1963 publication commemorating the establishment in 1948 of the foundation of the Ministry of Transport and Communications.³⁸ While discussing the manifold efforts to reconstruct the autobahn, no hint was given about the original construction of these very bridges in the 1930s. All were presented as unique and as fitting superbly into the natural scenery, but no information that might help to historically conceptualize them—date, location, or name—was mentioned. That history was simply effaced. Paradoxically, there was only reconstruction and no original construction anymore. This rhetorical strategy made it easier to integrate the bridges into the "national architectural heritage." Only by ignoring their history of National Socialism could *Reichsautobahnen* become "*Our Autobahnen*," as the Ministry of Communication and Traffic called them in one of its publications.³⁹

The reconstruction of the autobahn bridges also offered self-portraits of artisan skill from the prewar period. Stories told by stonemasons underlined engineers' determination to make it impossible to distinguish between old and new masonry, creating implicit proof of the continuity of "German high-quality craftsmanship." *Deutsche Qualitätsarbeit* had been one of the most vivid concepts for both manual and industrial workers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and as an integrative idea it has transcended all political systems and ruptures up to the present.⁴⁰ The autobahn bridges built during this period were meant to assert the "beauty of the homeland" in the socialist GDR, without striking a directly nationalistic tone. The appropriation of the autobahn bridges can be understood as part of the politics of separation from the Third Reich, as former members of the National Socialist Party were simultaneously absolved and integrated into the socialist work of reconstruction (*sozialistische Aufbauarbeit*). This was part of the "politics of amnesty and integration"—that is, the politics of the Nazi past in the GDR or, as Norbert Frei has termed it, "*Vergangenheitspolitik*."⁴¹

By the 1960s, senior engineers could only with some hesitation consent to build the autobahn bridges from prefabricated parts. Their claims

to give the "socialist highways" a distinct character with these conspicuous bridge constructions founded on the state-promoted ideal of "radical standardization" of architecture. Under such an architectural premise, the autobahn could not actually become a positive symbol of the GDR.⁴² At the same time, designers attempted to confer symbolic status on them. After the route from Leipzig to Dresden was completed, civil engineers celebrated a new bridge built across a river as an extraordinary construction because it combined steel with concrete and featured *Freivorbau* (cantilever construction), an avant-garde technology used for the first time in the GDR.⁴³ In 1984, the Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege (Society for Preservation of Historical Monuments) suggested recognizing this bridge as a monument to the GDR's *Geschichte der Produktivkräfte* (history of productive forces).⁴⁴ "For cultural and national identity in the GDR," one of the members argued, "it is necessary to include those latest material witnesses to the history of technology."⁴⁵

There is no doubt that the construction of this bridge was a great challenge for the GDR's civil engineers. But cantilever technology had already been used in bridge-building in the 1930s; for example, in the Muldetalbrücke near Siebenlehn.⁴⁶ Designating the fifteen-year-old bridge a monument to the "development of productive forces in the GDR" was an attempt to silence the history of the 1930s. The ecological costs of this new bridge were also ignored, as this new route directly crossed the Döbener Wald nature preserve. In 1967, although road planners voiced distress about this, it seemed inevitable.⁴⁷ In the 1980s, however, an autobahn bridge in the midst of a nature preserve could serve as a means for shaping national identity. Could one imagine a more potent symbol of the ambiguous relations between industry, ecology, and identity politics in the GDR?⁴⁸

The appropriation of nature as an exploitable resource for industry and agriculture is not in the least apparent in the construction of the Transitautobahn from Berlin to Hamburg. While the GDR sections of this roadway were built at high speed and without any great attention to nature, ecology, or the interests of individual inhabitants, the construction of the sections in the territory of the Federal Republic was often delayed well beyond the dates agreed upon for their completion. In the Federal Republic, environmental-impact studies had long been standard practice. In contrast, under the central-planning authoritarianism of the GDR, no such possibilities for a democratic discussion of road construction existed.⁴⁹

Transformations of Experience: "Sweeping Roads" and Median Strips

Which landscapes should be presented to drivers in the GDR? And did the highways of GDR socialism ever offer a particular view of the landscape around them? In order to answer the first question, we must first explain how the aesthetic concepts of shaping landscapes had been handed down in the GDR.

Rolf Näser, a civil engineer born in 1930, is representative of the engineers who belonged to the GDR's generation of reconstruction. In the 1950s, Näser and others found a mentor in civil engineer Franz Roesmer, who must have been a charismatic man. Years earlier, in the 1930s, Roesmer had been a close colleague of the architects Friedrich Tamms and Paul Bonatz, both important advisors to Fritz Todt, the general inspector under the Third Reich. From 1935 to 1945, Roesmer worked in Berlin as a bridge architect in the Supreme Building Organization of the *Reichsautobahn*. One of the few engineers who continued to earn a living under the authorities of the Soviet Zone and, after 1949, under the SED, Roesmer was recognized in 1957 as "Technician of Outstanding Merits to the People"; and in the 1960s he was named the GDR's "doyen of bridge-building."⁵⁰

In a 1998 interview, Näser recalled Roesmer's influence on junior engineers during the 1950s:

The engineers constructing autobahns in earlier times had accumulated enormous knowledge, drawn not from books but from experience. And most of them shared their tacit knowledge with us [the younger generation]. To give you one example. . . . Together with Mr. Roesmer and all the other guys—we walked or drove by jeep the entire route from Berlin to Rostock. In the North there are a lot of lakes. . . . And there, Mr. Roesmer told us time and time again: "Change the route! . . . But not in such a way that it would pass close to the lake. If there is a forest, then take care that there are always fifty to a hundred meters of wooded land between the lake and the autobahn, because it is much more beautiful if one can gaze at the water through the trees." . . . This was not because of nature conservation or something like that, you know. . . . Well, the man was right. There were thousands of such small matters in which Roesmer kept us up to the mark.⁵¹

Apparently, Franz Roesmer taught nothing other than the perspective on nature from the drivers' point of view. The presentation of a "natural" landscape with lakes and woods could be made "appealing" for the driver through carefully orchestrated road-building. Nature was a performance piece, to be played like a romantic nature film in front of the windshield. The driver should be offered not close-ups, but panoramic views. Roesmer's eager protégé, Rolf Näser, who by the 1960s was already highly placed in the administration, took care that such visions of landscape consumerism would continue to be relevant for the practice of road design in the GDR. Autobahns should be built in areas where beautiful scenery was to be found. In the late 1950s, for example, one plan proposed an autobahn route along the Ruppiner See in order to guarantee the driver a view of this lake.⁵² In regions without pleasant scenery, the landscapes should be made more bearable for travelers by the creation of scenic parks.⁵³ A 1960 document of the planned Berlin-Rostock route states that this roadway would provide access to recreational areas, such as the Plauer Lake, the Müritzer Lake, and the Petersdorfer Lake: "When deciding on the route, we attempted insofar as possible to achieve constant change in the scenic view. At some points the route is laid out in such a way as to offer views of lakes and other delightful objects."⁵⁴

In 1960, even Erwin Kramer, then the minister of transportation, sent civil engineers to Western European countries to gather information about the latest technologies and concepts of highway and road construction, as part of the means of reaching the goal of *Weltniveau* (a world-class level).⁵⁵ Road-planners realized during their visits to England and France that route designs in those countries were largely determined by economic considerations. Therefore, they stated with surprise, this way of planning "would not fit with the conditions presented to us in the GDR concerning aesthetics and the question of how roads fit best into the landscape."⁵⁶

GDR engineers maintained the attitudes toward landscape design that had been developed before the war. These views were established as common sense among the elder and younger generations, a common sense validated both by shared experience and by textbooks on road construction. The textbooks published in the GDR during the 1950s repeated verbatim the words and phrases from those of the 1930s. Johannes Kastl, born in 1905 and in 1949 appointed head of the road-construction administration in Saxony, authored most of the few textbooks on road construction for

civil-engineering students in the GDR. In them he accepted without question the aesthetic principles formed during the 1930s on the harmony of roads, bridges, and landscapes.⁵⁷ "The wide strip of the autobahn should be integrated as a new element of landscape design; otherwise the scenery will be reduced considerably. Because the routes through the landscape do not run in accordance with mathematical laws, it is necessary to analyze systematically all the experiences and the knowledge gained in the past construction of the autobahn."⁵⁸

In contrast to this statement from 1960, republished in 1968, other sources indicate that the mathematical principle of the clothoid was at that time as much favored in the GDR as it was in West Germany.⁵⁹ GDR civil engineers drew most of their information about the state of the art of their profession from West German technical literature, although this was difficult to obtain after 1961. The harmonious integration of nature and technology by the mimetic principle of road construction was taught in technical universities of the GDR as it was in West Germany, engaging with "good" and "bad" images of the *Reichsautobahn*. The "bad" examples displayed long straight sections, sharp curves, and zig-zagging paths. The "good" examples showed, in contrast, the gently rolling sections of the *Reichsautobahn* that had been built in the mid-1930s.

The Soviet textbook *Aesthetics of Road Construction* (1967) also argued for harmonizing road design with nature. In this book the "good" examples are photographs of what appear to be (West) German autobahns during the 1930s and the 1950s, but the exact locations are never actually identified in the picture captions. The photographs show the roads' sweeping lines with trees and bushes along the margins.⁶⁰ These images are contrasted with photographs of "bad" roads, which show American inner-city highways during rush hour. These are classic images of utilitarian civil planning: featureless, treeless lanes of concrete cutting through residential and industrial areas.

In theory, then, the desire to harmonize roads and nature for the pleasure of car drivers was clear. In practice, however, the major political and economic claims for fast, efficient, and cost-effective construction were at long last overriding these minor questions of aesthetics—very much to the regret of some young East German engineers of the *Aufbaugeneration*, who had tried to save and develop the practical knowledge of their mentors and masters. Questions of money and security had been more relevant

than those of landscape architecture. Sometimes, however, issues of safety and design were bound together. Civil engineer Rolf Näser recalled how he and other engineers considered adopting aspects of highway construction that they knew were used in the United States:

There was the question of how to design the median strip. You can't imagine the discussions we had then! There are median strips in America that are much broader than those in Europe and have a trough. Those median strips are planted very lushly but only with bushes—not with trees. The advantage is that you don't need crash barriers. . . . Such ideas we discussed again and again. But they wouldn't work out! Our land is too valuable here in the GDR—or [was] at that time in the GDR.⁶¹

It was not environmental issues but matters of agricultural outsourcing and speed of construction that drove decisions about route design in the GDR. When the route from Berlin to Rostock was eventually built, crash barriers were installed only next to the bridges, and there was not a single gas station along the 270-kilometer stretch. This autobahn was not much more than a paved concrete double line running in smooth curves through the landscape.⁶² As was the case with the Leipzig-to-Dresden route in 1971, there was not much public celebration when the new autobahn was opened to the traffic. The road construction left barren strips of land about thirty meters wide on both sides of the autobahn, which party authorities demanded be planted with fast-growing trees and bushes. A green roadside should help to meet "international standards." About three million Ostmarks were budgeted for landscaping, although in the end only one million were actually spent for this purpose.⁶³ In order to have the green roadside "ready" as quickly as possible, highly diluted Agent Orange imported from Great Britain was used. While application of this chemical would change the natural growth cycles of the plants, it would also accomplish the visual aim: getting something "green and pretty" along the autobahn—no matter what the ecological costs.

To be sure, this is an extreme example of landscape-design practices along the autobahn in the GDR. But all available records lead to the conclusion that landscape design was mentioned in the programs only because senior civil engineers knew very well that it was essential to modern road

construction, along with high standards of services and driving safety.⁶⁴ In all these respects the GDR autobahns displayed deficiencies when measured against established standards. It was these discrepancies with the West German model that gave socialist highways their distinctive character.

The Autobahn as Showroom of Socialism?

The everyday experience of the driver demonstrates that East German autobahns were unsuited to the construction of a positive self-image. The disrepair of the infrastructure was in fact a cause of psychological alienation within the GDR. Many East Germans turned to the road-building authorities with petitions and complaints, reporting on conditions of the socialist autobahn with displeasure and even fury. A small sampling of such letters from 1987 and 1988 illustrates the experience of the autobahn from its users' perspective.⁶⁵

In a general petition, shift workers complained about the "unbearable noise pollution" on the autobahn from Berlin to Dresden.⁶⁶ A Dresden motorist gave vent to long-suppressed anger over the autobahn from Dresden to Bautzen: "The word *autobahn* shouldn't even be allowed to be used here. These ongoing repairs are just stopgaps."⁶⁷ The quality of gastronomy and the condition of the toilets at the rest stops was criticized repeatedly. One woman, writing of her experience at a rest stop in Köckern, summed it up in words that also seem to describe the general state of things in the GDR: "Everything is so forlorn."⁶⁸ This driver, observing that acceptable toilets were available only to Western travelers just passing through the GDR, asked: "Should we East-German women just sit ourselves down on the Autobahn, like the men stand around?" At the Teufelstal rest stop she preferred the woods to the public toilet. A stand of trees on the GDR-autobahn, while offering little by way of a romantic vision of nature, could nevertheless provide privacy in a moment of need. "But so many foreigners come by there that one is ashamed."⁶⁹

This expression of shame in front of travelers from the West is repeated in these letters,⁷⁰ but their authors are also angered and bewildered by the apparent discrimination against citizens of the GDR in their own country. "Why are acceptable facilities built only for Westerners? In what categories do our citizens fall?"⁷¹ This letter, from a dentist who described himself as

"representing countless 'sufferers,'" was apparently signed by many of his fellow East Germans. His protest linked the disrepair of the autobahn between Dresden and Bautzen with the issue of car maintenance: "This 'hiking path' absolutely cannot be described as an autobahn! In parts one doesn't know how to avoid 'car traps.' There even 20 km/h is too much! Does this bear any resemblance to an autobahn? Especially considering that we have to keep our cars running as long as possible, with the waiting periods for new ones and the situation with service and spare parts!"⁷² The driver of a Trabant, the most widely sold car in the GDR, inquired angrily about the potholes on the section of the autobahn near Jena: "Does the responsibility for taking precautions rest only with the driver, or do you also have responsibilities? ... Who will repair my vehicle when it is destroyed by these hair-raising conditions?"⁷³

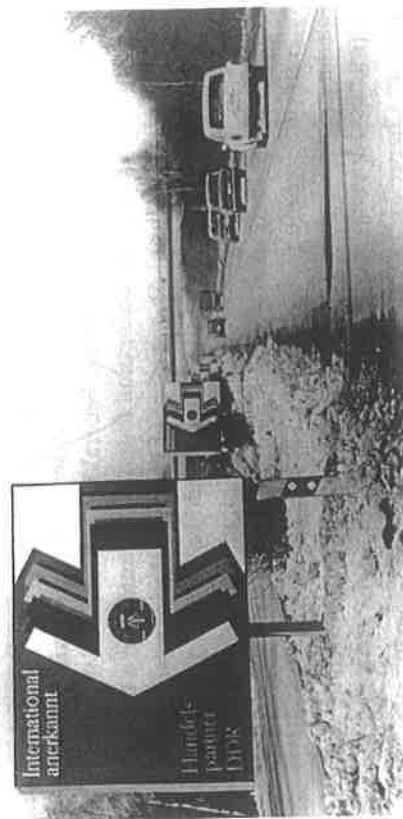
In the answering letters from authorities, East German citizens had to read sentences such as this one, written in 1988: "On account of other building projects the central building authority is not responsible for this construction. . . . Repairs to the road between Dresden and Bautzen cannot be expected before 2000."⁷⁴ Such reactions could hardly have satisfied the authors of these petitions, as they just revealed once again the well-known situation of economic crisis. As "showrooms of socialism," the GDR autobahns broke down. With these difficulties in the foreground, a drive on the autobahn left the beauty of the landscape by the wayside. An impression of nature was not conveyed as part of the driving experience. Anyone who had to worry about shock absorbers and the next toilet certainly had no feeling any longer for the beauties of the landscape on either side of the autobahn.

And how did Western travelers passing through the provinces of the GDR perceive the trip on the autobahn? Owing to the lack of other sources, the comments of two writers must suffice as representative of this transit experience: the unpleasant crossing over the borders, the strict speed limit on the autobahn (one hundred kilometers per hour), and the monitoring of traffic by the police and state security were for Western travelers like a "school of dictatorship."⁷⁵ As the West Berlin writer Friedrich Christian Delius summarizes it: "The Western sense of freedom, what would it have been without this transit journey?"⁷⁶

The difference between East and West was physically discernible even at the border crossing to West Berlin: the rhythm of the dull stretches between

the plates of concrete followed the driver to the next checkpoint. Peter Schneider, a writer from West Berlin, wrote pointedly in 1982 about his feelings as he approached West Berlin after driving for two hours through East Germany: "Sighting the wide taillights of the cars, the pale showroom lights, the turning Mercedes star above the Europe-Center, I was overcome by the desire that seizes the car driver after two hundred kilometers in transit on the Berlin AVUS: to step back, to let the beast inside run wild. Once again to order a beer at midnight, to buy a newspaper, to hold a handwritten menu in your hand, to gaze into the dissipated face of the West."⁷⁷

As clichéd as such pictures may be, they make clear what Delius himself knew: "The country through which we pass barely interests us."⁷⁸ The Western gaze through the car window during the journey across the GDR was politically inscribed. It showed the GDR in sharp contrast to the West, as a charmless state of total surveillance. Images of its political alternatives posted intermittently along the stretches of autobahn had just as little appeal as the recurring but unobtrusive advertisements on the autobahn bridges or, during the Leipzig Fair, on the median strips (fig. 8.4). There was no demand for "plastic and elastic from Schkopau" and "machines from Bulgaria"; nor did alternative products exist for East Germans. Instead the ads left an impression of constant political indoctrination in an otherwise barren landscape.



8.4. A section of the Leipzig autobahn with road signs declaring the GDR an internationally recognized trade partner. Photograph by Jürgen Dossmann, 1969.

Conclusion

The mathematical curve theory employed by engineers in the late 1930s became established only in the two postwar German states, where it came to influence the aesthetics of the German landscape. Not only the construction of curves in the Federal Republic but also the "sweeping" of new highways in the GDR "bull[t] geometrically and geodesically upon Schürba's 'Tafelwerk [i.e., guidelines]' of 1942."⁷⁹ This adaptation of road architecture to the dynamics of high-speed automobile traffic, which until 1945 was accompanied by *völkisch* and national arguments, also demonstrated a great deal of continuity, in that the inventors of clothoid curve design were able to take up leading positions in the agencies of the Federal Republic soon after the war. In the GDR as well, engineers who had been involved in construction of the autobahn during the Third Reich passed on the doctrine of the adaptation of roadways to the landscape—a doctrine that was neither genuinely National Socialist nor offered any guarantee that ecological considerations would be taken into account. The history of the sweeping curve is a fascinating example of the complex interactions and negotiations that took place under varying political regimes between champions of a technical idea and the cultural interpreters of landscape and *Heimat*.

A desire to be able to travel freely in one's own automobile had been stimulated among Germans in the 1930s under the National Socialist regime. After a delay of more than a decade, many East Germans could also fulfill this desire—not with the "strength through joy" automobile (*KdF-Wagen*) or the Volkswagen, but rather with the Trabant or Wartburg. Under National Socialism, in the Federal Republic, and in the GDR, German society's efforts at acceleration found in the autobahn a fitting visual and technical medium. As a symbol of unchecked progress, the highway also remained attractive for the GDR's would-be socialist utopia and was supposed to serve as a memorial to the era of postwar reconstruction.

As a purportedly ideal technical instrument of social, political, and cultural integration and for the harmonious flow of economic energy, the autobahn today remains an issue employed by politicians seeking to appeal to (motorized) voters. As the first free elections in the GDR approached, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the "architect of German unity," promised East German voters that he would soon establish "blühende Landschaften," or blossoming landscapes. One element in this political vision

of a cultural landscape had been the Neue Verkehrsprojekte Deutsche Einheit (New Traffic Projects of German Unity), including the construction of several autobahn routes that had been in the works since the 1920s. Kohl's party, the CDU, won the election with a decisive majority in East Germany.

In Germany political freedom and automobility are inextricably linked with one another, especially in the East, where until 1990 the hoped-for *freie Fahrt* (open road) ended, in the best case, at the state border. For many desperate citizens of the GDR who attempted to flee, travel ended with death at the final steel barrier of the state security services.⁸⁰ Without a doubt it is also for this reason that traveling on an American interstate highway figured prominently among the longings of many East Germans after 1990. Unlimited speed and new highways are, however, anything but the route to political freedom, as the experience of the present has finally demonstrated.

41. For newer interpretations that have been useful for this paper, see Monika Renneberg and Mark Walker, eds., *Science, Technology and National Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Mitchell G. Ash, "Verordnete Umbrüche, konstruierte Kontinuitäten: Zur Entnazifizierung von Wissenschaftlern und Wissenschaften nach 1945," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 43 (1995), 903–23; Kees Gispens, *Poems in Steel: National Socialism and the Politics of Inventing from Weimar to Bonn* (New York: Berghahn, 2002); Mark Walker, ed., *Science and Ideology: A Comparative History* (London: Routledge, 2003).

42. Kranzberg, one of the founding figures of the history of technology in the United States, stated in the first of his six stipulations that technology is neither good nor bad, nor is it neutral. Melvin Kranzberg, "Technology and History: Kranzberg's Laws," *Technology and Culture* 27 (1986): 544–60.

43. See Axel Dossmann's essay in chapter 8 of this volume.

Chapter 8

1. Karl Schawelka, "Ut hortus poesis: The Garden Art of Ian Hamilton Finlay," *Daedalos: Architektur, Kunst, Kultur* 38 (December 1990): 81–89, esp. 88.

2. VEB Autobahnbaukombinat, *Straßenbau — Road building — La construction de routes — Construção de estradas* (Berlin: VEB Autobahnbaukombinat, 1984), 9.

3. See Thomas Zeller, *Straße, Bahn, Panorama: Verkehrswege und Landschaftsveränderung in Deutschland von 1930 bis 1990* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2002).

4. For an extended discussion, see Axel Dossmann, *Begrenzte Mobilität. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Autobahnen in der DDR* (Essen: Klartext, 2003).

5. Langdon A. Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daedalus* 109 (1980): 121–36; Raymond Stokes, "In Search of the Socialist Artefact: Technology and Ideology in East Germany, 1945–1962," *German History* 15 (1997): 221–39; Bernward Joerges, "Do Politics Have Artefacts?" *Social Studies of Science* 29 (1999): 411–31.

6. See Werner Duth, *Deutsche Architekten. Biographische Verflechtungen 1900–1970* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992); and Werner Duth, Jörn Düwel, and Niels Gutschow, *Architektur und Städtebau der DDR, Band 1: Ostkreuz: Personen, Pläne, Perspektive* and *Band 2: Aufbau: Städte, Themen, Dokumente* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1998), hereafter cited as Duth, Ostkreuz or Duth, *Aufbau*.

7. Christopher Kopper, "Die Deutsche Reichsbahn 1949–1989," in *Die Eisenbahn in Deutschland: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Lothar Gall and Manfred Pohl (Munich: Beck, 1999), 281–316.

8. Michael Geyer, "Industriepolitik in der DDR: Von der großindustriellen Nostalgie zum Zusammenbruch," in *Die DDR als Geschichte: Fragen — Hypothesen — Perspektiven*, ed. Jürgen Kocka and Martin Sabrow (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994), 122–34.

9. Walter Ulbricht, *Der Siebenjahrplan des Friedens, des Wohlstands und des Glück des Volkes* (Berlin: Dietz, 1959), 8–155, esp. 30.

10. *Ibid.*, 30.

11. See Erhard Schütz and Eckhard Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn: Bau und Inszenierung der "Straßen des Führers" 1933–1945* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1996).

12. Karl Böhm, "Sprung über sieben Jahre," *Magazin* 2 (1960): 46–48.

13. *Ibid.*, 47.

14. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

15. Böhm, "Sprung über sieben Jahre," 47.

16. See Johannes Roskoth, *Verkehr. Zu einer poetischen Theorie der Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 2003), 31–40; Alf Lüttke, "Ikonen des Fortschritts. Eine Skizze zu Bild-Symbolen und politischen Orientierungen in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren in Deutschland," in *Amerikanisierung: Traum und Alptraum im Deutschland des 20. Jh.*, ed. Alf Lüttke, Inge Marfölek, and Adelheid von Saldern (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996), 199–210. On the transformation of this pictorial world of the 1920s and 1930s in the Federal Republic during the 1950s, see Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, ed., *Die nützliche Moderne: Graphik- und Produktdesign in Deutschland 1935–1955* (Münster: Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, 2000).

17. "Socialist progress is powered by an automobile motor and one which has been made into a tank," as two literary critics put it in the analysis of automobile metaphors in the works of East German authors. Gerd Kathage and Karl-Wilhelm Schmidt, *Langsame Autofahrten. Studien zu Texten ostdeutscher Schriftsteller* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1997), 180.

18. On the historical origins of the GDR insignia, see Harry D. Schurdel, "Die Hoheitssymbole der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik," in *Parteiauftrag: Ein neues Deutschland: Bilder, Rituale und Symbole der frühen DDR*, ed. Dieter Vorsteher (Munich: Koehler and Amelang, 1997), 44–62, esp. 48–56.

19. See Uwe Johnson, *Begleitumstände. Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992), 289.

20. Ina Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis: Die Geschichte der Konsumkultur in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999).

21. See Burghard Ciesla and Helmuth Trischler, "Die andere 'Verkehrsnot': Verkehrspolitik und Leistungsentwicklung des ostdeutschen Verkehrssystems," in *Deutsch-deutsche Wirtschaft 1945 bis 1990. Strukturveränderungen, Innovationen*

und regionaler Wandel. *Ein Vergleich*, Lothar Baar and Dietmar Petzina, eds. (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 2000), 152–91.

22. Axel Dossmann, "Auto-Suggestionen. Zur Autobahnplanung in der DDR bis 1961," *WerkstattGeschichte* 7, no. 21 (1998): 65–85.

23. This was meant to be better and faster than West Germany, but not on the same level; not by assimilating the Western countries but by searching for new, different, "socialist" methods of production and consumption.

24. The rail lines of the Deutsche Reichsbahn, which was the main long-distance transporter of goods in the GDR until 1989, were in no way forgotten but were severely neglected in the 1950s, just like the roads. The construction of the network of connections, which had been severely cut back, was put off many times because other projects had to be advanced for reasons primarily of political security. See Kopper, "Deutsche Reichsbahn," 302–12.

25. See Peter Hübner, "Menschen—Macht—Maschinen: Technokratie in der DDR," in *Eliten im Sozialismus: Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, ed. Peter Hübner (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), 327–60; Agnes Charlotte Tandler, *Geplante Zukunft: Wissenschaftler und Wissenschaftspolitik in der DDR 1955–1971* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, 2000).

26. Vorschläge zur Streichung von bisher bekannten Vorhaben zugunsten des Autobahnneubaus, 18.9.1967, in Landesarchivarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Magdeburg (hereafter cited as LAM), Rep. J 85/749; Werner Pardemann, *Probleme des Autobahnbaues*, Vortrag, 15.12.1967, *ibid.*

27. Stefan Wölle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur. Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971–1989* (Munich: Egon and List, 1999), 359.

28. Wolfgang Kaschuba, Ina Merkel, Leonore Scholze-Irritz, and Thomas Schulze, "Freizeitverhalten in der DDR und in den neuen Ländern: Geselligkeit, Fest- und Konsumkultur," in *Alltagsleben in der DDR und in den neuen Ländern*, vol. 5 of *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission "Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozeß der deutschen Einheit"*, ed. Deutscher Bundestag (Baden-Baden: Nomos-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999), 655–744. See also Hasso Spode, ed., *Goldstrand und Teutonengrill: Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte des Tourismus in Deutschland 1945 bis 1989* (Berlin: Moser, 1996).

29. Jonathan R. Zatlín, "The Vehicle of Desire: The Trabant, the Wartburg, and the End of the GDR," *German History* 15, no. 3 (1997): 358–80, esp. 358. See also Gerd Katthage and Karl-Wilhelm Schmidt, *Langsame Autofahrten*, 63.

30. Most pieces of the concrete Berlin Wall were not sold as souvenirs; they were smashed, and the fragments were used to build new roads around the reunified Berlin.

31. Dorothee Wierling, "A German Generation of Reconstruction: The Children of the Weimar Republic in the GDR," in *Memory and Totalitarianism*, ed. Luisa Passerini, International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 71–88, esp. 71 and 86.

32. See Durth, *Aufbau*, 49–61, 462.

33. Durth, *Ostkreuz*, 282–84.

34. See examples in Durth, *Aufbau*, 211–12.

35. *Ibid.*, 101.

36. *Ibid.*, 116.

37. *Ibid.*, 109.

38. *Unsere Straßen: Ein Überblick über die Entwicklung des Straßenwesens in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, ed. Ministry of Communication and Traffic (Berlin: Transpress, 1963), 132–37.

39. *Ibid.*, 182–86, esp. 182.

40. See Alf Lüdtke, "Ehre der Arbeit": Industriearbeiter und Macht der Symbol: Zur Reichweite symbolischer Orientierungen im Nationalsozialismus," in his *Eigen-Sinn: Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1993), 283–350.

41. See Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (München: dtv, 1999), 297, translated by Joel Golb as *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

42. See my interview with Rolf Näser, June 5, 1998 and Waldemar Gromzig, "Gestaltung und Technologie der Autobahn Berlin-Rostock," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Verkehrswesen* 8, no. 3 (1960/61): 768–70.

43. *Bau der Autobahn Leipzig-Dresden, Präsentationsmappe zum 22. Jahrestag der Gründung der DDR*, ed. Ministerium für Verkehr (Berlin: n.p., 1971), 14–16.

44. Ulrich Krüger, "Sachzeugen der Produktivkraftentwicklung," in *Denkmale zur DDR-Geschichte im Bezirk Leipzig*, ed. Kulturbund der DDR (Leipzig: Gesellschaft für Denkmalpflege, 1984), 11–15, esp. 14–15.

45. Ernst Ullmann, "Gedanken zu Denkmälern aus der Geschichte der DDR," in *Denkmale zur DDR-Geschichte im Bezirk Leipzig*, e. Kulturbund der DDR, 3–5, esp. 4.

46. Schütz/Gruber, *Mythos*, 97.

47. Tape-recorded interview with Hermann Gärlisch, conducted by the author on September 1, 2000.

48. *Bau der Autobahn Leipzig-Dresden, Präsentationsmappe zum 22. Jahrestag der Gründung der DDR*, 1 and 22.

49. See also Paul Josephson and Thomas Zeller, "The Transformation of Nature under Hitler and Stalin," in *Science and Ideology: A Comparative History*, ed. Mark Walker (London: Routledge, 2003), 124–55.

50. *Unsere Straßen*, 4, 151.

51. "Diese Ingenieure, die früher tätig waren im Autobahnbau, die haben ein Wissen gespeichert, kein Buchwissen . . . und ham das meistens sehr

geschickt, manchmal auch nicht so geschickt, an uns weiterzugeben. Ein Beispiel: Ich sagte Ihnen, wir sind mit Herrn Roesmer und der ganzen Truppe das [Gelände für die Trasse Berlin-Rostock] abgelaufen oder mit den Jeeps abgefahren. Im Norden gibt es viele Seen. . . . Und da hat der Herr Roesmer uns aber eingebleut: Legt die Trasse um! . . . Legt die nicht etwa so, daß die direkt am Wasser lang führt. Wenn wir einen Wald haben, dann paßt immer auf, das zwischen dem See und der Autobahn noch fünfzig oder hundert Meter Wald [liegen]. Es ist viel schöner, wenn man durch die Bäume das Wasser sieht. Nicht etwa als Schutz oder was, . . . Der Mann hat Recht gehabt. Es gibt so tausend kleine Dinge, wo Roesmer uns getrimmt hat." Rolf Näser, quoted here from my June 5, 1998, interview with Näser, cited above.

52. Näser, "Bericht zur Trasse für die Bestimmung der Linienführung, Variante D," November 28, 1959, in Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (hereafter cited as BAArchB), DM 1/3706.

53. Ibid.

54. "Bei der Trassenführung wurde soweit wie möglich versucht, einen ständigen Wechsel des Landschaftsbildes zu erreichen. An einigen Stellen ist die Trasse so geführt, daß Blickpunkte auf Seen und andere reizvolle Punkte entstehen." "Stellungnahme der Hauptverwaltung Straßenwesen an die Staatliche Plankommission zur Studie Berlin-Rostock," June 3, 1960, BArchB, DE 1/20 841.

55. There were plans to travel to England, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and Sweden; see "Protokoll über Beratung für den Autobahnbau Berlin-Rostock," January 9, 1960, BArchB, DM 1/3706.

56. "Bericht über die Reise einer Delegation des Ministeriums für Verkehrswesen zum Studium der Autobahn und des Straßenbaus in England vom 6.9. bis 16.9.1960 und in Frankreich vom 17.9. bis 24.9.1960," *Das Straßenwesen*, 5. Sonderheft (1961): 22f.

57. Johannes Kastl, *Der Straßenbau*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1960), 4-7, 170-82. See also Kastl, *Entwicklung der Straßenbautechnik vom Saumpfad bis zur Autobahn* (Berlin: Verlag der Technik, 1953); and *Studienmaterial der Fachschule des Bauwesens*, ed. Zentralabteilung Fachmethodik der Fachschule des Bauwesens (Leipzig: Deutsche Bauakademie, 1956); Ortleb/Christfreund, *Lehrbriefe für das Fernstudium*, ed. TH Dresden (Berlin: n.p., 1955).

58. "Das breite Band der Autobahn muß sich als neues Gestaltungs-
element harmonisch der Landschaft einfügen, andernfalls kann das Land-
schaftsbild erheblich beeinträchtigt werden. Da es keine mathematisch be-
gründeten Gesetzmäßigkeiten für die Linienführung im Landschaftsraum
gibt, ist es notwendig, die bisherigen Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse, die bei
den bestehenden Autobahnen gesammelt wurden, systematisch auszuwerten."
Johannes Kastl, *Der Straßenbau*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1968), 2:181.

59. Scheibe, "Richtlinien für die Anlage von Autobahnen — Linienführung und Querschnittsgestaltung," *Das Straßenwesen*, 8. Sonderheft (1960): 37–50, esp. 40 and 44. For the Federal Republic, see Thomas Zeller, "Landschaft als Gefühl und Autobahn als Formel: Der Autobahnbau in der frühen Bundesrepublik als Abgrenzungsversuch gegen die 'Straßen Adolf Hitlers,'" *WerkstattGeschichte* 7, no. 21 (1998): 29–41; Zeller, *Straße, Bahn, Panorama*, 228–50. See also Benjamin Steininger, *Raum-Maschine Reichsautobahn. Zur Dynamik eines bekannt/unbekannten Bauwerkes* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2005), 85–133.

60. Sergej Anatoljiev Treskinski, *Estetika avtomobilnyh dorog* (Moscow Transport, 1967).

61. "Die Frage, wie wird der Mittelstreifen? Was glauben Sie, wie wird diskutiert haben! Es gibt in Amerika Autobahnstrecken, da ist der Autobahnstreifen wesentlich breiter und hat eine Mulde. Und dieser Mittelstreifen ist natürlich sehr üppig bepflanzt, aber nur mit Büschen, keine Bäume, und das hat den großen Vorteil, sie brauchen keine Leitplanken. . . . Solche Gedanken ham wir unerhört diskutiert. Geht nicht! Unser Grund und Boden ist zu kostbar hier in der DDR—oder damals in der DDR," Rolf Näser, quoted here from my June 5, 1998, interview with Näser.

62. Sitzung des Präsidiums des Ministerrates vom June 8, 1988, BArchB, Bonn (July 3, 1990).

C 20/114-6263, I-39, P. 6. See also Heinz Stelling, *Die Entwicklung des Straßengewesens in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik 1945-1989* (Bonn: Kirschbaum Verlag, 1992), 71.

62 Interview with Hermann Gärlich.

64. See, among others, the Bericht der Staatlichen Plankommission zur Vorlage in der Beratung im ZK am October 13, 1960, erstellt im Auftrag des ZK durch die Mitglieder der Unterkommission "Autobahnbau Berlin-Rostock," September 20, 1960, 21-28, BArchB, DM 1/2632.

65. Petitions from 1987/88, without signature, in Verwaltungsarchiv des September 20, 1900, 21-22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848,

66. Petitions to the Autobahnmeisterei Freienhufen (Dresden), September 1987 and January 1988, in VBAS.

67. Petition to the Autobahndirektion Dresden, January 30, 1988, in VBAS.

68. Letter:

69. Ibid.
70. Letter to the Ministerium für Verkehrswesen, January 19, 1988; petition to the Autobahnbaukombinat, Betrieb Weimar, April 8, 1987; petition to Mitsunaga, February 15, 1987, in VBAS.

Antropa, February 13, 1987, in VBAS.

71. Letter to the Autobahnverkehrs-Bereich, October 3, 1987.
72. Letter to the Dresden Council, Bereich Straßenwesen, March 17, 1987, in VBAS.

73. Letter to the Autobahnbaukombinat, Betrieb Weimar, April 8, 1987, in VBAS.

74. Replies to petition, January 30, 1988, and February 11, 1988, in VBAS.

75. Axel Dossmann, "Transit: Die Autobahn im Blick von Polizei und Staatssicherheit," in *Die DDR im Bild. Zum Gebrauch der Fotografie im anderen deutschen Staat*, ed. Karin Hartewig and Alf Lütke (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 107–24.

76. Friedrich Christian Delius, "Angenehme Weiterreise!" in *Transit Westberlin. Erlebnisse im Zwischenraum*, ed. Friedrich Christian Delius and Peter Joachim Lapp (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1999), 9–38, esp. 38.

77. Peter Schneider, *Der Mautspringer* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1987), 64.

78. Delius, "Angenehme Weiterreise!" 30.

79. Steininger, *Raum-Maschine Reichsautobahn*, 132.

80. Axel Dossmann, "Wer ist wer?" Feindaufklärung an den Transitautobahnen in der DDR," *Traverse* 3 (2004): 85–99; and the documentary *Autobahn Ost*, directed by Gerd Kroske, written by Axel Dossmann and Gerd Kroske (Leykauf Film, Germany, 2004).

Chapter 9

1. The quoted phrase in my title is drawn from Brenda Colvin, "Roadside Planting in Country Districts," *Landscape and Garden* 6, no. 2 (1939): 86–88, esp. 86. Colvin herself is, of course, quoting from *Hamlet* 2.2.

2. In the case of the German autobahns, landscape advocates were frequently consulted *after* a road had been planned, while economic constraints limited the extent of landscaping and planting. See Thomas Zeller, "The Landscape Crown: Landscape, Perceptions, and Modernizing Effects of the German *Autobahn* System, 1934 to 1941," in *Technologies of Landscape: From Reaping to Recycling*, ed. David E. Nye (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 218–38. On the landscaping of the autobahns, see also W. H. Rollins, "Whose Landscape? Technology, Fascism, and Environmentalism on the National Socialist *Autobahn*," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85 (1995): 494–520; E. Dimendberg, "The Will to Motorization: Cinema, Highways, and Modernity," *October* 73 (1995): 91–137; G. Gröning, "The Feeling of Landscape—a German example," *Landscape Research* 17 (1992): 108–15; James D. Shand, "The *Reichsautobahn*: Symbol for the Third Reich," *Journal of Contemporary History* 19 (1984): 189–200.

3. On debates surrounding the design, construction, and use of Britain's roads and motorways in early- and mid-twentieth-century Britain, see Peter Merriman, *Driving Spaces: A Cultural-Historical Geography of England's M1 Motorway* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

4. J. Sheail, *Rural Conservation in Inter-war Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

5. On the formation of the Roads Beautifying Association, see E. Ford, "Byways Revisited," *Landscape Design* 234 (1994): 34–38; M. Spitta, "A Quarter of a Century of Highway Planting," *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* 77 (1952): 4–12; and Merriman, *Driving Spaces*. Fox was a consulting physician for diseases of the skin at St. George's Hospital before running his father's firm of general merchants, Duncan, Fox and Co. He also established an arboretum at his home in Winkworth, Surrey, which he gifted to the National Trust in 1952. See "Dr Wilfrid Fox" (obituary), *Times* (London), May 24, 1962, 25.

6. "Arterial Roads to Be Avenues," *Daily Express*, July 25, 1928. This news story, like several others cited below, is collected in a scrapbook of press cuttings preserved in the Roads Beautifying Association Archive at the Civic Trust Library, London, hereafter cited as RBA Archive Scrapbook.

7. See "Roadside Tree Protests," *Star*, October 31, 1928, in the RBA Archive Scrapbook.

8. Edwin Campbell, "Roadside Tree Planting: Art versus Utility," *The Queen: The Lady's Newspaper*, December 19, 1928, in the RBA Archive Scrapbook.

9. "Mrs. Ashley and the Trees," *Daily News*, December 29, 1928, in the RBA Archive Scrapbook.

10. Wilfrid Fox, "Roadside Planting (Including Post-war Suggestions)," *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* 69 (1944): 231–39, esp. 239. These discussions are clearly complicated by references to both Britain and England, and by the very different cultures of landscape which are invoked in discussions of Britain and its nations. What's more, the organizations examined in this paper operate in different regions and nations within Britain: the CPRE focuses on England, ILA members work throughout Britain, while the RBA worked on schemes in England and Wales (though the majority of these were in the South-East and Midlands of England). This tension is evident throughout the debates in this chapter.

11. "The Road Beautiful," *Country Life*, November 17, 1928, 708–10, esp. 708.

12. Roads Beautifying Association, *Eighth Report of the Roads Beautifying Association 1935–1936* (London: Roads Beautifying Association, 1936), 7. A similar assertion is made in a 1937 publication titled *The Highway Beautiful*, jointly authored and published by the Automobile Association and the Roads Beautifying Association; the copy of this booklet that I consulted is in the RBA Archive at the Civic Trust Library, London.

13. Fox, "Roadside Planting," 233, 235.

14. Roads Beautifying Association, *Seventh Report of the Roads Beautifying Association October 1933–March 1935* (London: Roads Beautifying Association,

THE WORLD BEYOND THE WINDSHIELD

**Roads and
Landscapes in
the United States
and Europe**

*Edited by Christof Mauch
and Thomas Zeller*

Foreword by David E. Nye

Ohio University Press
Athens

Franz Steiner Verlag
Stuttgart

Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio 45701
www.ohioswallow.com

© 2008 by Ohio University Press



Franz Steiner Verlag
www.steiner-verlag.de

Printed in the United States of America
All rights reserved

Ohio University Press books are printed on acid-free paper © TM

15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-3-515-09170-1 (Franz Steiner Verlag hardcover)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The world beyond the windshield : roads and landscapes in the United States and Europe / edited by Christof Mauch and Thomas Zeller.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8214-1767-6 (hc : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8214-1767-3 (hc : alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-8214-1768-3 (pb : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8214-1768-1 (pb : alk. paper)

1. Roadside improvement—United States. 2. Roadside improvement—Europe. 3. Scenic byways—United States. 4. Scenic byways—Europe. I. Mauch, Christof. II. Zeller, Thomas, 1966–
TEr77.W67 2008
713.0973—dc22

2008000738

... the road the human being travels,
That, on which blessing comes and goes, doth follow
The river's course, the valley's playful windings,
Curves round the cornfield and the hill of vines,
Honoring the holy bounds of property!
And thus secure, though late, leads to its end.

Friedrich Schiller, *The Piccolomini* (1799),
translated by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Contents

List of Figures	ix
Foreword	xi
DAVID E. NYE	
Acknowledgments	xv
Introduction	i
CHRISTOF MAUCH AND THOMAS ZELLER	
1. Driving Cultures and the Meaning of Roads <i>Some Comparative Examples</i>	14
RUDY J. KOSHAR	
2. The Rise and Decline of the American Parkway	35
TIMOTHY DAVIS	
3. The Scenic Is Political <i>Creating Natural and Cultural Landscapes along America's Blue Ridge Parkway</i>	59
ANNE MITCHELL WHISNANT	
4. "A Feeling Almost beyond Description" <i>Scenic Roads in South Dakota's Custer State Park, 1919-32</i>	79
SUZANNE JULIN	
5. "Neon, Junk, and Ruined Landscape" <i>Competing Visions of America's Roadside and the Highway Beautification Act of 1965</i>	94
CARL A. ZIMRING	
6. A Rough Modernization <i>Landscapes and Highways in Twentieth-Century Italy</i>	108
MASSIMO MORAGLIO	

7. Building and Rebuilding the Landscape of the Autobahn, 1930-70	125
THOMAS ZELLER	
8. Socialist Highways?	143
<i>Appropriating the Autobahn in the German Democratic Republic</i>	
AXEL DOSSMANN	
9. "Beautified" Is a Vile Phrase	168
<i>The Politics and Aesthetics of Landscaping Roads in Pre- and Postwar Britain</i>	
PETER MERRIMAN	
10. Physical and Social Constructions of the Capital Beltway	187
JEREMY L. KORR	

Notes 211

Contributors 271

Index 275

Figures

1.1 John and Louise Hitchcock Davis as they made the first attempt to drive coast to coast in 1899	20
1.2 Horatio Nelson Jackson and Sewall K. Crocker on their transcontinental drive from San Francisco to New York City in 1903	23
2.1 Classic Bronx River Parkway scene, ca. 1930	40
2.2 Collingwood area of the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, 1946	45
2.3 Cover of the March 1932 issue of <i>American Motorist</i> magazine	47
2.4 Rocky Knob area of the Blue Ridge Parkway, ca. 1940	49
2.5 New England's Merritt Parkway, ca. 1948	53
2.6 Aerial view of the Los Angeles Freeway Interchange, ca. 1965	56
3.1 Mabry Mill at milepost 176.2 of the Blue Ridge Parkway	74
3.2 Puckett Cabin at milepost 189 of the Blue Ridge Parkway	75
4.1 Peter Norbeck, governor of South Dakota from 1917 to 1921 and senator from 1921 until his death in 1936	82
4.2 A view of the "Cathedral Spires" from the Needles Highway in South Dakota's Black Hills	85
4.3 One of the pigtail bridges on the Iron Mountain Road in the Black Hills National Forest	90
4.4 Mount Rushmore Memorial seen from the Iron Mountain Road	91
6.1 A section of the Messina-Palermo motorway in Messina, Sicily	121
7.1 Emil Schult's design for the cover of the 1974 Kraftwerk album <i>Autobahn</i>	126
7.2 A service station along the German autobahn, ca. 1938	132
7.3 A section of autobahn showing typical landscaping, ca. 1938	134

- 7.4 An example of postwar autobahn design 136
- 7.5 The "only optically unfavorable" stretch of autobahn built during the Nazi era 139
- 8.1 Brochure developed for potential foreign investors in East Germany's highway-construction cooperative, the Volks Eigener Betrieb Autobahn-baukombinat 145
- 8.2 Map of existing and proposed autobahn routes in East Germany, ca. 1958 148
- 8.3 Cover of a 1961 issue of *Das Straßewesen*, a government bulletin distributed to East German highway engineers and construction crews 151
- 8.4 A section of the Leipzig autobahn, 1969 165
- 9.1 Cover of a 1948 pamphlet published by the British Road Federation 176
- 9.2 Two-span bridges over Britain's M1 motorway 184

Foreword

A century has passed since the motorcar raced into history, and during that time in the Western industrial nations the automobile and the high-speed road have passed from novelties for the rich to conveniences for the many to necessities for nearly everyone. In this process, the car has been naturalized. Children now think it normal to sit in a car while moving at 120 kilometers per hour, but the drivers of 1920 thought half that speed was daring. It requires an imaginative effort to recall the almost utopian promise of the early automobile and the uncertainty about how best to provide suitable pathways for this new vehicle. Historians have focused on the conversion of city streets and roads to the new traffic demands of cars and trucks, on the competition between mass transit and individual cars, and on the marketing battles between electric-, steam-, and gasoline-powered vehicles. Yet, curiously, until this present volume, the creation of fundamentally new kinds of roads has remained a somewhat neglected subject. Christof Mauch and Thomas Zeller have put together a tightly focused clutch of essays that share three concerns. First of all, they recover the moment of highway innovation from circa 1920–39, when planners in several nations worked out alternative solutions. Americans, inspired in part by Frederick Law Olmsted's carriageways in Boston, in New York's Central Park, and even in Yosemite, sought to build roads that would provide not merely transportation but recreation and enjoyment of nature. Indeed, the sinuous curves and occasional steep hills of these suggestively named "parkways" made them unsuitable for trucks. They were intended for automobiles only, and all horse-drawn traffic was banned. In contrast to these free public highways, Italians developed the first limited-access *autostrade* as toll roads, built and owned by private enterprise. The model they imitated during construction was the railroad. The engineers preferred long, straight highways, with no sharp curves or steep gradients. Somewhere between these two possibilities lay the German autobahn, constructed in great haste at a rate of a thousand kilometers per year, inspired by U.S. parkways but a largely separate development driven forward by Hitler, who built ahead