

schwerlich zwischen zwei Buchdeckel pressen lassen. Aber in einer solchen noch ausstehenden Erzählung würden beispielsweise jener „ohne Begleitung seiner Partnerin den Kinderwegen schiebende Facharbeiter mit den etwas längeren Haaren auf dem schwäbischen Dorf“ oder „die junge Büroangestellte aus der hessischen Kleinstadt auf unbegleiteter Urlaubsreise in Spanien“ (S. 228), die von Norbert Frei am Ende des Buches idealtypisch entworfen werden, um auf die durch „68“ beschleunigte, aber nicht verursachte Expansion der Möglichkeitshorizonte hinzuweisen, nicht an das Ende der Darstellung platziert, sondern in deren Mittelpunkt gerückt.

**Christof Mauch/Thomas Zeller  
(Hrsg.): The World Beyond the  
Windshield. Roads and Landscapes  
in the United States and Europe,  
Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008,  
283 S.**

Rezensiert von  
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The most important visual task of an automobile driver is to ensure a safe passage by continually scanning the road and the traffic on it. At the same time, however, the view of the surrounding landscape can markedly affect the experience of driving. These views, as noted by Christof Mauch and Thomas Zeller in their introduction, are not the product of happenstance.

Rather, they represent decisions shaped by the interplay of politics, economics, and culture at specific times and places. Some of these decisions were idiosyncratic while others were influenced by the ideas and actions of their counterparts in other countries. The result has been some broad similarities along with considerable national and regional variation.

All the articles explore the connection between highways and landscapes, but the leadoff article, in „Driving Cultures and the Meanings of Roads” Rudy J. Koshar takes a somewhat different approach with a driver-centered view. Asserting that a road is defined by the way it is used, he posits that driving is a „semiotic act” characterized by „negotiating meaning through use of a shared code” (p. 17). In explicating the changing culture of driving, Koshar begins with the first efforts to cross the U.S., moves on to the unintentionally „democratic” consequences of prewar Germany’s autobahns, and concludes with a discussion of some deviant uses of the car in postwar U.S.

The focus on road design per se returns with Timothy Davis’ „The Rise and Decline of the American „Parkway. Built from the 1910s to the mid-1930s, parkways were designed with aesthetic appeal foremost. Their serpentine curves and carefully landscaped rights of way enhanced the enjoyment of driving, but as such they were antithetical to the highway engineer’s culture, which stressed economical construction and the efficient movement of traffic, virtues which trumped all others in the era of post-WWII suburbanization.

One such highway, the Blue Ridge Parkway is the subject of Anne Mitchell Wisenant’s „The Scenic is Political.” An

outstanding example of a highway built for aesthetic rather than utilitarian purposes, this „linear national park” extends for 469 miles as it traverses North Carolina and Virginia. Initiated in 1935, the highway was conceived as a means of attracting tourists to what was presented as a quaint and unspoiled part of America. In fact, the realization of this image was the product of highly political process, one that was not an unalloyed blessing for the local inhabitants. The routing of the road reflected power differentials in the region, and largely excluded locals from the operation of roadside businesses. In reality, the promotion of a distinct regional culture was intended to attract out-of-state visitors, often to the detriment of the putative bearers of that culture.

Another tourist-oriented road is presented in Suzanne Julin's, „A Feeling Almost beyond Description.” This narrative of the planning and construction of scenic roads in South Dakota's Custer State Park effectively describes the forces gave rise to this example of „park rustic” (p. 89). Chief among these was the entrepreneurial role of the state governor, who sought to promote automotive tourism with roads that made effective use of pigtail curves, rustic bridges, and views of Mt. Rushmore.

Aesthetic issues are also the focus of Carl A. Zimring's „Neon, Junk, and Ruined Landscape,” which narrates efforts to implement Lady Bird Johnson's vision of highway beautification in the mid-1960s. Primarily intended to eradicate roadside junkyards and billboards, the program at best was a partial success. Junkyards, renamed by their proprietors as „scrapyards” in the hope of improving their image, could at least be obscured by enclosing

fences. Billboards were a tougher nut to crack, as genuine highway beautification required nothing short of their removal. This was largely thwarted through determined opposition from the billboard industry. Far from eradicating them, the Highway Beautification Act ended up protecting billboards, although little information on how this happened is provided.

Aesthetically pleasing highways in the form of parkways or just ordinary roads bereft of billboards and scrapyards were of little concern in Italy according to Massimo Moraglio in his „A Rough Modernization: Landscapes and Highways in Twentieth Century Italy.” Sadly ironic for a nation imbued with an inbred appreciation of the arts, the designers of Italy's highways showed little concern for aesthetic sensibilities. Although an 84-km. autostrada built in 1922 can be credited as one of the world's first limited-access highways, Italy's pre-World War II efforts were hindered by poverty and a fragmented governmental structure. When highways were built, they reflected the interests of construction magnates like Piero Puricelli. The post-war era was a great one for Italian design in general, but not in the case of Italian roads and highways, where the need to accommodate a burgeoning car population trumped aesthetic concerns.

Although they initially were inspired by Italian autostradas and American parkways, Germany's autobahns exerted considerable influence on post-World War II road design in Europe and the United States. But as noted in Thomas Zeller's „Building and Rebuilding the Landscape of the Autobahn,” the relationship between landscaping and road engineering was an uneasy one. Although lip service

was paid to the importance of aesthetically pleasing limited-access highways, in the 1950s engineers in the Federal Republic were able to assert authority over landscape architects, and they have never completely relinquished their primacy.

If West Germany was half-hearted in its efforts to synthesize aesthetics and efficiency, the German Democratic Republic was even less concerned with harmonizing highways with the natural setting. As noted in Axel Dossmann's „Socialist Highways?“, the existing landscape was something to be traversed as quickly and cheaply as possible. Moreover, ulterior motives lay behind seemingly aesthetic considerations. When the first East German autobahn was built in 1971, its builders replicated some features of the prewar German autobahn, most notably „Germanic“ stone bridges. Yet these designs were not motivated by cultural imperatives; their nostalgic design was the product of chronic shortages of steel and concrete.

For Peter Merriman, national identity also was one of the issues that shaped highway landscaping. Predating the first British motorways, divergent images of the English countryside continued to be promulgated as these limited-access highways spread into the countryside. In “‘Beautified’ Is a Vile Phrase” Merriman describes the conflicts between prewar and postwar actors as they argued over the proper landscaping of Britain's highways and motorways. The designers of the first motorway, the M1, sought no input from an advisory committee concerned with the landscaping of major roads, but the Ministry of Transport's appointment of a landscape architect in 1961 represented the recogni-

tion that highway design should be more than an engineering exercise.

The final chapter, Jeremy Korr's „Physical and Social Constructions of the Capital Beltway,” does not address the relationship between the landscape and the highway that surrounds the capital of the United States. Instead, it documents the designers' complete lack of concern for the people who lived in the neighborhoods traversed by the multi-lane highway. It is small consolation that in subsequent years the highway has been socially constructed to serve as a social and cultural demarcation between areas inside and outside the Beltway, a source of shared fear and loathing for many drivers, and even a site for mobile sexual adventures.

The individual contributions to *The World beyond the Windshield* do not address exactly the same themes, nor are they always in perfect agreement with one another. In this, they reflect ongoing debates on such matters as the prewar planning and design of Germany's autobahns and the extent of European influences on the Interstate Highway System in the United States. These issues might have been highlighted in a concluding chapter, which also could have forged connecting links between the individual articles. Yet even in the absence of such a synthesis, the book's contributions significantly extend our understanding of the processes through which 20th century highways were envisaged, designed, built, and used.