Consuming Landscapes
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The traveler had a choice, and he opted against the scenic road. While touring the American Southeast, a writer for the New York Times decided not to use the Blue Ridge Parkway. Its ridgetop location made driving on an overcast day less pleasurable: “Rain, low clouds and zero visibility forced us off the Parkway but the Interstate also produces some sweeping vistas and runs up and down the slopes of many of those beautiful, sharp-edged Blue Ridges.” When this account of an Appalachian journey was written in the early 1970s, the touristic desire for roadside panoramas had not abated. However, as a multilane interstate highway at a lower elevation and with a less poetic designation, Interstate 81 apparently sufficed for scenic intake.\(^1\)

In the postwar years, parkways and the idea of automotive access to scenery became more and more controversial. The elite disagreements between design professionals and wilderness advocates were joined by more mass-based movements. In infrastructural terms, interstate highways, with their emphasis on constant speed and predictability, competed with the parkway planners’ predilections for variety and visual enjoyment at lower speeds and sometimes higher elevations. A new kind of roadmindedness took hold with unadorned interstates, and new groups of actors contributed to redefining it.

As the following pages will show, the eventual dominance of utilitarian interstate highways was far from preordained. Pressure groups such as trucking lobbies preferred them over parkways, which they decried as wasteful. Driving on interstates proved to be different than touring on parkways. While American scenic roads continued to expand, such roads began to disappear from guidebooks both in the United States and in Germany. In cities,
highways became controversial when urban activists pushed back against the destruction of their livelihood. For environmentalists from the 1960s onward, cars and roads stood for everything that was wrong with modern society.

**Unbuilt Parkways**

Given these contrasts and the rapid expansion of interstate highways, it is easy to overlook the plans for extensive parkway systems developed during and after the 1930s. Understanding unbuilt scenic infrastructures and the reasons why they remained on the drawing boards helps to illuminate the varied history of roadmindedness. Several parkway plans circulated in the press and among politicians. One of the longest of these highways would have been built in the country’s most populated section. On the heels of the planning for the Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway, Park Service Associate Director Arthur Demaray and Chief Thomas MacDonald of the Bureau of Public Roads introduced the idea of a “national parkway of the interurban type” from Washington, DC, to Boston in 1935. It would bypass the cities, thus lowering the cost of purchasing property. With at least 200 feet (61 meters), its right-of-way would allow for control of the roadside. Not only would this 450-mile (724-kilometer) parkway put thousands of people to work, but it would also serve the automotive needs of an area with some 25 million people, they wrote: “In no other section of the country is such a parkway so greatly needed.” This proposal incorporated existing roadways around New York, in particular the Taconic Parkway being built by the State of New York, extending the Bronx River Parkway northward by 100 miles (161 kilometers) into the eastern Hudson Valley; Gilmore Clarke was the main landscape architect. From 1925 onward, Franklin D. Roosevelt had been a major driving force for the Taconic. His preference for an elevated route was incorporated into the road’s southern portions. By the time the proposal for the national parkway was written, about sixty miles (ninety-seven kilometers) of the parkway from the George Washington Bridge to Poughkeepsie were complete. This interurban parkway’s conception was close to the townless highway advocated by MacKaye and Mumford years earlier, but it was also grounded in the Bureau of Public Road’s basic approach of responding to existing traffic needs rather than creating them. While the State of New York finished the Taconic by 1963, the larger federal plans for a road from the District of Columbia to Boston did not leave the basic planning stage. Neither
did a scenic highway crossing the length of Massachusetts, despite the governor’s offer to donate the right-of-way to the federal government.2

An even more ambitious (but also inchoate) parkway proposal was born in Congress. A 20,000-mile (32,000-kilometer) parkway loop was to span the entire continental United States and connect almost all national parks. On the East Coast, the parkway with a two-hundred-feet-wide right-of-way would have joined Acadia National Park in Bar Harbor, Maine, with Miami and the Everglades. Starting in Chattanooga, Tennessee, a southern route leading to the West would link several national parks en route to California. Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks were part of a northern section to Mount Rainier in Washington. From Seattle, the road would turn eastward and continue all the way to Albany. This monumental parkway proposal was introduced by the chairman of the House Roads Committee and received some press coverage, but little attention from Ickes or Roosevelt.3

Swept up in the parkway fervor, the American Society of Civil Engineers suggested a national system of car-only roads for tourists to separate them from trucks on federal-aid highways. The engineers justified their call with the “vastly predominating percentage of passenger cars now used for touring or pleasure purposes outside of municipal limits.” Rather than calling them parkways, the society preferred “tourways” and presented a committee of professionals and road boosters; the chairman’s role was reserved for Jay Downer, the prominent engineer with the Westchester County Park Commission. These tourways did not materialize, but they indicate just how high parkway fever was.4 A 1941 “Park and Recreational Land Plan” published by the National Park Service described a national parkway system “as a move toward restoration, to the car owner, of those returns in pleasant driving, to which his payment of a variety of special and general taxes fully entitles him.”5 In other words, automotive scenery had become a federally funded entitlement.

**Parkways vs. Highways**

Given this broad level of support for not just local or regional but national parkways, the turn toward highways for both cars and trucks and with less concern for landscaping needs explaining. Roadmindedness was transformed. The push for parkways was strong enough to provoke a reaction. With the construction of several hundreds of parkway miles and more in the offing, a countermovement emerged. Trucking organizations provided
some of the shrillest voices, since their vehicles were banned from scenic infrastructures. A spokesperson for the American Trucking Association reminded his readers that public roads were to be just that: open to anyone. Throughout history, he opined, roads had been used primarily for commercial purposes. He ridiculed the Skyline Drive as a “ribbon-way to fairyland” and thundered: “If the sightseer becomes so inanely selfish as to attempt or desire to legislate the other user off the highway, he admits ignorance of the purpose for which roads were built.” A pamphlet by a trailer company decried scenic roads banning trucks as “horizontal monuments to poor planning.” Truckers had to fight for a place on the open road. They loathed roads that were dedicated to passenger cars, both on the drawing board and on the scene in the Northeast and on Park Service parkways.6

Before and during the New Deal, highway lobbies began to push for the construction of a nationwide limited-access road system. Groups such as the National Highway Users Conference, which represented manufacturers of cars and trucks, as well as oil companies, argued that gasoline taxes should only be used for improving car and truck traffic. They also sought to uphold the professional primacy of civil engineers. With the increased level of funding for roads during the New Deal, federal plans for nationwide highways rested on the assumption that more trucks and cars would circulate on the roads. They should catch up with traffic. This approach had been the one favored by the Bureau of Public Roads early on, but it stood in obvious contrast to the traffic-inducing policy of the Park Service. The fact that the bureau was working with the latter did not resolve the underlying tension.7

In a foundational book-length report from 1939 entitled *Toll Roads and Free Roads*, the Bureau of Public Roads argued for need-based superhighways connecting major urban centers. The bureau suggested building new, limited-access roads where the need was already greatest and most likely to increase, based on traffic counts. The inclusion of trucks was so obvious as to not even be discussed. The statistics collated by the engineers made it clear that most trips amounted to five miles or less. Long-distance traffic was practically absent: less than 3 percent of all drivers wanted to go farther than 100 miles (160 kilometers). Traffic was mostly urban in origin and direction. Therefore, urban bypasses made little sense and traffic was to be directed into the heart of the cities, according to the report. Using Baltimore as a case study, the report called for combining slum clearance with highway building. World War II, of course, halted such efforts, but the fateful aim for the heart
of cities came to full force afterward. Only a half-decade after MacDonald’s and Demaray’s proposal for a national parkway from Washington to Boston bypassing the urban centers, this more consequential document proposed commercial highways targeting downtown areas. Their best design was “level straight.” Landscape development was now demoted to planting low-maintenance roadside vegetation rather than being part of the design process from the beginning. Civil engineers would be in the driver’s seat.8

The detached professional language drawn from statistics in Toll Roads and Free Roads had its exuberant, utopian counterpart in the 1939 World’s Fair exhibit called “Futurama.” Sponsored by General Motors and conceived by the industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes, the three-dimensional model
of the “City of Tomorrow” showed gleaming skyscrapers and highways with several lanes and on several levels. There was no congestion. In this wildly popular exhibit, public transit had all but disappeared in favor of a car-based urban modernity. Visitors observed the phantasm while sitting on a moving conveyor belt. Futurama equated urbanism with automobility and movement in city and country with wide, limited-access highways. The hinterlands in this exhibit of some 35,000 acres were marked by massive freeways with up to fourteen lanes. While civil engineers in the employ of the Bureau of Public Roads disliked the utopianism, they welcomed the public attention to highways and traffic problems.9

**Expanding German Roads**

Such vigorous public debates over parkways and highways were absent from Germany, where the professional primacy of civil engineers for roads was never fundamentally questioned during the Nazi years, the hap-hazard involvement of landscape architects notwithstanding. Fritz Todt’s elevated role in Nazi governance, and his expansionist visions, provoked occasional grumbling by hikers and conservationists, but no serious dissent. Against this background, Nazi planners envisioned an Alpine network of scenic roads with the German Alpine Road as its core. Even before Austria’s annexation, an engineer noted the rise of auto hiking, cited American parkways as an inspiration, and suggested combining existing and future Alpine roads into a transborder system of scenic driving. Motorway enthusiasts, in the meantime, sought to expand German and Italian interstate highways into a European network under German domination.10

While postwar Europe developed extensive highway networks, they were planned and financed by individual countries. After Germany’s liberation, the establishment of the Federal Republic, and the beginnings of European economic integration, new highway connections across borders emerged. In West Germany and elsewhere, multilane, limited-access highways enabled motorists and truckers to drive at constantly high speeds. The Federal Republic inherited a highway system built far ahead of demand. Construction of new stretches, therefore, did not start until the 1960s, for the most part. Trucks had already been allowed to use Nazi autobahns. Unsurprisingly, trucking lobbies became some of the most vocal voices for rebuilding, maintaining, and extending the autobahn in the Federal Republic. As historians have shown, their pressure groups—and those of car manufacturers, tire
producers, and other automotive interests—aligned the highways with a modern, Western way of moving about. Trying to strip the autobahn of its Nazi heritage, they stressed the capitalist values of moving freight quickly, and the personal freedom of the road in a liberal democracy. These lobbies were highly effective, not the least because they contrasted West Germany’s embrace of individual transportation and multilane highways with the supposedly collectivist transportation system in East Germany. A Cold War rationale prevailed, with individually owned automobiles and expanding highways as markers of Western consumerism.

When the United States began the construction of its interstate highway system in 1956, the conflation of free societies with individual, car-based mobility was at a Cold War high. After decades of planning and political battles over financing, Congress assented to an interstate highway law that year. The federal government agreed to reimburse states for 90 percent of the construction cost for the new superhighways crisscrossing the country. Originally planned for 41,000 miles (66,000 kilometers), the interstates were
the largest public works program ever undertaken by the federal government to that date. Its main motivation was not upgrading military logistics. Truckers and motorist organizations had been some of its chief proponents. This system cemented the utilitarian approach to freeways and the primacy of commerce and fast movement. Instead of using roadbuilding as a response to the economic calamities of the Great Depression, postwar federal highways were born out of affluence and a desire to provide automotive infrastructures for an increasingly car-oriented society. By providing the means to make long-distance road trips feasible and easy, they contributed to the decline of passenger railroads and the rise of the automotive sector as a pillar of the economy. As the interstate system was debated, one prominent conservationist, Bernard DeVoto, went so far as to support these highways wholeheartedly. They were needed for circulation and movement in a restless society, DeVoto wrote, and he implied that conservation and highways were not contradictory, as long as they were spatially separated.13

In West Germany and the United States, multipurpose highways for trucks and passenger cars became the norm for long-distance roads in the second half of the twentieth century, not landscaped parkways. Intricate and detailed guidelines issued by federal governments mandated design features such as the thickness of the road surface, the width of the road, and the size and design of signs in order to ensure uniformity in all processes related to roadbuilding. The decades from 1950 to 1980 saw the most rapid and extensive roadbuilding period in both countries. Given their new status as Cold War allies, knowledge exchange between West Germany and the United States accelerated.14

Road infrastructures grew by leaps and bounds, were highly popular, received copious funding, and, at least initially, engendered no widespread disagreement. Building predictable, uniform, high-performance roads suitable for all weather conditions and in various geographic zones was the goal of the civil engineers designing them. Drivers had to get used to operating their vehicles at constantly high speeds, weaving in and out of traffic, and to preparing to exit the highway. One important engineering worry was that of ensuring sight distance at high speeds—that is, to allow drivers to slow down and hit the brakes without collision, should they encounter a traffic jam or stalled car in the roadway. Drivers’ visual perceptions mattered, but more as matters of safety, less so in the realm of aesthetic enjoyment.15

The experience of parkways, in contrast, had been about scenery, variety,
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Advertisement in *Highway Builder*, September 1940. Built on parts of a former railroad right-of-way, the Pennsylvania Turnpike allowed for unusually high travel speeds when its first stretch opened in 1940. This advertisement for a tire company extols the virtues of speed. Courtesy of *Highway Builder* magazine
and relatively low speeds. Their sensory qualities did not place them outside the realm of capitalist circulation, but their low speed marked them as different. In the United States, they still found institutional sponsors. In the 1950s, New Jersey commissioned Gilmore Clarke to design the 170-mile-long (274-kilometer-long) Garden State Parkway, a toll road from suburban New York to New Jersey beaches. Trucks were banned on some of its portions and remain so today. This parkway offered a much faster ride than the suburban parkways of the interwar period, but the attention to landscaping was still paramount.\(^\text{16}\) Almost simultaneously, workers in the Garden State paved the lanes for the New Jersey Turnpike, a commercial thruway for trucks and cars. In the state’s flat terrain, the straight, unadorned, multilane road became synonymous with rapid movement, if not the state itself.\(^\text{17}\) New York’s state parkways were not finished until the 1960s. On the federal level, the most persistent patron of parkways remained the National Park Service.

Commemorating the historically important trade and travel route between Nashville, Tennessee, and Natchez, Mississippi, the Natchez Trace Parkway was built between 1937 and 2005 at a length of 444 scenic miles. Parkway historian Davis notes the “less dramatic nature of the terrain” and the drawn-out planning debates and funding battles regarding the road. In a more populous area of the United States, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway was opened in 1954. It combined parkway aesthetics with the characteristics of a high-speed commuter route.\(^\text{18}\)

However, a popular vote had already brought down one prominent parkway proposal. The voters of Vermont defeated a planned Green Mountain Parkway in a referendum in 1936. It would have run the length of the state, from Massachusetts to the Canadian border, as one of the New Deal’s relief projects. The landscape architect designing the route for the National Park Service worked on a version of MacKaye’s flankline road; Robert Marshall objected not to the road as such, but to its proximity to the Long Trail, a hiking trail already completed by 1930, that runs along the north–south spine of the Green Mountains. Voters rejected the idea for various reasons, among them the yet-to-be-decided role of tourism in Vermont, the state’s Republican political orientation at the time, and the realization that a Park Service parkway would not have allowed roadside development.\(^\text{19}\)

One of the most ambitious and detailed American parkway proposals was for a Mississippi River Parkway, which would follow the banks of the river for 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers), from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico.
Parkway for the Mississippi: Suggested location before construction. If built, the Mississippi River Parkway would have been the longest scenic road in the United States. While it did not leave the planning stage, the plan for the riverine road was only one of the imagined extensions of the 1930s parkway boom. These before-and-after images portray a shoreline road hugging the banks of the Mississippi. Bureau of Public Roads, Department of Commerce, and Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Parkway for the Mississippi,” Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1951, 27
An elaborate postwar report by the Bureau of Public Roads and the National Park Service concluded that new construction would be too expensive, and a toll road unnecessary and impracticable. Therefore, the agencies suggested combining existing roads and bridges, upgrading them to parkway standards, and adding some newly constructed interconnections. The road would re-
A Consequential Defeat

Shorter in length, but probably more consequential in infrastructural terms was the defeated parkway on the remains of the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal. This unbuilt road matters greatly in the history of road-mindedness. The C&O Canal paralleled the unruly Potomac, connecting the tidewater region of Washington, DC, with the headwaters of the Ohio River receive federal aid and be “designed expressly for tourist travel and to conserve and develop the recreational resources of the region.” A large survey, undertaken by a hundred planners appointed by the ten river states, examined the banks and existing roads. Congress, however, was unwilling to fund the road upgrades. Today, a “Great River Road” exists—if only on road signs—and is promoted by the tourism agencies of the states.\textsuperscript{20}

Protest hike, C&O Canal, 1954. An activist US Supreme Court judge, William Douglas (in the middle ground, raising his hat), leads the protest hike along the banks of the derelict Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. As a result of protests like this one, the National Park Service abandoned its efforts to turn the former canal into a parkway. Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park
and Pittsburgh, and thus opening up the West and increasing the movement of freight. Or so it had been conceived by George Washington. When construction began on the canal in 1828, another infrastructure project aiming West began to make its way, less than fifty miles (eighty kilometers) to the north: the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the country’s first. The latter project triumphed, and the former languished. The C&O Canal ended in Cumberland, Maryland, rather than beyond the Allegheny Mountains. By the 1930s, the federal government had taken over the decrepit canal ditch, which had flooded several times. During the New Deal, African American Civilian Conservation Corps men created a recreational landscape with hiking paths out of some of its remains close to the District of Columbia.21

After World War II, the Army Corps of Engineers came up with plans for a series of fourteen dams, given the frequent flooding of the canal. The storage lakes would have inundated the Potomac and the adjacent canal. Hydroelectricity and flood control were the goals. Another branch of the federal government disagreed. Seeking to preempt the Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service suggested filling the canal and turning it into a parkway from Washington, DC, to Cumberland. Factions of Washington’s elites, including the Washington Post, were intrigued by the Park Service’s plan, since it would “enable more people to enjoy beauties now seen by very few.” But some hikers were prominent and in opposition. In a publicity stunt, Supreme Court justice William O. Douglas challenged the newspaper’s editorial board to an eight-day hike along the 185 miles (298 kilometers) of the towpath in 1954. The ramble would demonstrate the recreational quality of this infrastructure for those propelled by their legs, not their automobiles. Tellingly, Douglas called the man-made landscape “a wilderness area where man can be alone with his thoughts, a sanctuary where he can commune with God and nature, a place not yet marred by the roar of wheels and sound of horns.” Park Service Director Conrad Wirth objected to the first point. He emphasized that the canal area had already been a “commercial trafficway” for three-quarters of a century. After a series of disputes, the desire for non-motorized recreation won out in the end. The C&O Parkway remained unbuilt. The towpaths running on both sides of the canal, as well as some locks, were restored for visitors, hikers, and bicyclists. By 1971, the flood-prone structure was declared a National Historic Site; its maintenance fell to the Park Service.22

The defeat of the canal-turned-parkway was a major blow to the idea of scenic automotive drives in a prominent location. A generation earlier, the
suburban parkways outside of New York had introduced metropolitan parkways to a larger and generally receptive, if not enthusiastic, audience. By the 1950s and 1960s, some of the most prominent local elites in the nation’s capital rejected a suburban scenic drive planned by the entity that had been most active in promoting them at the national level.

More generally speaking, however, consideration of scenery in the context of driving was not completely abandoned. An ambitious 1966 national program instigated by President Lyndon Johnson proposed a $4 billion program to upgrade existing highways and build new scenic roads and parkways, for a total length of 54,000 miles (87,000 kilometers). Proponents justified the expenditure by pointing out that almost 13 percent of all driving, as measured in miles, was for pleasure. However, no new scenic roadway construction ensued. Instead, Lady Bird Johnson lent her support to a Highway Beautification Bill, which targeted billboards alongside federal roads. Historians agree that it did not achieve its goals; billboards were there to stay. Scenic roads, though, are still within the purview of the federal government. Since 1991, the Department of Transportation has been awarding the sobriquet of “scenic byway” to already extant routes that have undergone a vetting process.

Within its own confines, the National Park Service continued to promote roads. Parks became ever more popular as the Park Service welcomed motorists, both in its narratives and on the ground. Beauty spots were easily accessible to drivers and passengers. Growing numbers of vacation days for workers and employees, the rise in discretionary incomes, and the pervasiveness of automobiles for suburban Americans contributed to a run on parks. In the 1960s, the Park Service managed to parlay this popularity into budget increases. The program was entitled “Mission 66.” Some of this money went into building more and faster roads in the parks. Architecturally speaking, the Park Service introduced modernist styles into building and road design and did away with some of the efforts to incorporate vernacular forms. Roadmindedness took on new forms and undergirded a massive expansion during Mission 66. Whether modernist or rustic, road infrastructure in parks continued to grow, to the point of utter automotive convenience. According to one study, one in six visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National Park never turned off their car engines in the 1980s, thus partaking in a completely sedentary scenic experience.
Fundamentalist Critiques

The infrastructural activism of Mission 66 and the rising numbers of visitors also provoked a fundamentalist voice from within the National Park Service, arguing against roads and cars. Edward Abbey, a former park ranger whose advocacy for wilderness issues went hand in hand with nativist calls to limit immigration, famously warned of “industrial tourism” and advocated a ban on roads. For him, highways eased the movement of humans into parks and thereby threatened their “wild” character. Wilderness depended on the absence of infrastructures in Abbey’s eyes: “The auto-motive combine has almost succeeded in strangling our cities; we need not let it also destroy our national parks,” he admonished. While unsuccessful in his efforts to minimize roadbuilding in the parks, Abbey managed to popularize a counterview on roads in parks: rather than being artistically acclaimed structures that provided access, they were destructive impositions. Abbey’s moralizing and vibrant writing drew attention to the signaling role of roads. For wilderness advocates such as Abbey, their absence was a crucial marker. In lieu of considering design options or choosing locations, they regarded roads in and of themselves to be one of the clearest expressions of mass tourism run amok. Besides, the disallowance of roads became part of the political and legal definitions for wilderness areas. Opposition to the Blue Ridge Parkway had pushed some activists to form the Wilderness Society in the mid-1930s. This small but influential group scored a major legislative victory with the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964. In the areas protected by this act, resource use as well as any permanent structures, including roads, became banned. This different stance is exemplified by one of the country’s oldest environmental organizations, the Sierra Club. In the 1950s, it changed its attitude toward roads drastically. After supporting highways in the Sierra Nevada rhetorically and financially for the first half of the century, the club now opposed them loudly.

The infrastructural boom years of Mission 66 provided updates for campgrounds, visitor centers, and utility services in the national parks. They also provided momentum for finishing the Blue Ridge Parkway. As Anne Whisnant writes, the Park Service was single-minded, if not always successful, in its pursuit of the road. It faced pressures from local developers and state politicians. The final holdup for completing the road was a long-standing
conflict with a private company that owned a mountain peak called Grandfather Mountain, which was close to the intended routing. After adorning the mountain with a “mile-high” suspension bridge, the mountain’s owners used the rhetoric of conservation to quibble with the design of the Blue Ridge Parkway. An expensive engineering compromise, in the form of a cantilevered bridge, called the Linn Cove viaduct, reduced the number of trees to be cut. By 1987, travelers could traverse the Blue Ridge Parkway on its entire length from Virginia into North Carolina.28

Continuing Regimes of Exclusion

While this road remained a sought-after destination for millions of visitors, its attraction was not equally distributed. By design, African Americans were planned to be segregated from white visitors at restrooms, campgrounds, and restaurants in the first few years of the parkway’s history. In 1941, only about five thousand out of one million visitors to the Blue Ridge Parkway were Black.29 After the war, segregated planning ended. By practice, however, the Blue Ridge Parkway was a public recreation area during the Jim Crow regime, which included spatial exclusion. Access to amenities of leisure, such as parks, was regimented and regulated in the American South and beyond. African American activists fought segregation in state parks through legal challenges. Even though formal segregation was declared illegal by the 1960s, participation in recreation continued to be decidedly unequal. On a deeper level, the idea of environmental leisure was itself racialized, as scholars have argued. Even in the absence of formal bans, practices and cultural norms of outdoor recreation continued to be associated with whiteness.30

In addition, steering an automobile to assert one’s autonomy and automotive freedom were much easier to come by for white Americans than for African Americans. This was true not just in the South. Roadside businesses, such as gas stations or restaurants, might not cater to African Americans, necessitating careful planning of overland trips with guidebooks. The most famous one, the Green Book, listed establishments that offered services to them. Hostility, harassment by police, and (in the worst case) physical violence awaited unprepared Black drivers and passengers in some locales, as Gretchen Sorin documents.31

On scenic drives such as the Blue Ridge Parkway, these two regimes of uncertainty and inequality formed an uneasy admixture for African American motorists. Although it would be difficult to quantify how many of them
used the recreational road in the postwar years, it stands to reason that they were few. The rising popularity of this road rested on white visitors, to a very large degree. In a rare piece of archival evidence from 1956, DeHaven Minkson, a prominent Black doctor from Philadelphia, expressed his reluctance to travel to the Blue Ridge Mountains, lest he would be denied dining and lodging. Rather than having to rely on the Green Book, Minkson sought to assert his rights as a citizen and as a motorist and wrote to the Department of the Interior. But such voices were rare in a geography of racialized exclusion.\textsuperscript{32} Roadmindedness did not extend to everybody.

**The Alpine Road after Hitler**

Unlike the Blue Ridge Parkway, the German Alpine Road was never finished according to its original plans. Its incompleteness was the result and showcase of fractures. The political, economic, and moral ruin of Germany in 1945 provided the overarching rupture. In the postwar period, tensions between tourism and conservation, development and quietude, motorized access and sweat-driven solitude, as well as high- and low-altitude routes, came to the fore in much more pronounced and public ways than during the enforced acclaim of the Nazi years. Despite several lobbying efforts, the road links remained broken. Only after another, more recent, wave of lobbying did continuous signposts appear on the landscape in 2017 to elevate various stretches of road into a fully marketable tourist road.\textsuperscript{33}

Immediately after the war, few things were further from the minds of Germans than tourism. Cities were in ruins, food was rationed, infrastructures still suffered from the war. Rather than thinking about getting away for leisure, most Germans were trying to scrape by. Millions of refugees and expellees needed shelter and nourishment. Yet, in Bavaria’s Southeast, the Berchtesgaden tourist association was already preparing for a revival of tourism in early 1946. While it might seem paradoxical for them to have considered tourism issues at such a time, local leaders pointed out that recreation was the backbone of the economy in this part of the country. Once the general economy would rebound, Berchtesgaden would again become a favorite destination as the “Yellowstone Park of the Bavarian Alps.”\textsuperscript{34}

The reference to the United States, which had liberated this part of Germany less than a year earlier, and its national parks was not incidental—even if it was preposterous, given the sheer size of Yellowstone, which dwarfed the conservation areas in Germany. (Yellowstone would, in fact, cover one
Tourism managers realized that postwar tourism would be increasingly car-based and would require infrastructural expansion. The German Alpine Road, like many of the country’s roads, lay in disrepair. Its most powerful sponsor, Hitler, had vanished along with his dictatorship. Instead of support from Berlin, the project of a tourist road in the German Alps now depended upon local and regional promoters. Instead of ready access to money, resources had to be negotiated through more democratic processes. Instead of carefully designed eye-catching flora and visual screens, spontaneous vegetation had crept up in some locations, and had overgrown isolated bridges and pieces of unfinished, crumbling roadbed. To take just one example to illustrate the degree of contention: When a local member of the Bavarian state parliament suggested the construction of less than a mile of Alpine road (including an expensive tunnel) near the town of Schliersee in 1952, some members of a parliamentary committee growled that roads in Northern Bavaria were just as bad, and that their upkeep and renovation made more economic sense. While the state assembly ultimately approved Bavarian money for this stretch, the episode shows that intraregional tensions made it necessary to justify the road in the first place. The flow of money to the road was no longer a given.

While roadmindedness thrived in general, the Alpine Road in and of itself, as well as its design, became controversial. Two years after the founding of the Federal Republic, a newspaper article ridiculed plans for expanding the road as premature and reminded its readers of the Third Reich support for the roads. The new federal government in Bonn was initially reluctant to fund the project. Only a few stretches could be justified to be built, and motorists could live with the gaps in coverage, since other roads were not far away, opined the writer. A suggested routing over the Kampenwand summit (5,476 feet, or 1,669 meters, above sea level) was now out of the question, and thoughts of the costs of doing so made state administrators “shudder,” according to the paper. The issue of elevation was directly related to cost: instead of connecting one mountain pass with another, as the Nazi plans had favored, the more economical and thus preferable postwar approach should be to circumvent peaks.

Conflicts between the road administration and locals became more pronounced, too. A group of local farmers protested that the Alpine Road made it necessary to build fences to keep their grazing cows from crossing the
Road planners in the Third Reich had prescribed wooden fences to control the view from the road in its totality. Local farmers, however, thought they were too “massive.” Alwin Seifert had designed them, the Reich’s administrators paid for them, but local farmers refused to accept the fences on their property, as they would then be responsible for their upkeep. Maintenance would have required an inordinate amount of lumber, in their opinion. The postwar federal road administration, indeed, preferred much less expensive (and less scenic) metal electric fencing to keep the cows at bay. While arguing whether Bonn or Munich would be responsible for financing the fences, all parties involved appeared to agree that simpler fences would, in the end, suffice.\footnote{39}
The Federal Alpine Road

Between 1952 and 1966, 90 miles (145 kilometers) of the German Alpine Road were rebuilt or built anew, which meant that 345 out of the originally planned 430 kilometers of the road were available. At the time, the Bavarian secretary of the interior indicated that completing the road would be difficult, given the high cost of construction at higher elevations and pressing needs elsewhere. State planners responsible for transportation and infrastructures were keen to return to the interwar period’s policies of counting traffic and prioritizing new construction projects according to needs, thus maintaining their department’s expert status and its relative autonomy from politics. Rather than bowing to political pressures, the department sought to rely on quantitative criteria. Measured by these yardsticks, the Alpine Road had not fared well before 1933, and administrators aimed to make it part of more comprehensive infrastructure planning after 1945.

The person most willing to lend his name to the Alpine Road after the war was Hans-Christoph Seebohm (1903–1967), the federal secretary of transportation. A mining engineer by training, he headed the Bonn department from 1949 to 1966 and made a name for himself through his shrill tirades on behalf of the German refugees from Central and Eastern Europe. He also loved to participate in opening ceremonies for the highways that were built from the late 1950s onward. His name is closely connected to the expansion of the autobahn network after the war. “No one thinks as highly of Hans-Christoph Seebohm as Hans-Christoph Seebohm,” quipped the news magazine Der Spiegel on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of his position as secretary. His management style was heavy-handed and his roadmindedness without question.

On one of his publicity tours, the secretary careened through Bavaria in the summer of 1959 to visit construction sites. East of Berchtesgaden, he ceremoniously opened a five-kilometer stretch of the Alpine Road to traffic and defended the overall road project, which was classified as a federal road. It was as economical as any other road, Seebohm declared, somewhat defensively. Tourists should be able to expect good roads when traveling. However, not every calm valley should be accessible through good roads. Seebohm enjoyed the public attention as a patron saint of the postwar Alpine Road, as one newspaper called him. However, he was less than sanguine in closed
meetings. In the mid-1960s, local tourism boosters, including a monk from the well-visited Benedictine abbey of Ettal, formed a lobbying group to complete the Alpine Road. When they met with Seebohm, the secretary listed his prior support for the road, resulting in 83 miles (134 kilometers) of rebuilt or newly built road during his tenure. But he rankled the lobbyists by reminding them of the Nazi roots of the project and its avoidance of Austrian territory, which Seebohm deemed outdated, given the efforts at European integration. The Bavarians countered that the road still had its merits, even though the Nazis had sponsored it. “Apart from politics,” opined the gingerly friar, who was also in charge of the lucrative Ettal brewery as cellarer, the “initiative back then” should be admired. Cutting off both religious and secular lobbyists, an agitated Seebohm insisted that the project was of regional, not national importance. A tourist road alone would not be eligible for federal financial support; such stretches might be built as toll roads. But if the road also served larger traffic functions, he would consider providing money. There was no dearth of resources for roads under Seebohm, but the Alpine Road did not make it to the top of the agenda, despite the Bavarian lobbying and opportune politics of memory.44

For one thing, the whiff of Hitler’s personal love for the road continued to hang over the road like tailpipe emissions. One constituent derided the “phantasy project” of “Hitler’s Alpine Road” in a letter to Seebohm’s Federal Department of Transportation in Bonn. A centuries-old mountain pass which enthusiastic local Nazis had designated as the “Adolf-Hitler-Pass” was renamed to shed its odious associations. Not all infrastructure left over from the Nazi period was contested, but this scenic infrastructure emblematic of the charismatic dictator was. This does not mean that tourism in the Federal Republic was a radical departure from Nazi experiences, though. Even if they did not live up to their own promises, Nazi efforts to promote tourism in the Kraft durch Freude organization had popularized the notion of (racially grounded) extended vacations for wider swaths of society. Even more important, the memory of military deployments to Mediterranean or other European theaters of war was an often unspoken presence for postwar tourists. In the case of the town of Ruhpolding on the Alpine Road, a prominent package tour operator had begun, under Nazi rule, to offer vacations by chartered trains. During the Federal Republic, these greatly expanded trips brought tens of thousands of tourists by railroad to Bavaria. Gondolas and other Alpine infrastructures undergirded the rise of skiing, thus making the
Alps an all-season destination. Bavaria attracted more tourists than any other German state, and tourism became an important pillar of a generally booming economy.

The Alpine Road contributed to and benefited from the spectacular growth of tourism in the mountains after the war. German and other tourists flocked to close-by destinations and increasingly used their own motorcycles and automobiles to do so. The Alpine Road certainly attracted more and more visitors to the Alps. But whether this was a development to welcome or to criticize was now an increasingly open question. The accessibility of the Alps, argued some, made them more vulnerable. Hikers could still find solace but not necessarily solitude in the mountains, given the number of tourists.

**Elevation in the Crosshairs**

Planners could no longer expect to be met with open arms when they discussed the Alpine Road. Apart from political battles over funding, organized opposition to building the highway on higher elevations arose. Conservationists were up in arms in 1965, when the newly formed lobbying group for the road presented a proposal for a mountaintop route; an extension leading from Linderhof Palace, near Ettal, to the town of Füssen was to be built over the Hochplatte summit (6,830 feet, or 2,082 meters, above sea level), in a nature reserve established just two years earlier. This was precisely the route that had served as the nucleus of the Alpine Road plans four decades earlier. Speaking for the proposal, the mayor of the tourist town of Oberammergau reckoned that bringing the road up to a mountain peak would create “one of the most beautiful and attractive” roads in the Alps. The mountains would “lend themselves” to such an elevated routing. A well-known hiking path would have been converted into an automotive route. According to the mayor, an Alpine Road worthy of its name must not be a “crawling valley” road; it needed to convey the beauty of high altitudes to compete with neighboring countries.

The rhetoric of elevation was no longer paramount, however. The German Alpine Club, a group of hikers with tens of thousands of members, protested the project “not because we begrudge the car tourists an attractive road link, but because a nature reserve which is unique in Germany since it is untouched, extensive, and unique, can easily be endangered.” Instead, the goal should be to preserve this landscape in its current state. A more eco-
logically minded society noted that nature reserves in Germany were “ridiculously small” in comparison to the United States, the Soviet Union, Poland, or France. Therefore, one should not play fast and loose with the existing reserve.\(^4^8\)

During the Nazi dictatorship, conservationists had not been decisively involved in Alpine Road planning. The growing postwar disenchantment with the production of windshield views rested, on one level, on the success of the interwar campaign for technified, consumable landscapes. Exactly because the Alpine Road had allowed busloads and carloads of tourists to experience the Alps while driving or being driven, the mountains had become less valuable in the eyes of middle-class urbanites who enjoyed summits for their remoteness. The memory of the Nazi past, so powerfully embodied in Hitler’s personal mountain pass, meant that any lobbying for the road during the Federal Republic had to strip the project of its Nazi connotations and sponsorship.\(^4^9\) As a result, the highly elevated road was not built; the only way to get to the Hochplatte today is by hiking. By the late 1980s, a local road builder summarized changing attitudes: “You can’t impose on the landscape like that anymore.”\(^5^0\) The automotive avoidance of mountaintops had become commonplace.

German conservationists used the rhetoric and the legal weapons of conservation areas to fight ridgeline roads in the Federal Republic. Their reference to the supposedly “untouched” state of the Hochplatte summit evokes—but was not equivalent to—the American wilderness debate. Historically, German conservation had derived its strongest cultural powers from the idea of cultural landscapes. These were worthy of protection precisely because they were the result of both human and non-human forces, according to these voices. Criteria for selecting protected areas emphasized previous interactions between humans and environments. In contrast, the wilderness movement in the United States prized less developed landscapes, since they were closer to the perceived primeval state. One of the most important indicators for such pristine areas, their roadlessness, acquired legal force with the passage of the Wilderness Act.\(^5^1\)

In the absence of such instruments, German conservationists pursued localized protests. As a result of postwar federal politics, shifting priorities, environmentalist critiques, and the all-too-prominent former sponsorship of the project by Hitler, the Alpine Road remained a patchwork of finished roads, detours, and privately owned toll roads. By 1978, a journalist judged
it to be “likely one of the most beautiful, but definitely the most peculiar road in Europe.” Almost randomly, the road appeared to veer in all directions; it had no signage on the ground and ranged from being a federally funded highway to a gravel path.52 When the Alpine Road was half a century old in 1988, no entity stepped forward to celebrate the anniversary. Why not? A journalist for the liberal Süddeutsche Zeitung concluded that its incompleteness and the brief bout of attention lavished on the road by Hitler precluded a celebration. Still, he went on to describe how one would traverse Southern Bavaria from East to West using the existing stretches of the Alpine Road.53 Rather than paying attention to the Nazi patronage, a newly founded umbrella organization for the Alpine Road paid homage to the 1927 proposals in 2002 and thus celebrated a seventy-fifth, apparently less innocuous, anniversary. However, this did not stop a newspaper from telling its readers that an eager local Nazi had renamed mountain features: in addition to the “Adolf-Hitler-Pass,” two mountains near Bad Tölz were called “Hitler Mountain” and “Hindenburg Mount.” The former had been adorned with a ten-meter high swastika lit by torches at night.54

The Disappearance of the German Alpine Road in Guidebooks

Needless to say, guidebooks for the Alpine Road avoided such images after 1945. Generally speaking, the degree to which landscapes were consumed and their manner of consumption are difficult to assess; the consumer’s angle is notoriously absent from most sources. Still, printed tourist guides are valuable. In the case of the German Alpine Road, a survey of guidebooks shows the gradual but certain disappearance of the road itself as an object. The engineering work, the paved surface, receded into the background as the view from the road—not of the road—became more and more prominent.55 In other words, visual expressions of roadmindedness were on the wane in guidebooks.

Without ever mentioning its former Nazi patronage, transportation secretary Seebohm gave the Alpine Road his blessing in a 1960 guidebook. In a preface, he stated (with some exaggeration) that the federal government had taken over the expansion of the road, had spent substantial amounts of money, and was on track to do so in the future. The guidebook, then, became a political document calling for the completion of the road and creating a continuity to its prewar sponsors without ever mentioning them. The guide-
book’s author, Hans Schmithals, was an artist who had already praised the first stretches of the road in a Nazi guidebook from 1936. Now, he celebrated the federal Alpine Road. Describing towns and sights along the route, the travelogue remarked on the inchoate character of the road. A 1965 manual on driving in the Alps generously devoted twenty-three pages to the Alpine Road and its ancillary routes around Berchtesgaden, with several images of the road itself. The author noted, however, that the road was not completed, but drivers could patch together a ride through the Bavarian Alpine and sub-alpine regions by connecting the existing stretches of the Alpine Road with other roads.

Realizing that the road would remain a torso, a 1970 guidebook celebrated the sights that detours from the original plans would offer. Somewhat bashfully, the author noted that construction began “in late 1933”—every reader would get the reference. Disappointedly, the writer indicated that there was no prospect of its completion. Pictures of the road are sparse in this book; cities, lakes, mountains, and other sights along its route dominate the visual impression. Continuities were also personal. Wolf Strache, whose photographic career took off during the Nazi years, published propaganda books on the autobahn and worked as a military photographer for the Luftwaffe. By 1955, he celebrated the idea of “auto hiking” as if it was a novelty. Avoiding the term “German Alpine Road” and returning to the awkward interwar term “Queralpenstraße” (transversal Alpine road), he called it the “road of our dreams.” Strache noted that the dream-like road remained thus, as it was never finished. Still, the existing stretches offered motorists “the enjoyment of complete floating, this unique combination of a deliberated technology and a landscape which still possesses the greatness and purity of the divine, this form of bliss that only modern man knows.” For Strache, the road mattered because it overcame a supposedly apolitical tension between technology and landscape in a harmonious way.

By 1996, the Alpine Road had almost ceased to exist, pictorially speaking. An eponymous coffee-table book spent little time discussing the road itself, but celebrated the Southern Bavarian landscapes traversed by the (partially imaginary) road. Now, the focus was clearly not on the road itself, but on the way in which it connected travelers to sights and cities. By 2003, another guidebook resigned itself to the fragmentary character of the road. Only then, apparently, was it possible to mention National Socialism by name. While noting the dictatorship’s strong support for the Alpine Road, the au-
thor insisted that ideas for it predated the dictatorship, and that environmental concerns in the postwar period led to the road being unfinished. In the most Pollyannaish of interpretations, this was actually positive in the eyes of this writer: it would have been much worse if a comfortable, wide, multilane road had been built and attracted motorists from all over. The pictures made it clear that the attraction was not the road, but the Bavarian landscapes and folk festivals.63

The Disappearance of the Blue Ridge Parkway in Guidebooks

In the case of the Blue Ridge Parkway, guidebooks show a similar process of the pictorial disappearance of the road. The older and more extensive it became, the less there was of it to be seen in guidebooks. The road itself ceased to be a major attraction, but the view from the road never did.64

The oldest available guidebook, a National Park Service booklet from 1947, proudly showed an open, bending road on its cover. The road itself is only showcased in one more photograph out of eight; instead, wildflowers, picnic grounds, and the Mabry Mill site are depicted. Publications such as this booklet prepared tourists for their trips and planted a visual itinerary in their heads. They were also meant to be persuasive when it came to raising funds for the road’s completion. From 1959 on, a quasi-official guide authored by an early park ranger named William Lord hit the bookstores along the parkway. It went through several editions. Without referring to the very public battles over routing during the 1930s, the guidebook presented the parkway as an apolitical achievement reconciling technology and landscape and making a romanticized version of Appalachia available to tourists. The 1982 edition of the guide, comprised of four volumes, featured the road itself on one of the four book covers and in two more images out of a total of fifty-eight. Not only had the road ceased to be a novelty; it was now a carrier to the attractions, not the attraction itself.65

A 1984 naturalist’s guide celebrated the road as a respite from the usual entrapments of automotive landscapes. When driving its entire length, “you will travel a distance longer than that from Washington, DC, to Boston yet never pass a fast-food restaurant or drive-in movie theater. There is nowhere else in the eastern United States where a person can travel so far completely surrounded by trees.” The guidebook, appropriately, devoted eleven of its twelve color plates to the fauna and flora to be encountered while driving, and one to an image of a car with dogwoods and redbuds in bloom. A late-
Roads out of Place

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twentieth-century publication with a short essay and seventy images included only three of the road itself. The proportion is similar for other coffee-table books. In a 2002 pictorial guide, the Linn Cove viaduct receives a mention as an “engineering marvel,” but the road at large has since clearly receded. An international guidebook series summarized the parkway experience as “countless opportunities to be transported.”

When the first of these guidebooks was written, a continuous car-only highway without intersections over more than 400 miles (640 kilometers) was still novel. By the end of the century, both Germany and the United States had seen a rapid growth of their road network, and a road—no matter how well designed—became less of a destination. But both the Alps and the Appalachians retained their guidebook qualities as unchanging and majestic landscapes. Roads provided access to them and views of them. In other words, the notion of what a road is and what it does for sightseers had changed. One major reason for this refashioning can be found outside of touristic areas.

Freeway Revolts and Scenic Infrastructures

While the basic design features of the Alpine Road and the Blue Ridge Parkway changed little in the postwar period, roads in other settings, their shape, and routing became dramatically contested. This debate and its resulting cancellations or alterations of highway plans in turn greatly altered the understanding of roads and their relationship to urban and rural environments. A new generation of activists challenged roadmindedness, especially in its urban appearance.

The controversies over urban highways rested on a particular planning approach. American highway planners had been unwavering in their commitment to build roads from one city center to another, given their reliance on traffic counts. When state highway engineers began using federal dollars to plan interstate highways, they routed them through downtown areas and chose access routes that targeted corridors through the economic margins. Through a combination of looking for the least expensive land to purchase and their notion of “slum clearance,” planners all too often targeted the homes of urban African Americans and recent immigrants with alacrity.

Such plans conveyed a technocratic confidence in planning for the common good and a professional myopia toward the social implications of a large-scale infrastructure. They engendered massive protests that historians have come to call “freeway revolts.” In urban settings, roads became some of
the most controversial large-scale technologies in the postwar era. As corollaries to the privately owned automobile, public roads featured in public debates. The American freeway revolt was more intense than the European one, the former being caught up in a Civil Rights struggle of asserting citizenship rights.

The planners’ penchant for routing freeways through the heart of downtown areas and through established urban areas added to the depth of disagreements. To put it bluntly, urban freeways brought the infrastructural power and spatial reach of multilane roads into residents’ backyards and changed their understanding of the urban environment. Robert Moses, who had used his political acumen to build parks and parkways in urban and suburban New York in the interwar years, became one of the most visible faces of postwar planning and construction of multilane, commercial highways in cities around the United States. For critics, his detached, utilitarian, and increasingly autocratic planning style personified an abrasive approach to public works. Throughput and flow were the key categories for Moses and for civil engineers aiming to move growing traffic expeditiously. Grassroots activists, on the other hand, saw an imposition on the urban fabric and fought against dispossession. Their neighborhoods were to be destroyed and their houses razed, with little benefit for themselves. In effect, their areas would become sacrifice zones. Given the intensity of the Civil Rights Movement and the fact that planners were almost always white male professionals, the freeway revolt was often seen through the prism of race. A slogan of the day from Washington, DC, castigated “white men’s roads through black men’s homes.” Depending on organizational skills and political constellations, alliances cutting across class and racial lines were able to delay, change, or halt urban freeways in many American cities while other activists failed and roads were built. A generation of future politicians cut their teeth in freeway altercations.69 These protests contributed to realigning relationships between experts and non-experts, between authority figures and the public, between politicians and citizens in general.

Among learned observers, the mood changed as well. Lewis Mumford, who had praised Moses’s and Clarke’s interurban parkways three decades earlier, railed against “the highway engineer’s monstrous sacrifice of precious urban land to the accommodation of increasing traffic” and the “technocratic arrogance and ecological ignorance exhibited by current highway engineering” in the late 1960s. With the emotional depth of a jilted lover,
Mumford abandoned all hope when it came to cars and roads during this decade. His earlier optimism for creating restorative, well-planned carscapes had all but vanished.70

Given the tendency of civil engineers in Germany to have autobahn stretches bypass cities rather than traverse them, the European freeway revolt took on a more localized character. Arterial highways and urban ring roads, planned and built by municipalities, became the object of protest, lawsuits, and sometimes successful interventions. Criticism was more likely to be rooted in concerns for historic preservation than in the United States, and the altercations did not receive the same level of nationwide public attention.71

Among landscape architects in the United States, critiques of civil engineers and their work grew louder. Their former collaborators from the parkway era—landscape architects—were chagrined by having been excluded from the design process for the most part.72 One particularly outspoken critic of the role of engineers was the landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. A Brooklynite, he trained at the then modernist Harvard Graduate School of Design and lived most of his life in San Francisco. Born in 1916, he no longer regarded parkways as a paragon of professional collaboration between civil engineers and landscape architects. His focus was on designing urban spaces and often on mitigating what he perceived to be the pernicious effects of urban freeways. An avowed modernist, he saw himself at the forefront of introducing new design elements into cities and landscapes.73 Well known for his Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, DC, Halprin also designed Seattle’s Freeway Park (opened in 1976), which showcased his artistic efforts to restore a ruptured cityscape after the construction of a wide traffic artery.74

In his 1966 book Freeways, Halprin clearly showed his admiration for well-designed rural highways and the revulsion he felt for urban freeways. From his point of view, the design of highways in the country was uncontentroversial. He invoked the late-eighteenth-century landscape designer Humphry Repton’s general plea for an “integration” of the road into the landscape.75 To do so in the 1960s required “long, sinuous curvilinear patterns whose very calligraphy express the qualities of motion through space.”76 With the images presented, Halprin paid pictorial tribute to the Clarke generation of American parkways (the Mount Vernon parkway was shown) and the 1930s autobahn in Germany. For Halprin, there was little new to say on this.
The real issue, however, was the clash between urban centers and interstate highways. After professing his love for the “sensation of speed,” the excitement of travel, and the beauty of freeways, Halprin criticized the “major disasters” that American cities had suffered. The problem was in designing freeways for the purpose of transportation alone, without regard for the urban fabric. But he held out hope that highways and cities could be reconciled. Cities must be rebuilt, with freeways being integrated into them. Broad railroad corridors had disfigured urban centers and were moved underground later; learning from the railroad experience was key. Halprin accorded blame to the roads themselves and their design.

Privately, he made it clear that single-minded civil engineers were the culprits. In a notebook entry, he castigated them harshly: “But goddammit the real trouble with highway design in this country is that it has been given over to a whole group of incompetent narrow gauge, limited, unknowing, inept people who are unable to deal or even understand the difficult sophisticated and complex problem. . . . Structurally they are babies, urban design-wise they don’t have the foggiest notion of what we’re talking about—on an aesthetic level they are boors on a planning level they don’t even comprehend the problem.”

While Halprin admitted to having written his remarks while riding on a plane and having consumed “several American Airlines martinis,” one can assume that he spoke for some of his colleagues, if only more intemperately. His recommendation, as it was, consisted of “setting up educational procedures” for civil engineers so that they could fully appreciate the aesthetic and social dimensions of the problem. Even though he shared few of the aesthetic tastes of the first generation of parkway designers, he joined them in claiming that civil engineers did not possess an adequate professional toolbox for tackling the problems of road design. Halprin reaffirmed the necessity of employing landscape architects and empowering them at the design level exactly when their influence on roads was waning.

More generally speaking, these years saw the rise of a new generation of critics and planners who relegated parkways to an outdated effort to preserve unspoiled nature. Instead, design professionals such as the influential landscape critic John Brinckerhoff Jackson, and the postmodern architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, embraced common and ordinary highways. Venturi and Brown famously embraced parking lots and symbolic architecture in their book *Learning from Las Vegas*. Jackson averred that a
highway landscape “is beautiful when it offers freedom and community of experience.” Gone were the efforts to immerse travelers in a sinuously progressing scenic corridor. Jackson, especially, pursued a different version of roadmindedness and emphatically embraced highways rather than shunning them.

Regardless of such professional rivalries and changing views, popular sentiment, especially among urban protesters, began to turn against roads. When the Federal Highway Administration invited landscape architects, an architect, and a civil engineer to study the issue of urban freeways, it included Michael Rapuano, who had worked with Gilmore Clarke on parkway planning and had founded a consulting firm with him. A writer for the countercultural Village Voice in New York dismissed Rapuano as a “1930s highway philosopher,” criticism that was sufficient to invalidate the entire project. For the freeway revolt generation, Rapuano and Clarke were simply discredited in the late 1960s, given their close association with Robert Moses.

Such anti-road sentiments culminated in the protests on the first Earth Day in 1970, an outpouring of environmental sentiment and crystallization point for the new mass-based environmental movement. According to historian Adam Rome, many Earth Day participants labeled the automobile as public enemy number one. “Cars were put on trial, buried, and hacked to pieces.” In their eyes, cars and roads embodied what had gone wrong with society. This was a fundamental critique. Rather than allowing nature lovers to access scenery or reconcile nature and technology, roads in and of themselves had become barriers to natural enjoyment and the functioning of ecosystems. The new environmentalism conjured catastrophes. In a list of “recent technological mistakes in the environment,” the ecologist Barry Commoner cited the “maze of highways” and “hordes of automobiles” right after nuclear fallout. Distinguishing between flankline and skyline roads appeared to be a quaint or dangerous exercise at a time when roads, as such, were the movement’s enemy.

**Parkways in a New Light**

The view from the road changed dramatically during the post–World War II period. Newly built interstate highways expanded rapidly and dwarfed the interwar parkways in size and imaginative power. Plans for extended networks of parkways failed; focusing on scenery and excluding common-carrier traffic paled in comparison to moving cars and trucks quickly and in
great numbers. Parkways such as the Blue Ridge and the German Alpine Road occupied niches, rather than serving as models for other infrastructures. During the interwar period, scenic infrastructures received general acclaim and were shaped by discussions among professional experts such as civil engineers and landscape architects. Their social and environmental costs received little attention in the general public. Utilitarian interstate highways from the 1950s onward enjoyed popular support and their networks grew rapidly. Increasingly, though, urban protesters and environmental activists began to question their location and design and, eventually, their fundamental purpose of enabling easier and faster movements for automobiles and trucks at the cost of destroying neighborhoods and of contributing to pollution.

In this process, the status and meaning of parkways and scenic infrastructures changed. As destinations in and of themselves, such roads faded. Their manicured and, in essence, didactic appearance could be understood as the “monotony of perfection.”85 Rather than being instructed to immerse themselves in the surrounding landscapes, drivers often preferred faster rides to partake of Cold War consumerism. In sum, the sheen of these duplicitous scenic roads was no longer as bright.

On regular highways and especially on high-speed interstates, however, road environments loomed larger than ever by the end of the twentieth century. A new roadscape emerged in this late-century version of roadmindedness. Drivers began to expect large signs legible from afar, rather than new landscape features evoking surprise at the end of a curve. From a psychological point of view, “it is a toddler’s view of the world, a landscape of outsized, brightly colored objects and flashing lights, with harnesses and safety barriers that protect us as we exceed our own underdeveloped capabilities. What we see while driving is a visually impoverished view of the world.” Sound barriers and jersey barriers provide visual effects of the more monotonous kind.86 Instead of pursuing an educational version of roadmindedness, these roads simplified and standardized driving and vistas under the auspices of safety, not visual delight.87

In addition to the roads and their meanings, cars and their interiors changed as well. Braking and shifting gears demanded less effort or none at all; automatic transmissions became the norm in American automobiles. Automobile engines required less attention in general, allowing a process that scholars have described as cocooning. The interior of the car became a
place of refuge and individual shelter. Car radios, once decried by MacKaye, became commonplace, as did climate control. High-altitude roads were no longer the only way to obtain cooler air during hot months. While parkways encouraged drivers and passengers to look outward and to see their ride as part of an environmentally grounded journey, the encapsulation of drivers in their automobiles allowed for a more inward-looking trip. The focus of postwar family trips became the collective experience of sights after arrival and less the trip itself.  

The kind of driver, then, who detoured from fast, predictable trips in favor of less utilized backroads was either searching for deeper diversion or trying to find distinction among homogeneity, and that driver had more time to do so. Books about these trips continue to find leisurely readers. Leisure, however, had become less and less of what roads were about.