Reappraising the New Jersey Turnpike: Tactical Interventions in Urbanism

by

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B.A., Urban Studies, Columbia University, 1995

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Abstract

The New Jersey Turnpike, despite its quotidian and grey appearance, is still an incredibly effective tool for codifying and speeding up time and movement, right down to the routines and habits of each body within its territory. Yet, over time, the joints and connections of this monolithic system have begun to weaken and decay. As cracks have formed, urban architecture now has opportunity to create tactical interventions that both patch the system and challenge its modernist underpinnings. In a sense, design for the Turnpike of today should provide the traveler - who is literally and metaphorically stepping out of the hermetic system of the automobile - with wild design elements that grow between the cracks in the system. As they grow, their success will depend upon their ability to work within the existing order while also enhancing and revealing the anonymous and individualized travel experience of the various user groups using it today. As tactical interventions, they strive to offer a "postmodern" alternative that challenges the Turnpike's modernist notions of universalized space and time. To develop such interventions, the thesis work is composed of three parts that build upon one another. The first section considers the engineering history of the Turnpike as a means of understanding the genetic code of the roadway and how that code is able to so effectively codify space and time for those occupying the system. The second section then attempts to employ alternative urban design tools for analyzing today's conditions and how those conditions of decay might serve as a platform for developing strategies of urbanism along the Turnpike. Finally, the last section sets forth some preliminary strategies and tactical interventions that draw upon the ideas and concepts gleaned from the first two sections.

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Section 1.000

Look at the ground around the figure of the automobile or the ground around any technology, which necessarily has a large ground of services and disservices associated with it. With a motor car, most people are interested in changing designs or patterns of the car. They pay only incidental attentions to the huge service environment of roads, oil companies, filling stations and other allied services of manufacturing that are the ground of the car. It never occurred to them that this figure of the car might generate a huge ground of new services far bigger than the figure was thought to be. In other words, the car created a totally new environment of services.¹

To begin let us return for a moment to the late 1940s, after the Second World War, when the forces had gathered to create the New Jersey Turnpike. During this time period the great influx of returning troops and the growth of the areas surrounding all of the major cities - New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. - were contributing to unprecedented growth for the State of New Jersey. With that growth also came more and more vehicles that began to take to the roads of New Jersey, increasing traffic and making it harder and harder for travelers to move within the State. Yet, given the need during the 1940's to focus most of the limited State's resources towards the war effort, roadway improvements had up to that time been limited in scale. In fact New Jersey was, in 1949, despite the growing number of vehicles appearing on the road every year, still mostly composed of State and local services.
highways. All that was about to change. 1949 was the era of the "Man in the Gray Flannel Suit" and William Whyte's Organizational Man.

So, like the battle of Normandy, they, as one big team, methodically employed the science of organization and the precision of engineering to the task at hand. As a first step the State, and its primary backer, Governor Alfred A. Driscoll, established a new organizational structure, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, to oversee the implementation of a new State highway. As outlined in law, the State granted the Authority the power to oversee the financing, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the entire highway. A first of its kind in New Jersey, the Authority was able to purchase land, issue bonds, design and operate the roadway, and collect tolls that were fed back into the Authority budget, not the State coffers. And what was their goal? To complete, using the latest principles of scientific management and engineering the most safe, efficient mile corridor in the world in less than two years!

To this end, the State and Governor then established and selected the three members of the non-salaried committee that would oversee the project and its staff. Given the massive scale of the road, and the untested nature of the Authority, everyone involved wanted to allay fears of cost overruns and poor management. Therefore the men who made up key positions within the organization were all captains of industry, Wall Street darlings, government
technocrats, and military personnel. At the top, the Authority's first chairman, Paul L. Troast, was chosen because he was the owner of one of the largest construction companies in the nation and a man known for being able to "get things done" on large construction projects. The vice-chairman, George F. Smith, was the chairman of a major pharmaceutical company, Johnson and Johnson, and an expert in labor relations and operations management. And finally, the treasurer, Maxwell Lester Jr., was a wealthy investment banker on Wall Street whose monetary skills were used to oversee the project finances and marketing of the bonds to investors. Together, the committee's backgrounds offered assurances to both the political and business community that they had the appropriate skills and experience to undertake this massive public works project. They also set a particular tone that came from people who controlled great wealth and believed in the power of business management.

As a further move to assure the people of New Jersey and the powers that be that the Turnpike Authority would be a success, the committee quickly hired key staff members for the agency whose experience would further solidify the Authority as an efficient, pragmatic operation. One such key selection that epitomized the Authority's ethos was General W.W. Wanamaker, a retired career general from the Army Corp of Engineers. Serving as Executive Director for the Authority, General Wanamaker chose members of his staff for both their technical
skill and loyalty to the group. He states, "[we operate] in the manner of a well-trained football team which, when ground gaining is tough, opens up its play, not in desperation, but in order to afford each of its eleven members full opportunity to give the best they have..." As Wanamaker saw it, the Authority needed to act like and believe in the team. Individuals were subsumed under the overarching thinking of the group and the skills and energy of everyone in the organization could be used to help achieve the group's goal of completing the road in an efficient, timely manner.

A second key appointment was the hiring of its chief engineer, Charles M. Noble. As his background would suggest, Noble was a man who had worked his way up through the engineering ranks with various state highway and engineering agencies. By the time he was hired by the Turnpike Authority he clearly appears to have been a man of much "real-world" experience.

Together, the engineer and the general, brought their rational minds to bear on the challenges - acquiring land from local communities, raising of revenue to fund the project, creating design standards, etc - that could now be viewed as elements or obstacles of a game which their organization has to push through, to battle against, in order for them to achieve the ultimate goal of building their roadway. These things were never viewed by Wanamaker, Noble or the other members of the staff as people and places to work with. They only saw them as obstacles to overcome.
The Authority, with its goal and team set, then developed the rules for the game. They created massive scheduling charts with each section of the road assigned to a team of builders and engineers. They designed a macro set of rules and procedures that codified ways of addressing a multitude of practical problems faced by the engineers and builders who would carry out the overall roadway layout and form. They outlined everything: its shape, its location, its arrangement of parts, and its process of construction. What is most remarkable about those standards is the degree of fine calibration used to control everything from the specific drainage angles along the roadsides to the algebraic formulation of the distance required for the human eye to be able to react to a change in direction from within a moving vehicle. Every last detail of the roadway was quantified and mathematically calculated so that they would have a road the was extremely safe for high-speed automobile and truck travel while being able to complete the design and construction of the entire 118 mile roadway within a two-year time frame. With schedule and design standards in hand the engineers and construction teams then went about the messy business of reshaping the earth to fit their dream. To make the road a reality, it had to go through many towns and cities. It had to cross the vast New Jersey Meadowlands and its two rivers, the Passaic and Hackensack. All presented their own unique problems and challenges. And the response? To fundamentally alter the ground and its ecology. First
they stabilized 20 million cubic yards of mud, silt, and clay. Then they had to pour 89 thousand linear feet of sand. And finally they covered it all with 15 million yards of fill, pounded into place. Some say enough to fill three trains from coast to coast. On top of this would go the two longest bridges of their era that measured over 12,000 feet in length. Yet despite those alterations, those macro rules still gave them a road and a pair of bridges that showed none of it. Like the great flat Nebraska plains, no grade was greater than 3 percent and no turn had a radius less than 3500 feet. Smooth simple space built for speed. Once the dust had settled it became clear to all that safety and convenience were the deepest desires behind their Herculean efforts. With the war becoming a distant memory and the economy booming, cities were straining to accommodate more bodies and the ever-expanding need for more goods. Under this strain and the desire for more and more movement within the system, the vision of the Turnpike stood out as a vital link within the larger megalopolis.\textsuperscript{10} One could now travel with ease along the major highways that had begun to rise from Boston to DC and beyond. And unlike past roadways, the Turnpike welcomed one and all. From truckers to vacationers, people were now on the move, carrying goods, carrying people. They were all coming to the Turnpike to buy themselves a piece of time.

Still, even in its perfection nature calls and the body needs to rest. So the Turnpike men added service...
stops directly onto their transportation wonder. These breaks, like the road, were calculated and plotted down to the last detail and organized to move vehicles and people as if they were elements on a board. Initially with so little time to build, the first structures were crude and ad hoc in their articulation. Just a small outpost of a building with a snack stand and a few bathrooms, some gravel covered parking lots and the gas pumps to keep the cars moving. But, as the primary work of road building came to completion, the gravel and simple sheds gave way to a style that better reflected the smooth speed of a future that was now. The sleek modern forms conveyed the shining prospect of modernism an optimism for a future that was about to take flight.

Naming of things often tells you a lot about that thing and the people who name it. In this case the New Jersey Turnpike decided to call them service areas. Freeways, on the other hand, referred to them as rest stops. Why is that? At one level, it appears the disparate terminology reflected the different needs that would occur at these sites. For most highways and the administrations responsible for them, a rest stop was only used as a place to park your car, go to the bathroom, possibly pick-up some information on local sites and grab a candy bar or soda from a concession machine. In contrast to this, the Turnpike service areas, while offering these basic services, also offered other amenities, including several types of fast food dining, places to buy snack items and souvenirs, automotive repair services, and...
gas stations. In a sense they were mini-towns or linear cities that resided within the more traditional patterns of urban development that surrounded them.

Yet beyond its functional role, the term service area also reflected a different type of relationship that the traveler was now engaging in on a toll road like the Turnpike. Simply put, the Turnpike required the traveler to make at least two types of economic exchange. A freeway did not. The first type of exchange would be when you entered and exited the toll roads. Through their gating system each vehicle would be required to take a toll card when you enter the system and to pay a toll every time you leave the system. You, as the traveler would submit to this payment system in order to derive the benefits that you assume will accrue from using the road, which in essence could be summed up as the transfer of money to save time.11

With the establishment of an economic gating process based on the exchange of money for time, the Turnpike was also able to create what a closed system, or monopoly that facilitated a second type of economic relationship between the Authority and the traveler. In a more open system of the freeway, the services offered to travelers are normally found along the local roads that join the highways at each exit or interchange.12 At those places the traveler and a private company exchange goods or services for money. In contrast to this, in the closed system of the toll road, those services are only offered by the Turnpike itself at service areas located
within the system. The money exchange then occurs between the Turnpike Authority and the traveler and thus a way for the Authority to collect additional revenues from those travelers who are located within the closed system.\(^{13}\)

The Turnpike Authority's decision to offer such services seems to be derived from the economic benefits that it believes both parties were able to receive. For the traveler, given the closed system of toll roads, simple economics would suggest that the opportunity cost of leaving the system for a service is, in most cases, much greater than the opportunity cost of using the services within the system. At the same time, the Turnpike Authority had come to the conclusion that if a toll road offers many of the services normally provided by private businesses at various interchanges along freeways, the majority of those toll road travelers using the Turnpike who decide that they need to stop for one or more of those services will do so at the Turnpike's service areas to save both the money and time lost due to exiting and re-entering the system.\(^{14}\)

Once this had become clear to the Turnpike, service areas, as opposed to rest stops, suddenly had become an important, albeit secondary source of financial revenue for the Authority. According to one source, prior to building the service buildings, the Authority did consider whether or not to allow private companies to build and own the facilities used in the service areas. But after studying the economic costs and benefits of privately owned facilities versus Turnpike controlled ones, the Authority determined that "greater revenue" would
be generated by owning the buildings themselves. At the same time, in a less conscious manner, as the Turnpike began to act as its own separate economy, a linear city designed to produce goods for the life of the automobile, the goods that it produced began to rise like a wave of detritus that accompanied living in this new age. This new economy and new world now sold everything that addressed the needs and desires of travelers. What they sold, despite their lack of aura, tried to hold onto a sense of place. It could be an ash tray made of pewter, of glass, or in the shape of a heart for that special someone. It could be a collective plate for the cupboard shelf. Or a banner, like those of your favorite baseball team, marking the occasion of traveling to Florida for the first time along the sleek new roads. Or maybe it was just a simple glass to join your collection at home. All of it would be marketed to you within the family comfort of the rest stops, as safe and convenient as the road itself. The bright nuclear family, a rocket ship about to blast off!

Endnotes


3 New York Times, "Turnpike Authority is Created in New Jersey", (Oct. 28, 1948; ProQuest Historical Newspapers), 58.

4 When Gov. Driscoll first
proposed the idea, the general public expressed a great deal of concern over the cost of the roadway. See “New York Times, Road Agency Tests Law: Jersey Turnpike Authority Seeks Court Ruling on Its Status”, (New York, N.Y., Sep 8, 1949), 48.

6 In fact, at one point members of the state legislature complained that he was practicing a form of patronage by hiring many of his old army buddies. See Gillespie, Looking For America on the New Jersey Turnpike, 26.


9 See Civil Engineering; Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1952 for further discussion regarding these issues.


The engineers of the turnpike often talked about the time benefits of the roadway. See Civil Engineering; Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1952 for further discussion regarding these issues.

12 The terms closed and open are used as metaphors to describe processes that relate to organizational structuring of space. They are not meant to necessarily be pejorative in tone.
For additional insights as to how organizational space operates see Keller Easterling, Organization Space: Landscapes, Highways, and Houses in America, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999)

According to NATSO, a national trade association representing over 900 travel plaza and truckstop owners and operators nationwide, federal law prohibits the development of commercial services along Interstate right-of-ways for facilities built after 1960. Due to shortages in State revenues for public rest stops maintenance, the Bush administration has proposed changes in that law to allow the commercialization of public rest stops. NATSO opposes such legislation, saying it would destroy private sector businesses already operating at interchanges outside the highway system and provide a monopoly for those businesses operating at public rest stops. See May 14, 2003 NATSO Press Release “NATSO Condemns Rest Area Commercialization Provision in Administration’s Highway Bill” (http://www.natso.com/news_events/press_releases.php3)

Roland A. Wank, “Service Facilities Designed for Maximum Public Convenience” (Civil Engineering; Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1952), 89-90
Section 2.0000

The two decades beginning in 1876 saw the appearance of the incandescent lamp, the telephone, hydraulic generators, skyscrapers, electric trolleys, subways, and elevators, as well as cinema, X-rays, and the first automobiles. By 1903 the spectacle of the first mechanically powered airships and then airplanes had shattered the still inviolate horizontality of the phenomenological and geopolitical space of the pre-World War I era. The life-world in Europe and America was being transformed in depth—the unparalleled technical saturation of the human perceptual apparatus through innovations in transport and communications was redefining the body and its relations to the world beyond it. A new order was emerging whose configuration could be expressed either in terms of a dynamics of force and a relativism or in the privative terms of nihilism and dissolution.1

So what about the New Jersey Turnpike today? To at least partially gain a foothold in understanding this infrastructural phenomena, it is important, in the engineering spirit of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, to begin with some basic facts and figures. As stated before, in 1948 the State of New Jersey legislature passed the New Jersey Turnpike Authority Act that established the creation of an Authority "...to construct, maintain, repair, and operate Turnpike projects". From a quantitative point-of-view the Turnpike is much like it was when it opened, only on a larger scale. The original Turnpike roadway was a total
of 118 miles in length and extended across the State of New Jersey from New York City in the Northeast down to the Delaware Memorial Bridge in the southwest. Built in 23 months between January 1950 and January 1952, it cost approximately $255,000,000 to build and was financed entirely through the issuance of bonds. Additional pieces and extensions to the Turnpike were added over the next forty years for a total of 148 miles of roadway in 2004. The Turnpike is still a limited access road that requires each vehicle to enter and exit through one of its 28 toll plazas. Repayment of the bonds and all other expenses are paid for by the revenues from those 28 toll exchanges, as well as from concessions, and other investments. Revenues from tolls are now well over 600 million a year. Spaced along the main corridor are the 12 service areas named after famous residents of New Jersey. Each of those service stops provides parking, bathrooms, food, fuel pumps, and automotive repairs for automotive travelers as well as truckers. The Authority employees approximately 800 full-time toll collectors, 650 part-time toll collectors, 520 maintenance workers, and 115 administrative staff members. Additionally, there are 218 State Police personnel, Troop D, who work for the Authority, as well as the employees of the service areas that technically work for the subcontractor franchises of HMSHost and Sun Refining and Marketing Company.

From the point-of-view of the engineering community that helped bring the roadway into existence, those facts and
figures all add up to success. For instance, in 2002 the New Jersey Turnpike was twice honored by the American Society of Civil Engineers; first as one of the top ten civil engineering projects in New Jersey and then as a New Jersey Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. In offering an explanation for lavishing such praise on this piece of infrastructure, the ASCE stated that they chose to award the Turnpike because such recognition “celebrates the historic achievements of the engineers that designed a major highway through the State of New Jersey that not only provided for uninterrupted travel, but also for high-speed travel with extensive consideration given to the safety of its patrons. Many of the design and safety standards used for the original construction became a model for the Interstate Highway System some years later. The New Jersey Turnpike’s innovation and sustained development continue to make it ‘tomorrow’s highway built today’. Clearly those who designed it as well as those who manage and maintain it today are proud of and even awed a bit by their roadway and its ability to serve as an efficient, safe means of moving large numbers of vehicles across the state.

In a sense, as Section 1.000 suggests and as these numbers support, such a contention rings true. The original intent of the Turnpike Authority was to have an efficient piece of infrastructure that, through the language of engineering, strove to create a constant, nearly frictionless and error-free space of movement made up
of numerically defined entities and objects. At the same time, as a monopoly that sold both time and various services that went with that time, they wanted to act as a profitable business. Together these two goals made up what I would call the algorithm of the Turnpike.

But the Turnpike is more than just those two ingredients. As many resident of New Jersey would also attest to, this engineering success has, over the years, also drawn much derision and criticism from both within New Jersey and outside of it. As one resident of New Jersey put it:

The Turnpike isn't a supportive environment. It has no time for good manners. On the Turnpike you are expected to "state your business" and get off as quickly as possible.

There is no ease on the Turnpike; you're constantly reminded that you're not supposed to "loiter." There are rest areas on the Turnpike, but they aren't for resting. The Turnpike isn't an interactive environment. It's like an elevator: people keep their eyes front, don't look at one another. It's as if every car on the Turnpike has a giant bumper sticker that says, "DON'T MESS WITH ME."

There's always a sense of menace about the Turnpike.³

Or one can find more particular aspects to deride such as Phillip Roth's witty, ironic comments about rest stop names in his book, The Counterlife: He says:

If you're from New Jersey," Nathan had said, "and you write thirty books, and win the Nobel Prize, and you live to
be white-haired and ninety-five, it's highly unlikely but not impossible that after your death they'll decide to name a rest stop for you on the Jersey Turnpike. And so, long after you're gone, you may indeed be remembered but mostly by small children, the backs of cars, when they lean forward and tell their parents, 'Stop, please, stop at Zuckerman - I have to make a pee.' For a New Jersey novelist that's as much immortality as it's realistic to hope for.

Whatever the source or the tone, New Jersey residents find themselves faced with the fact that they are blessed with an icon of sorts that they both love and feel ashamed of at the same time.

It is also, following Marc Auge, a non-place of sorts that, through its form, impacts the behavior of those using it. How does it do this? To enter a non-place is to have the user temporarily check his/her primary identity at the gate or the toll. Once in you become an anonymous stranger among millions of strangers who can now take on other identities and play other roles. You become possessed by a new, strangely anonymous you.

With this particular type of freedom is the price of entry, the fee you pay to enter the system. It is a contract between you and the Turnpike. As part of the contract the Turnpike forces you to provide your identity, by Easy pass, by credit card, by toll card, when called upon to do so. To reinforce and control this experience, the language of the non-place demands that you follow its directions at all times. Signs constantly tell you...
what to do. Toll cards mark you with rules and regulations to follow. Your anonymity is a highly prescribed one.

While in this non-place you also become part of a highly prescribed form of capitalism, one that now operates at a global scale. When you go to buy a hamburger from Burger King, your purchase doesn't simply go to the Turnpike. It runs through several multinational corporations who have studied you and the behavior of travel stops. At the top you have the parent company Autogrill based in Italy. They operate in over 14 countries with a staff of over 40,000. They serve over 690 million meals a year along major highways, in hundreds of airports, in thousands of train stations, and numerous shopping malls. In the United States, through their subsidiary, HMS Host, the expertise of this global knowledge is used to provide food and shopping services in the travel plazas of dozens of highways in over 9 different states, in most of the major US airports, and in numerous shopping centers and food courts. Within the Turnpike, HMS Host and their multi-national food service corporation subcontractors is the sole provider of food services within the system. These companies determine what you will eat, drink and buy. Although they claim to localize the cuisine, in the end efficiency and profits limit such options to a few items that simply highlight the generic aspects of place making today. It is all about the quick-efficient movement of capital at a global scale. And the result in financial terms today? The Turnpike
Authority now generates over $26 million in annual revenues from concession activities and the renting of space by its two operators, HMSHost Corporation and Sun Refining and Marketing Company. Yet, despite this mathematical desire for perfection and the commodification of the travel experience, the non-place has never fully achieved its dream. The reason for this can be summarized by suggesting that there are two other major forces, the Narrative of the Individual and Black Dragon, that together cause errors to arise and standards to break down.

At one level, those other forces were at least considered by the Turnpike Authority. Some evidence suggests they were cognizant and concerned with the social role that these service areas play within the Turnpike system. According to Roland A. Wank, an architect with the firm responsible for the design of several of the service facilities along the Turnpike, the policies behind the creation of these service facilities was guided, in part, by the need to offer "proper service and comfort" to the traveler and that this traveler, as their customer, was "entitled" to being given the "maximum public convenience" through the design of these service facilities. Approximately 50 years later, New Jersey Turnpike Commissioner Joseph "J.P." Miele, celebrated the renovation of the Vince Lombardi service area by making similar claims when he states, "Upon appointment as a Commissioner of the Turnpike Authority, I envisioned state-of-the-art Service Areas to accommodate our customers'
needs. I am pleased that New Jersey Turnpike motorists can now experience this higher level of comfort, convenience and aesthetically pleasing architecture at five of our facilities.\textsuperscript{66} The Turnpike Authority is not just interested in functional or economic efficiencies. They also have created for themselves a set of core values that claims to place the user’s needs and comforts at the center of any design decision associated with their service facilities.

It also seems clear that wrapped within these social values was the Turnpike’s associated belief that the service areas are undoubtedly important symbols for determining the public’s perception of the Turnpike. As Wank states, the Turnpike Authority had multiple design goals for all of the service facilities along the Turnpike. Included in this list of design criteria were the needs to be “attractive and helpful in the conduct of favorable public relations”, to be placed on “high grounds for better visibility and views,” and to be located based on the vague term “scenic quality.” Further evidence can be found in 2001, during the celebration of the reopening of two of the recently renovated service areas along the New Jersey Turnpike. Turnpike Authority Chairman Frank X. McDermott stated, “For the first fifty years of its existence, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority focused on providing safe, efficient movement of both people and goods through our State. The roadway functions well. We are here today to celebrate a moderate shift in our focus from functionality to one of comfort, convenience
and aesthetics.”

For over the past 50 years of the Turnpike operations, the term “service area” has not only been associated with the goals of functional efficiency and economic solvency but also what the engineering community would have considered to be the more subjective public relations and marketing goals of “proper comfort” and an “attractive” building located in a site of “scenic quality”.

But such evidence only scratches the surface. Other positions and opinions further embellish and layer these simple beliefs. Let us first consider the narrative of the individual. For me such a term suggests there are a multitude of voices that disrupt the generic anonymity of the Turnpike. A great deal of travel literature supports such a contention. For instance, some consider the travel experience like the Turnpike to be a transcendental romantic adventure, an American pastoralism. Paul Auster captures this nicely in his book The Music of Chance. He states:

*Speed was of the essence, the joy of sitting in the car and hurtling himself through space. That became a good beyond all others, a hunger to be fed at any price. Nothing around him lasted for more than a moment, and as one moment followed another, it was as though he alone continued to exist. He was a fixed point in a whirl of changes, a body poised in utter stillness as the world rushed through him and disappeared.*

Others, like the theorist, Paul Virilio liken the driving experience to a strange mix of...
magic and violence, a "seventh art" operating within the realm of the virtual. He states.

The depth of the landscape rises to the surface like an oil spot on the surface of a painting. Inanimate objects exhume themselves from the horizon and come bit by bit to impregnate the sheen of the windshield. Perspective comes alive. The vanishing point becomes a point of assault projecting its arrows and rays on the voyager-voyeur ....this dromoscopy allows one to see inanimate objects as if they were animated by a violent movement.9

And some, like Jean Baudrillard, see driving as a thing of the past that has been replaced by the ecstasy of communication. As he states, The hot, sexual obscenity of former times is succeeded by the cold and communicational, contractual and motivational obscenity of today. The former clearly implied a type of promiscuity, but it was organic, like the body's viscera, or again like objects piled up and accumulated in a private universe, or like all that is not spoken, teeming in the silence of repression. Unlike this organic, visceral, carnal promiscuity, the promiscuity that reigns over the communication networks is one of superficial saturation, of an incessant solicitation, of an extermination of interstitial and protective spaces. 10

Together, these three statements epitomize three of the more prevalent positions reflected in discussion of urbanism today.

Yet, as one reviews the
information from the ground, the anthropological evidence gathered through videos and photographs, it becomes clear that these positions only offer one facet that in many respects builds on the notion of the non-place. Other voices suggest the organic, the silently repressive, the body, does not fade away into the pixilation of the screen and the network. Instead pixels blink on and off and patterns tangle in on themselves. The voices, the bodies, the spaces of an "Other" still remain. Take for instance the travel writings of African-American writers like Chet Fuller, who, despite wanting to explore the same issues as white writers, must face a society around them that makes their identity central to their travels. Space doesn't seem to offer a universal read of the Transcendental. Or there is the incident with Ismail Elbarasse, a 57-year-old Palestinian American who was recently arrested as a terrorist for videotaping the Chesapeake Bay Bridge while traveling with his family. Regardless of his guilt or innocence, what stands out for me is that Virilio's missiles seem to point into the car, not just outwards. Or the writer Kathleen Kirby, who suggests that, as a woman, the world around her doesn't cooperate when she tries to free herself from her organic body. With one word, like "bitch" muttered by a stranger in a park late at night, the political realm disrupts the cold communication networks and brings to the fore the need for some boundaries for self-interest to survive. What we have then, are a multitude of voices at work that seems to counter the universalizing tendency of the Turnpike and
its need to assign a number to everything and everyone.

A second position further suggests the Turnpike of today never fully achieved the simple efficiency that they always intended. That is because there was also another force, the Black Dragon that seems to reside beneath the surface of the pavement. Interestingly, the metaphor actually comes from members of State Trooper D who are assigned to watching the road on a daily basis. Physically speaking, the metaphor works. As a large shiny piece of infrastructure, the slow trickle of traffic moving along the southern portion would be its tail. As you move further North, industry and other development forms the trunk and belly of the beast. Finally, the fire-spewing head and teeth would be the top, where a crisscross of roadways, open marshlands, rivers, shipping ports, airports, and trains all collide together before spewing forth into New York City across the Hudson.

More importantly, the metaphor highlights a key breakdown in the system, a bubbling over, that leads to errors and even fatalities within the system. For instance, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), nationally, driver fatigue may cause as many as 100,000 accidents each year. Additionally, the Gallop Organization for the National Sleep Foundation found in 1995 that 52% of adults surveyed had driven while drowsy. They also found that 25% of every 1,000 drivers have admitted to falling asleep at the wheel at least once in their lifetime and of those 250 drivers, 4.6% of them have
been in accidents in which they believed fatigue was at least part of the cause. Additionally, epidemiological data of driver fatigue suggests that certain groups are at a higher risk of driving while fatigued. The most common types of drivers to fall into this high-risk category are: rotating shift workers, truck drivers, sleep disordered person, and young adults (average age of 20).

The Turnpike does what is can to counter this through efficiency and rigorous standards. As has already been shown, safety has always been the single highest priority on the New Jersey Turnpike. From its inception, many innovative safety features were incorporated into the roadway's design. For example, the Turnpike was the first highway in the nation to implement the dual-dual system, where trucks are separated from cars. This design, which exists between Interchanges 8A and 14, is perhaps the safety feature most obvious to the public. The Turnpike's daily operational practices also place a heavy emphasis on safety. Troop D expertly executes a well-conceived plan of selective deployment of supplemental details, concentrated traffic enforcement activity and continued high visibility of marked State Police units coupled with the strategic deployment of unmarked patrol vehicles. Their activities played a major role in the decrease in fatal accidents in 1997.

Yet, although the Turnpike is considered one of the safest roads in the country, it, like a dragon, can still snatch a life away in the blink of an eye. Over thirty people die every year along the turnpike. Drivers
will often get sleepy and cause accidents. Others get drunk. And some simply speed. Even State troopers face risks every day of being hit by a passing vehicle or potentially being shot by a car they have pulled over. At other times, the Black Dragon includes the forces of nature snow, rain and fog to mix with human folly. In fact the most severe roadway accident to occur in the Turnpike’s history was really a combination of both human error and the weather. It happened over the course of two hours. In a horrific series of crashes, ten people were killed and another 40 injured in a 65 vehicle crash at the Northern end of the Turnpike. The cause? It was a heavy fog that had settled over the road which then combined with smoke coming from a fire at one of the local Meadowlands dumps. Like some evil witches’ brew, this black cloud hung over the highway, reducing visibility to less than a couple of feet. For the various Federal, State and local highway agencies, these statistics and numbers infect and disrupt the highway system’s equations of efficiency, a prospect that is disturbing both in lives lost and the ineffectiveness of the proposed system. It has also led them to propose a range of highway design strategies, including the deployment of periodic rest stops along the highways, that they believe helps to minimize those numbers and their influence on the overall functioning of the highway.

So what is it in particular about its design and operation that makes the New Jersey Turnpike both a long-term engineering success in terms
of safety and efficiency but also an ambivalent icon of sorts, 'tomorrow's highway built today', that still feels "like an elevator"? It is my contention that the spatial meaning behind this organizational structure is the result of all four of those elements. Two of those ideas come from the pragmatic needs of the Turnpike, efficiency and profitability. The other two, the Black Dragon and the Narrative of the Individual, work at a less obvious level through imagery and culture. Together they provide a useful framework for creating the strategies and tactical interventions along the Turnpike that are derived from both the particular history of the Turnpike Authority as well as a broader American discourse regarding travel and people's relationship to the automobile. It is like the incident of the toll booth operator, Ronald "Rocky" Sorrentino and the family of ducks. The Black Dragon is not just something we fear. It is also something that, in a strange way we cherish, something we want to keep close but also shoo away. This is the dilemma of us and how we define ourselves in the world around us. As Mr. Sorrentino tells it:

Then there was another incident about the ducks. Here it is, twenty-four lanes, traffic is horrendous. There's a mommy duck and about six little ducks, little ducks... the water is pouring down. This duck and his [her] ducklings following him [her], decides to go from this side entry all the way across the exit. Traffic is—and I see this is happening. I get on the intercom. 'Hold all traffic! Stop all lanes! Exit! Exit! Supervisor, listen to what I'm
saying! There's a duck in the middle of the—. Well, I want to tell you something: they all stopped the traffic. Here's this little duck—everything stopped! The duck and his ducklings were running across: tikka tikka tikka tikka. I think it took maybe two minutes, because it's a couple of hundred yards, maybe. And they ran across, they got there safe. And I said, 'Let 'em all go! They're across!' The ducks went into the swamp and that was funny. That made the Turnpike newspaper.\textsuperscript{15}

Endnotes
\begin{enumerate}
\item New Jersey Turnpike Authority, The Trailblazer (Vol. XV No. 22, Summer 2002), 2.
\item The Authority has a contract with HMSHost for all 12 service areas. The Turnpike receives a portion of the profits and charges HMSHost rent for using the facilities. “Annual Report: 2003” (New Brunswick, New Jersey: NJ Turnpike Authority, 2003), 21.
\item Wank, 89-90
\item New Jersey Turnpike Authority “Press Release: Turnpike Opens Newly Renovated Vince Lombardi Service Area” (December 6, 2001, #136) www.state.nj.us/turnpike/01news136
\item The Turnpike nows believe in the importance of “comfort, convenience, and aesthetics.” New Jersey Turnpike Authority “Press Release: Turnpike Opens

\end{enumerate}
Newly Renovated Service Areas" (August 15, 2001, #92) www.state.nj.us/turnpike/01news92

8 Taken from Mitchell Schwarzer, Zoomscape: Architecture in Motion and Media, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004)

9 Paul Virilio Dromoscopy


12 Sorensen et al.


14 Gillespie and Rockland

15 New Jersey Historical Society 2002 Transcript of interview with Ronald "Rocky" Sorrentino, 1999 (www.jerseyhistory.org)
Section 3.00000

Paul Rabinow: “So architects are not necessarily the masters of space that they once were, or believe themselves to be.”

Michel Foucault: “That’s right. They are not the technicians or engineers of the three great variables – territory, communication, and speed. These escape the domain of architects.”

Given the history of the Turnpike and the condition of the roadway today, engineers and politicians rather than architects appear to have been in control of Foucault’s three great variables. Yet, although territory and speed continue to operate under the algorithm of efficiency and economics, communication has always been a much more contested concept. If individuals and various sub-groups have the ability to challenge how space is occupied and used, then hope for further spatial interventions still remains. Additionally, I have tried to suggest that the concept of the Black Dragon offers a fourth variable, one based upon the land or environment that always underlies and tests these other three variables. The next step, then, is to determine how, strategically and tactically, to best reclaim these variables for architecture in the world today? For some in the architecture community, the strategy would be to try and redesign the rest stops with a “sense of place” so they appeal to some idealized notion of the general public. One such critic who has taken such a position is the architect Michael Benedikt. From his perspective, to ignore the deleterious aspects of the
environment (environmental stoics) or to embrace the ugly as beautiful (place machismo) "will lead to further degradation of the urban and natural environments: the first through the toleration of neglect, the second through the provocation of hostility from "ordinary" people, people who want the world to be pleasant."

For Benedikt, architecture must reclaim space to create "beautiful" spaces that help improve both our urban and natural environments.

But, within the post-modern world of today, given the multitude of voices occupying the site and the constantly evolving concept of nature, it remains uncertain how Benedikt's universal claim regarding "pleasant" might be converted into a set of general strategies. Instead, it is worth considering the work of others who have been interested in alternative notions of urbanism. For instance, as the architectural critic Anthony Vidler has stated:

The new avant-garde is no longer a joyful proclaimer of future technological or formal bliss; it is personified instead by the squatter, the panhandler, the vagrant, the unwanted stranger.... All pretense of a piecemeal utopia a la Karl Popper (Colin Rowe), or a postmodern utopia of the fragments (Michael Graves), is dropped; what is left is a shrapnel-like shard, a sharp-pointed splinter, a remnant, a castoff, an irreducible piece of junk (Coop Himmelblau). These are not left to lie where they fell in some dystopian wasteland of the edge or the margins; they are honed into tools, weapons, and instruments of insertion,
opening rifts and faults in the apparently seamless fabric of the city to let in its new inhabitants.4

Although it would be naïve or an act of hubris to think that every piece of architecture could or should be about such an approach, Vidler’s polemic at least tries to address how much of the world is already under the sway of State or corporate influence. By adopting some of Vidler’s suggestions, or elements of them, one can begin to explore the cracks in the seams or create bubbles in the grid of power relations that might form a practice of resistance that can begin to expand the horizon of architectural representation for all of us.5

Continuing Vidler’s line of thought a bit further, one can see that by using a rest stop as a site for producing some type of transformation of the everyday, the architect and potentially the public can engage in a political process that moves beyond the limitations currently set by the profession and its traditional and formal approach to object creation and site redevelopment. Instead of seeing it as a capitulation to capitalism, it is just such an approach that defines a “critical” practice. It is willing to embrace the contradictions of it discipline. For example, the political theorist Bonnie Honig, sees the active political life as one that operates from within the center of the discipline, in the “space of the dilemmatic”. She states:

Are his years on the job ‘best described as a time when [he] risked or forfeited his integrity? Or might it be more apt to treat
those years as an instance of a practice of integrity, a disciplined and admirable acceptance of the risks of a life lived politically, in the dilemmatic space, for the sake of a complicated and nuanced set of rewards, compromises, failures, and achievements?" He does not "fetishize noninvolvement as the safe space of integrity. For [him], integrity is not a static marker of cleanliness but a complex, lived process of negotiation."5

Therefore, it appears that places that go against the grain actually could provide an opportunity for reconsidering the current political relationships established through space as well as challenge the status quo of the profession today.

At the same time, the architectural strategies used for the Turnpike must also consider the concerns of the Black Dragon. To do so seem to suggest the need to move beyond the Platonic approach of the original algorithm towards a more dynamic and uncertain set of processes. For instance, Sanford Kwinter offers a succinct explanation of such an approach. He states:

This analytical model – based on developmental pathways, dynamical interactions, singular points, and qualitative movements in abstract, sometimes multidimensional space – arguably furnishes a far richer theory of "site" than most currently employed in orthodox aesthetic or architectural practice.... It would not be inappropriate to liken this approach to the artful shaping of a surfer's trajectory on the sea.7

By surfing, one can then
explore the opportunities existing in a particular place at a particular time and in so doing help to bring forth the shaping of an event that embodies the latent aspect of movement and energy occurring at that site as well as critically addressing some of the variables that Foucault has suggested have had a major impact upon how we operate and perceive the world around us. For the designer, the architecture becomes more about the event, the dynamic flow of information that architecture helps to collect the various energies and forms of matter for brief periods only to have them then break free as history moves towards other arrangements and patterns.8

The following proposal is then simply an attempt to focus in on one particular section of the Turnpike, the Vince Lombardi Service Area, as a test case that follows the approach outline above. In reviewing these documents, it should be noted there are 5 primary strategies that led to 7 architectural interventions.

**Endnotes**


2 One author besides Foucault who spends a great deal of time discussing those processes is Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell: 1991)

3 Michael Benedikt *Environmental Stoicism and Place Machismo,*

Another architect who has argued for keeping the process as open as possible is the Peter Wheelwright. During a lecture at MIT he stated, "This is not a call to ethics nor am I invoking moral imperatives...again, these kinds of things are based on other kinds of decisions we all must invariably make in private. No, my concern is more simple. The more things we know, the more things we can draw upon to provoke our imaginations. And one of the things that we, that is, our species, has consistently tried to imagine, even now in the absence of utopian schemes, are ways to make human experience more rich in its expression, more interesting in its endeavors, and more just in its social practices."

Peter Wheelwright, "What is an Event and What is its Duration?" http://archrecord.construction.com/inthecause/0402WhatsEvent/MIT3.asp


The philosopher, Richard
Rorty has described our world as a "literary-historical-antropological-political merry-go-round" in which we can only hope to achieve "temporary resting places constructed for utilitarian ends." For me, Rorty ideas regarding Pragmatism offer a useful way of thinking about the world and how we operate within it. It also seems to tie in with some of the ideas being developed by Kwinter. See Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism and Philosophy" from Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy, editors After Philosophy: End or Transformation? (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).
The big difference between the garbage hills and the real hills in the Meadowlands is that the garbage hills are alive. In some completely peopleless areas of the swamp, there are billions of microscopic organisms thriving underground in dark, oxygen-free communities. They multiply and even evolve so that they can more readily digest the trash at their disposal. It can take a team of three organisms to finish off a dump-buried particle of cellulose in a bit of newspaper too small to even see. Eventually there are whole suites of organisms in each hill as if each hill were a bacterial high-rise. After having ingested the tiniest portion of leftover New Jersey or New York, these cells then exhale huge underground plumes of carbon dioxide and of warm moist methane, giant stillborn tropical winds that seep through the ground to feed the Meadowlands' fires, or creep up into the atmosphere, where they eat away at the Earth-protecting layer of ozone. When you gaze at a garbage hill you have to imagine a shadow hill hiding inside, a hill that closely follows the profile of the garbage hill except that it is slightly lower and thinner and that is made mostly of water. And then there is the water — water that comes in from the sky, water that comes in on the arriving trash, water that mingles with the bacteria and the trash, and in the end transubstantiates into what is known in the landfill business as leachate, a garbage juice. When the slope of the hidden hill of water rises to meet the level of the visible garbage hill, a tiny leachate spring forms, a seep. By one estimate, a little over a billion gallons of leachate flows forth each year from out of the twenty-five hundred acres of old landfills in the Meadowlands.

We live in a world populated by structures—a complex mixture of geological, biological, social, and linguistic constructions that are nothing but accumulations of materials shaped and hardened by history. Immersed as we are in this mixture, we cannot help but interact in a variety of ways with the other historical constructions that surround us, and in these interactions we generate novel combinations, some which possess emergent properties. In turn, these synergistic combinations, whether of human origin or not, become the raw material for further mixtures. This is how the population of structures inhabiting our planet has acquired its rich variety, as the entry of novel materials into the mix triggers wild proliferations of new forms.

Manuel De Landa One Thousand Years of Non-Linear History

zones of decompression

field notes:
extend time of rest "decompress"
reduce fatigue
Invigorate body
extend body beyond turnpike
improves safety
improves image
increases profit
field notes:

a genealogy of users
understand specific needs
counter universal user

strategies

PROJECT NUMBER: 000000
REVIEW: 12 22 22
CREATED BY: [Name]
FILENAME: [Name]
**User**

- **duration**
  - Current/Additional minutes: 30
  - Frequency: Times per year: 12
  - Range: Miles of turnpike: 156

- **speed**
  - Body miles per hour: 30/10

**Frequency of usage**

- **Commuter**
  - Duration: 30 minutes, Frequency: 12 times per year, Range: 156 miles

- **Vacationer**
  - Duration: 6 hours, Frequency: 1 time per year, Range: 118 miles

- **Trucker**
  - Duration: 5 hours, Frequency: 2 times per year, Range: 118 miles

- **Police**
  - Duration: 6 hours, Frequency: 4 times per year, Range: 208 miles

- **Worker**
  - Duration: 8 hours, Frequency: 5 times per year, Range: 260 miles

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**Field Notes**

- A linear city exposed
- A genealogical study
- 5 user groups created
- Specify program and duration

---

**Strategies**

- Project Number: 0000000
- Owner: JSS
- Owner ID: 
- Owner Name: 
- Contact Name: 
- Contact Phone: 

---

**S 2.1**
field notes:
less than 3%
smooth space
break in plan and section
address topography issues
choreograph movement
Field notes:
- diagrammatic study in section
- use local conditions
- invigorate body
- explore land to body connection

Strategies

---
field notes:
marketing and funding
community outreach
redundancy
transit overlap
new funding sources

strategies

PROJECT NUMBER: 0000000
SHEET: 50
DRAWN BY: ---
CHECKED: ---
FILENAME: DWG

S 4.0
field notes:
image and style
materials and finishes
machine aesthetics of Turnpike
streamlined and standardized

strategies

A PROJECT NUMBER: 0000000
ISSUED: 00.00.00
DRAWN BY:
CHECKED BY:
FILENAME: DWG
S 5.0
field notes:
highlands and coastal plains
jurassic era
180 million years ago
21 counties (state)
100 counties (Jersey)
680+ municipalities (state)
20+ municipalities (Jersey)
field notes:
estuary 8,000 years old
Wisconsin glacier formed it
Steppelk 10,000 years ago
26,000 acres of marsh before
8,000 acres remain today
2,500 acres still protected
1969 NJMC established
site map
vince lombardi
regional context
last stop on nj turnpike north
7 interventions
primary stop for truckers

field notes:

site map

vince lombardi
rest stop

A 0.2
Field notes:
Last stop on NJ Turnpike North
7 interventions
Primary stop for truckers
A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance.” The tactician “borrows” the environment for momentary pleasure or practical need, wresting her constitution from the efficient partitioning that makes her a producer of profit and a reproducer of power structures. He finds its model in “everyday” activities (e.g. walking) that feature a fluid, transient, and active creation of spaces. The tactic’s decomposition of inside and outside, its “in-difference,” provides the basis for a political potential.

Michel de Certeau, the Practice of Everyday Life
field notes:
new bird blind
connection to meadowlands
sawing container
wood screen
glass and wood box
nest structure

bird's nest uncovered

ramp over marsh edge

bird's nest
axonometric elevation

A 2.0
four rooms for relaxation
physical exertion to enter
limited view from each side
private, yet exposed

exterior landing above trees
climbing wall

coffee bar

juice bar

lower play space

exit ramp

entrance "odd" stair

smoke zone

slide

sand box

kids stair

ramp to upper play space

field

"tS:

adults: coffee and smoking

children: play space

merge the two into one

playful stimulants for all

mix and separate age groups

habitrail "quickly"

cafe

axometric
elevations

A 5.0
four [REST] chambers

[REST] lounge

axometric elevations

spiral stair entrance

garden for one

field notes:
Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy
sound relief
stress relief
addiction reduction
muscle relaxation
tunnel entrance
hidden garden
four chambers
Field notes:
- highway on common wall
- small projection in stall
- toilet movie listings:
  - news updates
  - "nature" cartoons
  - silence

Toilet cinema
Axometric, plan section

.exit

common projection wall

entrance

9'-6"

mop room

projection booth

41'-6½"

3'-6½"
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