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Symbolic markers and institutional innovation in transforming urban spaces

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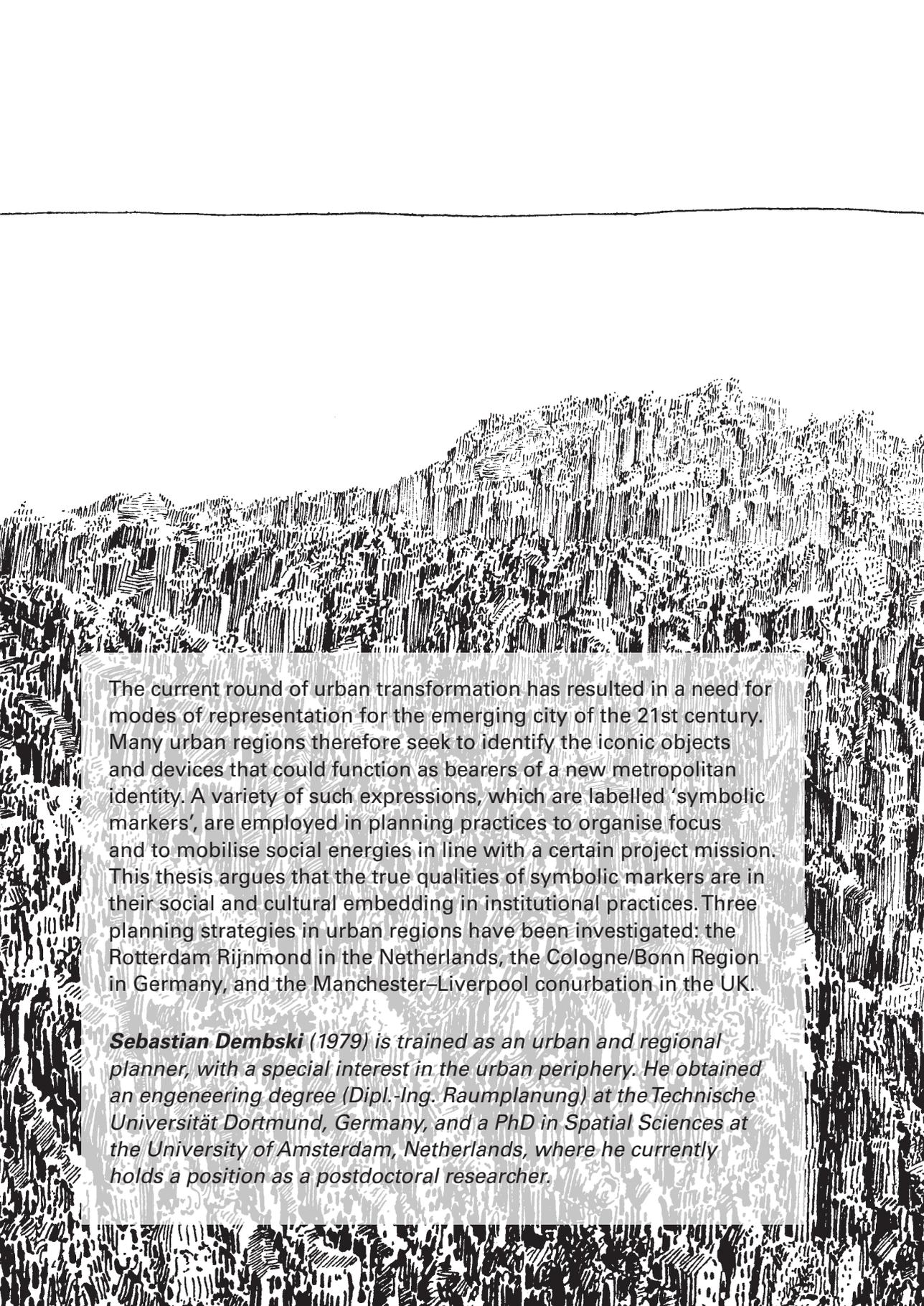
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The current round of urban transformation has resulted in a need for modes of representation for the emerging city of the 21st century. Many urban regions therefore seek to identify the iconic objects and devices that could function as bearers of a new metropolitan identity. A variety of such expressions, which are labelled 'symbolic markers', are employed in planning practices to organise focus and to mobilise social energies in line with a certain project mission. This thesis argues that the true qualities of symbolic markers are in their social and cultural embedding in institutional practices. Three planning strategies in urban regions have been investigated: the Rotterdam Rijnmond in the Netherlands, the Cologne/Bonn Region in Germany, and the Manchester–Liverpool conurbation in the UK.

Sebastian Dembski (1979) is trained as an urban and regional planner, with a special interest in the urban periphery. He obtained an engineering degree (Dipl.-Ing. Raumplanung) at the Technische Universität Dortmund, Germany, and a PhD in Spatial Sciences at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, where he currently holds a position as a postdoctoral researcher.