Interdiscourse Theory and the Analysis of Collective Symbols

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1. Preliminary Remarks

In the following, we begin firstly with a few basic premises to outline the theory of interdiscourse, forming the constitutive framework for the analysis of collective symbols. We then proceed to present the system of collective symbols characteristic of Western Europe. Such an arsenal of symbols plays an important role not only for the way metropolises regard themselves, for how others view them and for the images of metropolises conveyed by media and politics. It is also a key to constituting metropolitan research concepts, used quasi terminologically and analytically, such as 'urbanity' or 'metropolitaneity'. We then discuss a concrete example to illustrate the analytical method used on collective symbols, demonstrating the specific efficacy of this analysis for metropolitan research. The chapter ends with some references to other terms and methods of metropolitan research.

2. Theoretical Framework

Interdiscourse theory is based on the observation that, since about the middle of the 18th century, modern societies and their cultures have not only differentiated themselves into specific fields of knowledge, each with its special discourse, but in response to this, forms of speech have also developed, which, in turn, establish new connections between the specializations (see Link/Link-Heer 1990; Parr 2008; 2011; 2013; the relevant research is listed in Parr/Thiele 2010). Interdiscourse theory thus essentially understands the social cohesion of modern societies as defined by the sum of the links that imaginatively transform "the practical division of labour into life lived in its totality" (Link 1983, 27, my translation), even if this totality must always remain fragmentary and fragile. Entire cultures are then shaped, firstly, by the special discourses, or groups of special discourses (e.g., those of natural sciences, humanities and social sciences) they have developed, secondly, by the formations, and especially the hierar-

chies in which these are arranged, and thirdly, by the elements connecting discourses by bridging the gaps between discourses relevant to particular cultures.

This function is fulfilled by analogy-forming processes such as metaphors, comparisons, allegories, and, not least by such symbols as can be understood and used collectively by everyone. Thus, for example, the expression 'urban jungle', links the areas of 'culture' and 'nature'; that of the 'urban melting pot' links the process of steel production with the ethnically diverse structure of a metropolis, and that of the Ruhr area as the 'armory of the nation' links traditional craftsmanship with modern industrial production (cf. Parr 2011). In all these cases, we are dealing with an imagery (*pictura*) that stands for something else, the meaning of which it is, in fact, seeking to convey (*subscriptio*).

One of the most important functions of such collective symbols is to make highly specialized facts generally understandable, which, in turn, explains why they are frequently used in the media and in politics as a 'glue'. This is especially true when complex issues need to be formulated under constraints of space or time, yet as concisely as possible at the same time. Collective symbols are, therefore, not only found in literary, essayistic and journalistic texts (including films and other audiovisual materials), as well as in political speeches and announcements, but often also in introductions, greetings, and in the forewords to (popular) scientific and programmatic texts, such as those of urban actors and authorities, regional organizations and district and state governments. Being heard in the media-political public sphere seems to almost demand a resort to collective symbols. Such compulsion can be demonstrated by, among other things, the fact that radio, television, and newspapers usually select and quote only those collective symbols suitable for condensation from complex announcements, extensive brochures, and long speeches. Consequently, when we speak of and discuss metropolises, central aspects are commonly framed by collective symbols.

2.1 What are Collective Symbols and What do They do?

An interdiscourse-theoretical approach demonstrates how collective symbols represent couplings of specialised discourses and fields of knowledge, which, viewed semiotically, then appear as complex, iconic and paradigmatically expanded signs. In the first place, these unite the imagery (*pictura*) with the meaning it seeks to convey (*subscriptio*, 'sense'), so that collective symbols display a bipartite construction (for terminology see Link 1978; Drews/Gerhard/Link 1985; Becker/Gerhard/Link 1997). Secondly, an image consists of several partial images, which are nonetheless related and can continuously produce even more complex and longer text/image correlates. From a syntagmatic point of view, a *pictura* element is thus assigned to a *subscriptio* element (e.g., the *pictura* element 'teeming' to the *subscriptio* 'big city'), while the *pictura* and *subscriptio* attributes of a collective symbol are paradigmatically expanded into – at least rudimentary – isotopes. Hence, collective symbols display a multiple layering that distinguishes them from classical metaphors. Thirdly, we can define the relationship between *pictura* and *subscriptio* more precisely, because it is not completely arbitrary, but semantically motivated. A city laid out in a chessboard pattern with very wide, clearly laid out streets can hardly be symbolized as a 'jungle', but as a 'concrete desert'. Fourthly, collective symbols fulfill the criterion of iconicity, i.e. the *pictura* elements can be depicted visually. A simple test of

whether one is dealing with a collective symbol is, therefore, the question whether a text can be transformed into a caricature. Finally, a fifth characteristic is the tendency to polysemy, i.e. different 'meanings' with varying significance can be formed under an image (but not arbitrary ones!).

Thus, specifying collective symbols means that it is no longer single metropolitan metaphors (in the double sense of: 'Which single metaphors stand for metropolises?' and its obverse: 'What does the metaphor *metropolis* stand for?') that claim our interest, but rather the quite diverse, competing, sometimes even frictional discursivisations of the object 'metropolis', which are made possible by the collective symbol system as a whole, and for which this system of symbols is regularly used. In its entirety, the synchronous system of collective symbols represents something like a 'filter' of visualization and is, therefore, to be understood as a medium *sui generis*, with the discourses on the thematic object, 'metropolises', always constituting 'metropolises' as a social and discursive object.

2.2 Systems of Collective Symbols and Spatial Contexts

Collective symbols as a whole constitute a closely related system of visual forms subject to modification over time but remaining, synchronously, relatively stable and coherent and thus enabling the relevant discussions and events in a culture to be coded. This characteristic function results from collective symbols tending to form classes displaying paradigmatic equivalence in both *pictura* and *subscriptio*. On the one hand, image elements from different social areas can be exchanged while retaining the same 'meaning'. Thus, a metropolis can be described as an 'organism' (with 'head', 'heart', the various 'limbs', the 'blood circulation' etc.). On the other, it can also figure as a 'swarm of insects' or as a 'complex machine', or, just as well, thermodynamically, namely as a 'boiler under extreme steam pressure'. This results in chains of images (*picturae*) that can in principle be substituted for one another without changing their meaning (*subscriptio*). Here, an example would be (from a Western perspective): 'Shanghai is the heart of Chinese industry; it is the engine of a capitalist machine running perfectly, in which one cog engages another; it is an organism constantly growing at the core of the Chinese economy'. Another chain of interchangeable *pictura* elements deals with the standard attributions attached to the 'threatening big city', for example, the images of 'cloaca', 'kraken', 'moloch', 'jungle', 'thicket', and 'labyrinth' (cf. Henning 2020).

This is the first dimension of interconnected collective symbols; the second structural dimension means that different circumstances can also be subsumed under one image, i.e. the same *pictura*; for example, that of the 'imbalance' of a metropolis can denote different circumstances (subscriptions) meant by it: 'too many inhabitants in too small a space', 'not enough hospitals', ' rents too expensive', 'unbalanced age structure' or a 'very bad ecological balance'.

These two structural dimensions – chains of images with standard subscriptions, as well as different subscriptions sliding in under one image – result in the character of collective symbols as a synchronous system. In Western Europe, this system consists of many single symbols, of which about 100 to 150 are relevant. However, they relate

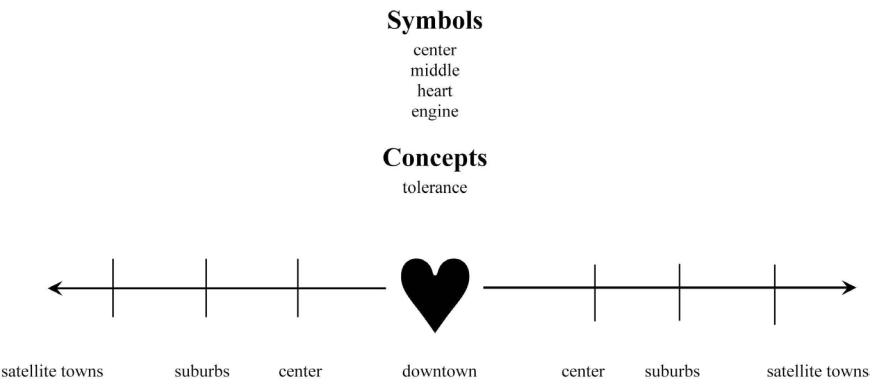
closely to each other through the two dimensions of interchangeability and repeatedly work to encode events of all kinds in media-political discourses.

One can, therefore, trace the interplay of collective symbols constantly being used in medial and political discourses, and equally in the arts, as a closely interconnected system of axes, equivalences and value hierarchies, through which our cultural self-understanding is given perspective, as through a filter. It then becomes obvious that systems of collective symbols always also represent a form of cultural construction in spatial contexts. This means, however, that systems of collective symbols are closely linked to ideas of spatiality: Systems of symbols constitute collectively shared representations of social relations in spatial form, and these can, nevertheless, be individually accentuated (not least in the arts, where there is great scope for aesthetic representation). In the terminology of the more recent sociology of space, systems of collective symbols construct 'mental maps' "through which […] not only perceptions, images and experiences, but also cultural knowledge can be produced and organized" (Berking/Löw 2005, 9, my translation). Just like cognitive maps (cf. Downs/Stea 1982; Werlen 2008, 259), the symbol systems that can be visualized as spaces are also culturally constructed and simplified spatial representations referring to a reality, which is – *de facto* – much more complex.

2.3 Collective Symbols and Their Systems as Media of Perceiving the Metropolis

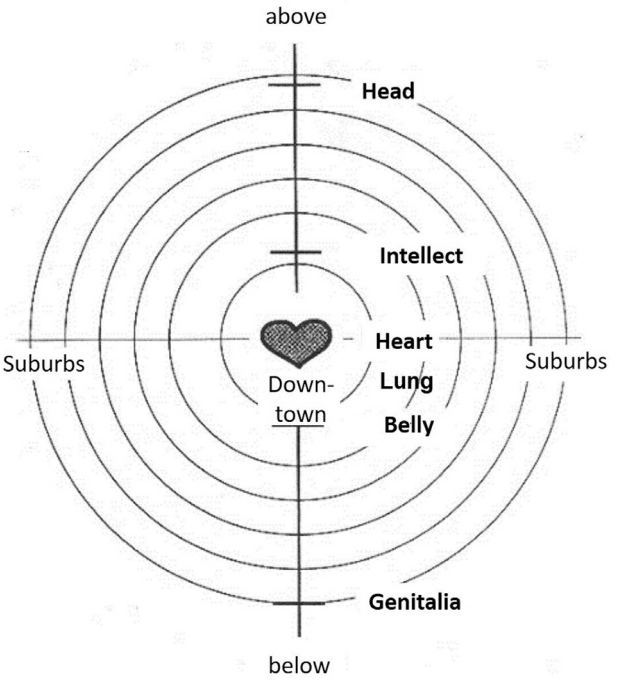
Thus, when systems of collective symbols construct models to denote spaces, and these models are applied to metropolises, what exactly do they look like? Since the beginning of the 20th century, a relatively consistent reservoir of symbols has developed for speaking about cities, metropolises, and regions. Empirical analyses of the relevant material reveal that three axes constitute this reservoir and that these are, at the same time, cultural constructions of space. The first of them is the taxonomic right/left axis (see fig. 1), familiar from, for instance, the symbolic positioning of political parties. It is based on the symbol of the 'scales' (as in the zodiac sign) and favors the place of the 'heart-center', which is particularly positively valued for its 'stability'.

Fig. 1: The taxonomic right/left axis (based on Parr 2001, 27)



The second axis is that of top/bottom (see fig. 2), which is often realized in the form of body symbols ('head', 'heart', 'lung', 'belly').

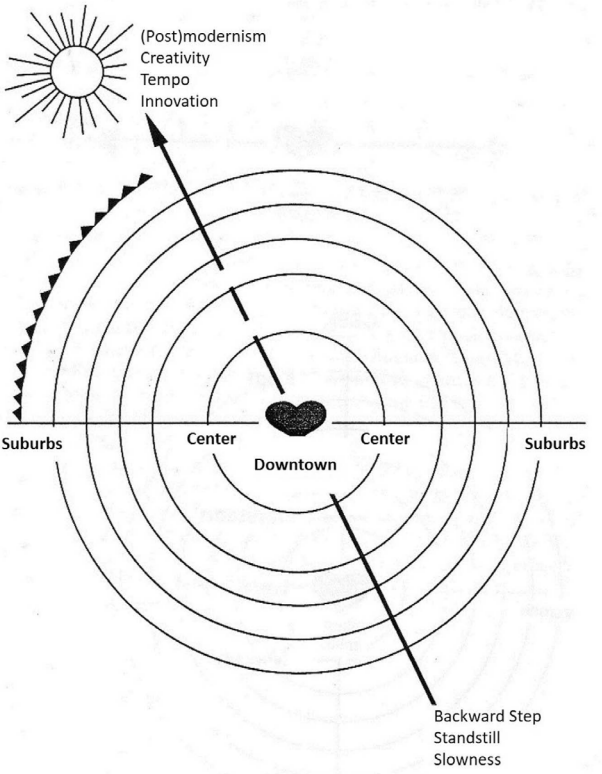
Fig. 2: The upper/lower axis (based on Parr 2001, 27)



The third, dynamic axis (see fig. 3) is that of 'progress', '(post)modernity', 'creativity', and 'willingness to innovate' vs. 'regression', 'stagnation', and 'slowness' (cf. Disselnkötter/Parr 1994; Parr 2001, 31; Parr 2013, 24–30).

These three axes together form a system of coordinates (right/left; up/down; forward/backward), a spatial model – albeit still abstract – which nevertheless can be concretized for entities of various kinds, not least for metropolises or metropolitan regions imagined as subjects with an individual 'character' (cf. Löw 2011; 2018). From the self-perspective of metropolises and their marketing, this yields particular potential if they can occupy the positively evaluated places on all three axes: on the right/left axis the integrating 'center'; on the top/bottom axis the 'heart' correlated with 'center' (not only 'head', not only 'belly'); and on the dynamic axis the pole of 'progress', which can be read as the 'top' or 'front' of a ranking list ('because we have the power for dynamic development, we will soon be world leaders' [cf. Peck 2008]). A small experiment quickly shows how effective collective symbols are in encoding metropolises: If you ask a group of test persons to pinpoint the capital city of Berlin on an empty map of Germany, then it will usually be placed in the middle of the map, in contrast to its rather peripheral actual

Fig. 3: The dynamic (progress) axis (based on Parr 2001, 28)



geographical location. This placement reflects the perception of Berlin as the cultural and political 'heart' of Germany.

The respective positions in the system of collective symbols have come to favor specific symbols, concepts, terms, emotive words, and ideologies, as well as their connotations: the 'center', for example, favors mainly 'heart' symbols, which connote regional authenticity, but also 'tolerance' ('we can look left from the center, but we can also look right') and 'maturity in one's actions' ('we are not dependent on either left or right', 'we are the zero point from which measurements are taken'). Debates on metropolises, cities, regionalism, and globalization repeatedly emphasize the urban values of 'tolerance' and 'openness to the world', and how they can apply in a cosmopolitan coexistence, so that such concepts become particularly relevant to conurbations as both topographical and symbolic 'integration centers' for regions.

Conversely, the symbolic 'center', as a site fostering integration, depends on its relation to what are defined as the 'edges'. If they are vague or – as they are often called in debates on regionalism – 'frayed', the 'center' becomes more difficult to define, and its existence may even be called into question completely. This is precisely what the celebrated author Heinrich Böll stated early on in the existence of West Germany. In

1958, he wrote that the Ruhr area "has not yet been discovered", as "the province that bears this name", that it "cannot be precisely determined either in its borders or in its form", "because no other name has been found for it" (Böll, quoted in Schütz 1976, 41, my translation).

Finally, the dynamic axis represents concepts such as 'modernity', 'innovation', and 'creativity' (including the corresponding symbols of progress) at one end, while the other denotes 'backwardness' or, at least, 'the past'. The particular importance of this third axis emerges in the current discourses on the "Ruhr metropolis" (see Parr 2010a), where they struggle to not only acknowledge the relics of industrial culture in retrospect, but also to develop future prospects. This dilemma, however, prompts us to assess how far discursivisations of the Ruhr Area can claim any lineage also enabling a perspective for the future, i.e. the 'valorization in the future of origins'. In terms of the analysis of collective symbols: On the dynamic axis, 'progress' must be accentuated more strongly than 'retrospection', and 'regression' must be redirected to, and reinterpreted as, 'progress'. 'Monuments' of industrial culture, for example, would be freighted with 'semantics denoting the future' and 'semantics denoting progress' (see the examples in texts from Regionalverband Ruhr/RVR 2010). Slogans, such as 'creating something new from the old' or 'from industrial region to tourist destination', correspond to this on the narrative level. To put it differently: The view onto the past must be designed in such a way that it is always also a view onto the future, and one that, ideally, can be conceptualized as a concise collective symbol. Here it would indeed be possible to posit 'cultural conversion'.

Based on the three-axis model, we can simulate possible symbolic positions carrying positive connotations for metropolises: 'We are the middle' (on the right/left axis) 'because we have the heart' (on the top/bottom axis), 'and since we have both, the heart and the middle, we are far in front (on the dynamic axis of progress). Similarly, various metropolises such as New York, London or the Ruhr area, sport the label of 'melting pot': here, we are dealing with the remnants of a topics deriving from an industrial process and standing for the integration of a disparate periphery into a center (the 'center' or 'heart'). However, as an identity formula oriented towards the future, the symbol has also to be located on the dynamic axis of progress, since the topics of 'melting' connotes a processual momentum, which can also be seen as progress, so that the symbol of process can become one of progress. Conversely, a position composed of the 'outer edge' of the taxonomic axis, the 'bottom' of the vertical axis and the 'regression' of the dynamic axis, would be coded particularly negatively ('If the outskirts of Paris continue to deteriorate, the whole city will soon be degraded into a cloaca and end up back in the conditions of past centuries'.)

At this point, it has already become apparent that, in the interplay of these three axes, oppositions like 'center vs. periphery' or 'metropolis vs. hinterland' emerge and then structure those regions under discussion. However, they can also receive very different accentuations, namely when treated spatially, temporally, and hierarchically. This opens up options for transitions between discourses on space, time and competition (rankings), so that, for example, sporting and artistic successes can be offset against the economic success of a metropolis. At the same time, this process stabilizes the respective identity conceptions, since they can then be related to the diverse social subareas.

One of its additional effects allots metropolises character traits consistent with the collective symbols assigned to them. This can be observed whenever the symbols involved are correlated with typical actions or when typical actions (such as 'being tolerant', 'understanding', 'being able to come to terms') can be generated from symbols (such as 'heart'). Thus, metropolises become active in generating narratives (cf. Parr 1999). Collective symbols are, therefore, important in circulating narratives for cities, metropolises, or regions.

We can demonstrate how literature, the press, politics and the various scientific disciplines (see the references in Parr 2001) have been promoting such circulation of the symbols for metropolises since about 1900. Three groups, in particular, recur with striking regularity: firstly, there are 'organism' symbols such as 'head' and 'heart', secondly, 'machine' and 'industry' symbols such as 'melting pot', thirdly, taxonomic relations of the type 'we stand at the center of things'. The juxtaposition of opposing 'organism' and 'machine' and, respectively, 'construct' topics to each other is an important rule for relating the different symbols together.

This results in a four-zone scheme (see table 1) for coding metropolises according to collective symbols. The first zone (read from left to right) denotes 'nature' as something looked upon negatively, as 'threatening' and, therefore, negatively connoted, the second zone indicates a positively valued 'good nature', the third zone a 'good culture/technology' evaluated positively, and the fourth one a 'threatening and bad culture/technology' accordingly evaluated negatively (cf. Parr 2001, 35).

The two middle zones result in a space of urbanity being positively evaluated twice over in a 'center' itself denoted equally positively. Some symbols and taxonomies oscillate ambivalently between 'good culture/technology' and 'good nature', and even have the capacity to integrate the two central paradigms into a single zone (see the lower half of the diagram; cf. Parr 2001, 34).

2.4 Collective Symbols in Narrating Metropolises

This stock of symbols relevant to regions or metropolises is ordered in such a way that it further enables the production of different types of journalistic, literary, and filmic narratives. These then transfer the paradigmatic juxtaposition of symbols into the narrative succession produced by combining them.

The first form of narration has the extreme zones colliding to create tension. Furthermore, stories of incompatibility or, conversely, stories of the mythical mediation of 'good nature' with 'good culture/technology' become plausible (for the connection between collective symbols and narratives, see Parr 1999). The aesthetics of imagery and text in metropolitan travel guides often work with such mediations, and, at the same time, implicitly with their always latent opposites. Such guides then display a penchant for correlating nature and urbanity, to offer, for example, visitors to New York the prospect of Central Park as a 'green oasis in a sea of concrete'. In Stockholm there is the possibility of fishing for dinner in the middle of the city, or, in the case of the Ruhr area, the promise of the 'Pott you can swim in' (cf. Merian Extra 2006, 39ff.), a play on the demotic label of "Pott" for the whole area with its allusions to griminess (reflected in the negative connotations of the pejorative adjective "pottdreckig": dirty like the quon-

Tab. 1: Perception of cities, conurbations, and regions through Collective Symbols

nature and organism symbols (semantic characteristic 'nature')		***machine and construction symbols (semantic characteristic 'culture/technology')***	
'bad nature'	'good nature'	'good culture/ technology'	'bad culture/ technology'
desert uncontrolled growth proliferation illness (i.e cancerous ulcer) wasteland desolation swamp jungle thicket standstill	organism, soul (creative) brain (pulsing) heart (green) lung sane growth	engine, machine bustling technical rhythm melting pot progress dynamism acceleration	city machine concrete desert Babylon whore cloaca prison labyrinth moloch swarming frenzy
periphery	suburb	center, headquarters	satellite city
imbalance nature chaos superficiality the back of beyond	a sea of stone, a sea of houses city as 'ship' order, depth the cherry on top center, core, heart of hearts, motor the nodal point in supra-regional networks rhizome creativity, tolerance		imbalance arid sea of stone leaking ship cultural chaos superficiality end of the line
extreme(s)	**center(s)**		**extreme(s)**

dam Ruhr region). In our example above, a negatively evaluated symbol, the "Pott" can be linked to the positive natural element 'bathing' in such a way that the latent paradoxical effect here initially created can be resolved diachronically (on the dynamic axis of the system of symbols): where *once* there was the dirty "Pott", *today* one can bathe in beautiful nature.

A second contrasting type of narrative form reverses the matrix and conflates 'bad/dangerous culture' with 'bad/dangerous nature' in negative scenarios. Such combinations appear in literature and they stand out particularly in the Hollywood genre of urban disaster films, whilst in politics, governing authorities also invoke them for disaster scenarios. The technique can also shape narratives depicting processes of decay, where 'mixture' turns into 'segregation', 'urbanity' into 'barbarism', 'unity' into 'multiplicity', 'wholeness' into 'disruption', and 'center' into 'periphery'. And finally, a dialectical contrast by way of illustration: success stories reverse this polarity to narrate how 'disunity' turns into 'unity', 'periphery' into 'center', and 'regression' becomes 'progress' (cf. Parr 2001, 36–38).

3. Methodology: Key Steps in an Analysis of Collective Symbols

Collective symbols can be analyzed most easily using a two-column scheme. The first step involves continuously entering all *pictura* and *subscriptio* elements found in a text into such a schematic diagram. This usually results in gaps in both *pictura* and *subscriptio*. The second step attempts to fill the gaps in the *p*(*ictura*) and *s*(*ubscriptio*) elements, relying on the already existing ones to show whether this form of making sense works.

Making sense involves a certain leeway (the criterium defining ambiguity), but operating only within the limits allowed by the symbols in totality. The deciphering can run from the *pictura* to the *subscriptio*, as well as vice versa. It is rare for texts to deploy a *pictura* without themselves referring to a corresponding *subscriptio*. The analysis thus unmistakably demonstrates the specific use of a collective symbol (or several combined ones). To use a journalistic text as an illustration:

> The fight against traffic congestion
>
> If the A 40 is the carotid artery of the region, then it has been suffering from vascular constriction for years. Traffic jams form as dependably as the sun comes up. Beginning in mid-July, the NRW (North-Rhine Westphalia) State Roads Authority will remove the bottleneck between the Gelsenkirchen (AS 28) and Bochum-Stahlhausen (32) junctions. The four-lane section will expand into six lanes, for 96 million euros. In this, Michael Gebert is the chief surgeon, as it were. […]
>
> The regional branch has taken precautions to prevent the traffic flow from finally collapsing. It is responsible for the 4.5 km long section from the boundary between Essen and Bochum to the Stahlhausen junction. Last year, it extended the stretch's hard shoulder in the direction of Essen by enabling it to support heavy trucks. (Wahl 2008, my translation)

So, to present the above as a two-column scheme (deduced elements are shown in square brackets):

	pictura		***subscriptio***
s 1	traffic congestion	p 1	total breakdown of traffic
s 2	carotid artery	p 2	highway/autobahn A 40
s 3	[patient]	p 3	region
s 4	vasoconstriction	p 4	bottleneck
s 5	chief surgeon	p 5	Michael Gebert (Roads NRW)
s 6	collapse	p 6	[mega jam] [total breakdown of traffic

Carrying out such analyses on more extensive bodies of text, then generates statements about the recurrent use of symbols, but it also identifies which symbols stand for the same fact and vice versa, as well as how contrasting facts can connect by recourse to the same symbols, or – often at least as interesting – which ones do not.

Also, considering the positive or negative values assigned to chains of symbols in a concrete case further enables statements about the discursive positions respectively taken: Does the discourse position taken confirm an already existing one? Is an alternative being developed? Or does the position generated via collective symbols even represent an intervention? Knowledge of such discourse positions is, in turn, the prerequisite

for tactical considerations applied to discourses: Which symbols are applicable in which – for example, cultural or political – context, and for what purpose? What is the best way to react to symbols that have been successfully circulated, but are not compatible with one's discursive position? If one also asks who maintains which discursive positions through which symbols, then, last but not least, statements can be made about those espousing them.

4. What can the Analysis of Collective Symbols Offer Metropolitan Research?

The analysis of collective symbols can reveal the unspoken – but highly effective – discursive schemes that play no small part in speaking about metropolises, as well as figuring in any concomitant actions. In other words, the analysis of collective symbols and their systems illustrates one of the cultural practices producing, circulating and establishing discursive constellations about spatial contexts. In particular, such analyses make it possible to differentiate specialized discursive elements from interdiscursive ones.

Furthermore, such analyses of collective symbols are important components in developing theoretical approaches to metropolises. The reason lies in the extent to which they relate "culturally prefigured (and premeditated) spaces and spatial conceptions" and their "configurations, prefigurations (and remediations) within cultural reality" (Hallet/Neumann 2009, 22, my translation), i.e. "the conceptual and empirical relationship between discourse and space" (Galze/Mattissek 2009, 8, my translation). The analysis of systems of symbols is, among others, one approach, equally capable of investigating both the over-semanticisation of actual geographical spaces and the semanticisation of medially imagined spaces, and it culminates in demonstrating the interplay of both. Moreover, this approach enables "both an application to concrete spatial conditions and a" semantic-structural "description of non-spatial phenomena, in which the terms for spatial relations are used metaphorically" (Dennerlein 2009, 29, who thus takes up Lotman's double view of *topological* and *topographical* structures [1972, 311–329], my translation). Thus, both the semantic-analytical and the symbol-analytical approaches can very precisely relate media textures, along with the semantics of their internal spatial constructions, not only to cultural and social spaces outside of fictional texts but also to real spatial topographies. From a diachronic perspective, the analysis of collective symbols, metropolises, and the regional spaces in which they are situated allows us to understand them as cultural and social spaces that change with the various symbolic discourses applied, and are accentuated in ever-new and different ways.

In the case of an object, a topic, or a discussion, collective symbols also make it possible to take up different positions in the discourse, given that the same symbol can be evaluated positively or negatively. The coherent use of whole clusters of symbols then results in equally coherent discursive positions. And in turn, the precise knowledge of these clusters enables targeted discursive intervention in discussions and disputes. For example, in 2010, when Essen was the European Capital of Culture for the Ruhr region, even cities on the geographical periphery of the Ruhr region were manifestly able

to present themselves as 'center' and as 'a piece of the center'. By contrast, opponents of the Capital of Culture took up the 'center/heart' symbols actually carrying a positive evaluation and deemed the most important motorway connection in the region a rather 'calcified main artery' for a metropolis. By introducing this notion of a discursive position, the interdiscursive theoretical approach thus allows for a much more convincing description of ruptures and interferences than do, for example, approaches derived from the history of mentalities. While theories from this latter focus on the homogenizing disparities, interdiscourse theory demonstrate interference, ruptures, distortions, and their diachronic development.

Furthermore, comparing systems of collective symbols from different cultures opens up a comparative perspective for spatial and metropolitan research, because, for example, the US-American symbol system is structured completely differently from the Western European one (see Link 1991; Parr 2010b). Finally, the analysis of collective symbols offers a thread to trace the proliferation of discourse elements, as well as the concepts and narratives linked to them (example: 'Big Apple' narratives in New York and the Ruhr area).

5. Connections to Other Methods and Approaches

Connections to other terms and methods in the field of metropolitan research arise from the analysis of collective symbols applied to research into urban modelling (cf. Gönsch/Gurr in this volume), storytelling (cf. Sattler in this volume), and the analysis of narratives (cf. Sattler in this volume) (since narratives can be generated from collective symbols by attributing characters). If texts can be understood as qualitative models for municipalities, then collective symbols, in, for example, planning texts, contribute significantly to their character as models, and as ones sometimes tending towards prognosis, sometimes towards simulation.

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