
Symbols of Multiculturalism in the Public Space of a Border Town

Submitted 20/10/21, 1st revision 15/11/21, 2nd revision 01/12/21, accepted 23/12/21

Marek Walancik¹, Janusz Morbitzer²

Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of the article is to get to know the meaning and influence on the behavior and behavior of people of multicultural symbols appearing in the public space of the former border town.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study was carried out using the diagnostic survey method, the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) technique. The research was carried out on a sample of 609 secondary school students.

Findings: The data obtained in the research were analyzed. The results show that the symbols of multiculturalism located in the public space of the city, which in the past was a border town, are perceived by the inhabitants as shaping the skills in intercultural communication, in building relationships, and accepting otherness.

Practical Implications: Based on the research, it should be concluded that the presence of symbols of multiculturalism in public space may constitute a universe in general education, in extracurricular education, and continuous education to counteract intolerance not only among pupils and students, but the whole society, in emphasizing otherness.

Originality/value: The article shows that in extracurricular education, universal, universally available solutions are required, referring to multiculturalism, drawing inspiration from the past from memory, and best generally available in public space in real reality.

Keywords: Symbols, multiculturalism, city, borderland city, public space.

JEL classification: M31, L31.

Paper Type: Research study.

¹Associate Professor, Faculty of Applied Sciences, WSB University, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-4465-0107, e-mail: mwalancik@wsb.edu.pl

²Associate Professor, Faculty of Applied Sciences, WSB University, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-9316-0059, e-mail: jmorbitzer@wsb.edu.pl

1. Introduction

In the words of A.N. Whitehead, "No community can exist without symbolism" (Whitehead, 1985). The above approach is complemented by Hałas that symbolism not only supports the existence of societies, but also enables social change (Hałas, 2007). According to J. Habermas, it is symbolism belonging to the anthropological order that constitutes human reality, and its importance in the public sphere is very large (Habermas, 2001).

In the modern world, attention is paid to the role of symbols in shaping public opinion and in creating social relations (Gajda, 2003). People can represent their experiences, the world, their feelings, and basically everything that concerns them with signs. "We call these signs symbols when people agree among themselves what the semantic content of a given sign is and what it represents" (Tuner, 1998).

The symbol appeared in literature and art in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, along with a current called symbolism. "The symbol has become - among the means of expression used to express certain feelings dictated by intuition, complicated mystical states of violent emotional experiences - the basic means of expression" (Tuner, 1998). The analysis of the literature in the Web of Science and Scopus databases shows that the problem of the meaning of symbols and symbolism in intercultural education in order to counteract intolerance is a gap.

In response to the knowledge gap identified in this way, the research problem in this article boiled down to the question: What is the participation of symbols in a multicultural form in intercultural education to counteract intolerance in a former multicultural city, a border town in the public space? Public space is a space to which everyone has easy access, where they can or interact with each other. It is the public space that is open to various relationships.

2. Symbol, Symbolism, Interactive Symbolism, Social Symbolism

In ancient Greece, recognizable signs that characterized members of secret societies and social groups were called symbols. At that time, symbols were objects of considerable power, magical power. Symbolism as a system of meanings, in a narrow sense, combines social reality with transcendental reality (Berger and Luckman, 1989). Alfred Schutz indicated a broader approach by examining the pragmatic processes of using symbolism (Schutz, 1962). Some symbolic cognition was indicated by M. Eliade (1991), pointing out that the symbol reveals certain aspects of reality - the deepest ones, those that elude all other ways of knowing.

In social symbolism, instrumental symbols were used, e.g., a flag and condensing symbols (Pranger, 1968) e.g., flag. Cassier gives three types of expressive symbolism, conceptual and representational (Habermas, 2001). In social phenomena, there is representative symbolism. In the concept of Noise, "social symbolism differs

from other types of symbolism in that it is produced and used in the mutual interaction of people" (Hałas, 2007). It is in all social phenomena that symbolization takes place, and in social herds the types of symbolism intertwine (Sapir, 1934).

Witehead, Cassier, Sapir, George, Herbert, Mead, and Pranger (1968) dealt with a broad approach to symbolism, symbolization, and the symbol in the process of communication. The founders of Symbolic Interactionism, Charles H. Cooley and Mead, argued that in interaction, exchange and reciprocity concern not so much material objects as ideas, symbols and meanings. The most important in the interaction understood in this way is the entire complex thought process that develops on both sides from the moment they come into contact (Sztompka, 2003).

In Mead's approach, we become self-aware beings thanks to language, so we have a sense of our own individuality and are able to look at ourselves from the outside, as others see us. The key element in this process is the symbol. A symbol is something that replaces something else. For example, the words we use to describe certain things are actually symbols that represent what we mean. Gestures and other forms of non-verbal communication are also symbols.

According to Mead, people share symbols and meanings in their interactions. And because they live in a world saturated with symbols, virtually every interaction that occurs between human beings involves the exchange of symbols (Giddens, 1987). Hałas notices (Hałas, 2007) that recently in the tradition of thinking it has become obvious that it is impossible to exist without symbols, to which Pierre Bourdieu, the author of the theory of the social symbolic system, argues that the social world represents objectively, as a symbolic system organized according to the logic of difference (Bourdieu, 1989). Symbols are a social product, and society is formulated by the regulatory role of symbolism. In all social phenomena, symbolization takes place, social and symbolic activities are closely related (Bourdieu's constructivist structuralism, Habermas's theory of communicative action).

Man lives in the world of his own symbols, and the human environment is nothing but the world of symbols and signs, everything that reaches him are our "symbolic creations". The function of creating symbols is one of the basic human abilities and activities. It is a process that runs permanently in his mind. We, on the other hand, are sometimes aware of it, but sometimes we only notice the results, realizing only then that certain experiences, messages, perceptions have been "digested" by our mind (Langer, 2009).

Social symbolism in terms of Noise is a process of communication, influence, implementation of intentions in human communities, through society, which is created thanks to the symbolic community of beliefs, beliefs, and practices. This symbolism formulates the social order, both in a cognitive and practical sense (Hałas, 2007). When considering social symbolism, it is worth paying attention to the investigations of Alfred Schutz in the problem of symbolization (Schultz, 1962),

that signs should be considered in relation to the reality of everyday life, and symbols should be related to other areas of life. In turn, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman focused on the social production of meanings of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1989).

In Strauss (1993) we find theorems about social symbolism, which can consequently be taken as properties of symbols, they condition the interaction, they are the material of interaction (as a symbolization process), they are a product of interaction (Hałas, 2007). Due to further considerations, they assume that it is worth analyzing the functions of social symbolism (constating, preserving, transforming), manifested both in task-oriented and identity-oriented activities (Hałas, 2007). Referring to the terminology itself and to selected theories of symbolism, we notice that a symbol is a certain conventional sign, acting as a substitute for an object, reminiscent of this object. The symbol always appears in a visual form and functions in a specific convention between those who use it (Gajda, 2003).

The symbols of the city are, patron, coat of arms, bugle call, historical or contemporary buildings characteristic of the city. Society is constructed by means of symbolism. Symbolization enables civilization processes, increasing the sphere of human freedom from nature thanks to the creation of a symbolically processed environment (Hałas, 2007). For example, the symbols, patrons of Venice are St. Mark and the lion, Ireland of St. Patrick, St. Catherine of Europe, Italy, Rome, Siena. The patron saint of Chorzów is St. Florian, who was not an inhabitant of Chorzów, region or country. Saint Florian is an officer of the Roman legions, executed for his faith.

Symbols are also how architectural buildings identify the city, they are easily recognizable to its inhabitants and visitors, e.g., the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Eiffel Tower in Paris, Great Sphinx - a monolithic statue of a sphinx, located in the pyramid complex in Giza, Egypt.

However, let us not limit ourselves in creating and adopting symbolism only to material forms, because the symbols around which the identity of a place is built are people, people whose names are inseparably associated with this and not another point on earth. Persons are of great importance for the vitality of social symbolism, for which "social actions are decisive, and not some abstract principle, often called the logic of the system or the logic of history" (Hałas, 2007).

It is in social action, the meaning of which relates to the behavior of other people and is directed at it," which is related to the action of the person (Weber, 1978). It is she who gives meaning to action by relating to the actions of other people. In Chorzów, where research was carried out, people symbols include, Kurt Alder, Mirosław Breguła, Rev. Józef Czempiel, Saint Florian, Teodor Kalide, Count von Redena, Ryszard Riedel, Franz Waxman.

3. Border Towns

The term borderland, by Jerzy Nikitorowicz, most often it is related to the area between centers, between what is on the borders and may belong to both centers, overlapping each other. Leaving the center, which is usually rigid and closed, we enter the area of differentiation, otherness, and dissimilarity, where we can compare, discover, show surprise, negotiate, etc. However, the dominant group should create conditions that facilitate leaving the center, and to look at ourselves and our own ideas on the other hand, taking into account the reasons of others, there must be favorable situations (Nikitorowicz, 2001).

The city of Chorzów in Poland in the Silesia region has 750 years of tradition. For 633 years it was under Czech, Moravian, Austro-Hungarian, Prussian, and German influences. It was a place, a border town where, as R.R. Alvarez., G.A. Collier write, various cultures interacted (Alvarez and Collier, 1994) "(...) a city where the Polish, German and Jewish population lived in different proportions" (Ladder, 1999). Jews prayed in the synagogue, Evangelicals, Christians went to their own churches. What is the knowledge of the young generation of figures that can undeniably be called the symbols of the city of Chorzów, such as, Kurt Alder, chemist scientist - Nobel Prize winner, Józef Czempiel, a blessed priest, national and social activist, St. Florian - an officer of the Roman legions, Erdman Teodor Kalide - a genius sculptor, Juliusz Ligoń - social and national activist, artist and folk artist, Karol Miarka national activist, Franz Waxman - genius composer, conductor and film music author, two-time Oscar winner, born in 1906, or count Friedrich Wilhelm Ręden the founder of Konigshutte - today's Chorzów?

These are the frontier people. Each of these people connected a part of their life with Królewska Huta, and later with Chorzów. Some of them were born here, spent their youth, and then left, others came, settled down for longer or permanently, others became the will of the people (e.g., St. Florian) patrons of the city. Each of them is a specific symbol of persistence in pursuit of a goal, diplomacy, artistic genius, and all these characters are a symbol of the possibility of coexistence in a multicultural society, where everyone has a place for self-realization, and its activity only enriches the entire society.

These considerations fit in with the theories of the weak socially and strongly geopolitical boundaries (Campbell, 2008). Following the thought of Jerzy Nikitorowicz: "only the borderland gives us a chance to understand others, their views, reasons, behavior, acceptance, respect for others and differences. Only the borderland prevents rejection of others or imposing one's own views and patterns on others. It teaches coexistence, cooperation, kindness, openness, thus creating less consent to intolerance and indifference. Borderland allows for the development of new strategies, for making transformations in thinking patterns (Nikitorowicz, 2001). Therefore, according to the authors, Chorzów is a characteristic city and the most suitable city for conducting this type of research.

4. Methods

In the conducted research, it was assumed that the research problem was examined, described and explained (Babbie, 2001): What is the share of multicultural symbols occurring in the public space of the former border town in the behavior and actions of people? The research was carried out in a former multicultural city, a border town. The survey was conducted using the CAWI technique by completing the questionnaire in an electronic form. 609 students of secondary schools in the city of Chorzów participated in the study. 53% of the respondents were female, 47 were male. All respondents came from cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. All respondents came from the territory of Poland from the Silesia Region. The research was conducted in April - May 2017. The selection of the sample was purposeful due to the purpose of the research.

5. Empirical Results

It was important for the research process to learn about the characters (symbols) with which the city of Chorzów is associated today. The respondents were asked to indicate a symbol connected with Chorzew, with its public space from the period of multiculturalism at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and the present day, e.g., Count von Reden, Franz Waxman, and contemporary Ryszard Riedel, Mirosław Breguła. The respondents associate symbols and figures in the city's public space with Chorzów. In the first place, they pointed out that they associate Chorzów with the figure of Count von Reden (37.7%).

It is worth mentioning that the Reden monument is located in the city center (about 200 meters from the Town Hall). Nearby there is a recreation park with Góra Wyzwolenia, former Redena Park and Góra Redena, where the monument was originally established. The figure of Ryszard Riedel (32.1%) and St. Florian (30.2%). The prestigious American magazine Rolling Stone named Ryszard Riedel (1956-1993), who was born and died in Chorzów as the last hippie of our times. Saint Florian is a historical figure. He has never been to Chorzów, he has not stayed in Poland. He is associated with the region of Upper Silesia and Cieszyn Silesia as a symbol of firefighters and steelworkers. With Chorzów through metallurgical traditions (there were two steel mills in the city). Chorzów, by the decision of the city council in 1993, welcomed St. Florian for his Patron (Resolution of the City Council in Chorzów No. LV / 402/93 of 07/15/1993).

In the public space of the city, he is physically present. In Chorzów, he is the Sanctuary of St. Florian. In 2015, his figure was placed on one of the street roundabouts. Therefore. Almost one-fifth of responses was given to Karol Miarka (18.9%), a Polish social activist in Upper Silesia, teacher, writer, publicist, and printer (Hanke, 1988). He contributed to the establishment of many Polish social and economic organizations in Upper Silesia, including Chorzów. In third place, the respondents indicated with the same value the figure of Juliusz Ligoń, a social

activist, folk poet, journalist (Hanke, 1988, p. 288-289) (26.4%) and priest Józef Czempiel (26.4). The fourth figure of Mirosław Breguła (22.6%), co-founder and leader of the Universe music band, 43 years old tragically deceased artist in 2007.

On a similar level, the figure of Franz Waxman (15.1%), Teodor Kalide (13.2%), Kurt Alder (Walancik, 2001), (11.3%) was indicated, Petronela was indicated in the last place Golasiowa (3.8%). It is worth noting that the respondents indicated that they see symbols, figures of people from the past and contemporary people in the city's public space. These are symbols personifying social, national, and religious diversity, multiculturalism, characters that fit into the shaping of the identity of the Upper Silesia Region and the public space of the city of Chorzów.

Bronisław Malinowski wrote "We still lack a clear definition of the symbolic process" (Malinowski, 2000b). On the one hand, the symbol refers to what is imaginary, thus diverging from reality, on the other hand, it is connected with the cognitive code provided by culture. The research asked participants whether they perceive the symbols of multiculturalism in the social space of Chorzów? Decisive respondents indicated (68.5%) that in the city's public space they see symbols of multiculturalism - monuments. It was assumed that the form of the monument are also commemorative plaques and sculptures.

Monuments that are symbols of multiculturalism in Chorzów are the monument of Count Friedrich Wilhelm von Reden, Gutenberg, the figure of St. Florian, St. John of Nepomuk, a monument commemorating the Jewish community. Commemorative plaques were indicated in second place (66.7%). There are a dozen or so commemorative plaques in Chorzów. Those related to multiculturalism are dedicated to Franz Waxman, Rysiek Ridl, Kalide, Kurt Alder and others.

According to the respondents, symbols of multiculturalism in the city's public space shape our attitudes and intercultural competences (Stier, 2006). We get involved, participate, and engage in the cultural life of the community (74.1%). The data of the Public Opinion Research Center show that the involvement of Poles in the activities of local communities is systematically increasing. People aged 35-44 years are relatively more involved, and in city dwellers of less than 100,000,000. inhabitants, religiously practicing, with leftist political views (Boguszewski, 2018). Women strongly indicated sensitivity and empathy, joining, participation, and involvement in cultural life. Men indicated in the first place building a conscious society free from stereotypes and prejudices, in the second-place intercultural dialogue, then openness, tolerance of otherness.

The presence of multicultural symbols in the public space of local communities is part of shaping cultural attitudes and intercultural communication (Bennett, 1993). The places where symbols are titled, and the circumstances related to their institutionalization make them a meeting place with Others (55.6%). Multicultural symbols in the city's public space mean building conscious attitudes, free from

stereotypes and prejudices (38.9%). They make us open to others and tolerant (25.9%), at the same time they are a form of intercultural dialogue, as indicated by one devil of the respondents, which makes us get to know a different culture. For us, dialogue is an important source of knowledge about the culture of others, about their values, but also about ourselves, about our culture, about understanding others.

Dialogue can reevaluate certain areas of your own culture that have so far been impossible to reevaluate. Such activities, in the opinion of the respondents, sensitize us, make us more empathetic, notice more problems of others and this may have an impact on regional development (Amin and Thrift, 1994).

The respondents were also asked, "To what extent can the knowledge of the city's history and the presence of multicultural symbols in the public space contribute to overcoming intolerance and acceptance of otherness?" The sum of indications in the opinion of the surveyed categories "to a moderate extent", "to a large extent", "to a very large extent", the impact of knowledge of the city's history and the presence of multicultural symbols in the public space of the community, on overcoming intolerance, on accepting otherness, is high and amounts to (65%).

On the other hand, the sum of responses in the categories "slightly" and "not at all" was 35%. In the opinion of the authors of the research, on the basis of the above results, it can be concluded that various actions should be taken, and various forms should be used to counteract intolerance and accept otherness. Such activities make sense precisely in the system of activities that are diverse in terms of forms and groups.

The respondents strongly indicated that they agree with the thesis that the presence of multicultural symbols in the public space allows for the preservation of the memory of the past, allowing to avoid mistakes in social activity in the future (61.1%). In the opinion of the respondents, their presence contributes to increasing the knowledge about the surrounding reality, and contributes to the reduction of intolerance (59.3%).

More than half of the respondents 53.7% indicated that they contribute to the improvement of skills in intercultural communication. 38.9% indicated that multicultural symbols in public space constitute a debate on social attitudes. Almost one-third of the respondents claim that it can lead to closing themselves off from the others.

The analysis of indications shows that one-fifth of the respondents indicated that their presence may have an impact on the prejudices of residents towards Others. It is also surprising that 14.8% indicated that the presence of multicultural symbols in the public space means building intolerance and closing oneself to others.

6. Discussion

Where there are different cultures, different people, different experiences and different history of nations, different symbols and meaning's function. It happens that they are mutually exclusive, they oppose each other, but it is also the case that they live in symbiosis, and often they permeate from one culture to another, as it can happen among the borderland communities. Borderland is the neighborhood of cultures, but it is nothing only a social space, but also a social, historically changing situation (Kłoskowska, 1995).

The borderland triggers a tolerance associated with freedom and responsibility and creates dialogues. However, only then can we understand otherness and experience it when we know and value our own culture, thanks to which we can compare and relate it to others not in terms of better - worse, but in terms of other, incomprehensible, interesting, puzzling, inspiring "(Nikitorowicz, 2001). This is important in Lifelong education (Dacko-Pikiewicz and Walancik, 2016) and in running a business as well (Stverkova *et al.*, 2018).

It should also be emphasized that the borderland creates the possibility of choosing, shaping attitudes, values, ideas based on the values of both or many cultures, where you can draw patterns from the traditions of people living nearby, adopt their patterns, modify your own or consolidate them. Borderland inhabitants can be "such and such, despite their different characteristics, assigning them to a specific denomination or ethnicity" (Nikitorowicz, 2001).

In the borderland towns, multiculturalism was natural. Multiculturalism is a complex concept. It is democratically institutionalized coexistence within the state of individuals, communities and other forms of community characterized by a socially articulated cultural identity. Currently, in the former city of the herdsman, the presence of multicultural symbols is not surprising. Each culture and its participants have their own world of symbols, functioning in everyday life, unchanging, but it may also be that in the clash with others with whom we share the territory, who are naturally and every day also with us with their world of symbols, we take their world as ours, giving them the opportunity to use ours.

And we still do not know "whether it will be a world of anomie, a world of relativity that breaks down everything that is common and permanently, or whether from this "cultural chaos", as our time is often called, a new shape will emerge that can be defined in terms of meaning" (Przeclawska, 1995). In the past, cultural symbols, symbols in general, were a bond that connected a given community, determined the belonging of an individual to a given culture, they were an unquestionable value. If they are symbols of characters, they are in a sense a cultural universe.

It is multiculturalism, the ability to function side by side and together with one another, in the past, leaving its dimension of tolerance, respecting otherness, that

gives a chance and inspires self-enrichment, both cognitively, emotionally, and morally today, as confirmed by the results of the study. In addition, the currently conducted territorial cooperation allows for joint relations between regions that cooperate not only as cross-border. It is precisely such factors as common culture, language, symbols, including symbols, characters that determine this cooperation (Proniewski and Jankowska-Ambroziak, 2019).

Through territorial cooperation, symbols, characters, multiculturalism, we become recognizable and attractive for tourists (Kułyk and Brelik, 2019), and above all, tolerant and open to others. Such activities lead to the recognition and respect of cultural differences (Fritz *et al.*, 2005).

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