

„Multicultural urban space of Subotica – geographical-semiotic analysis”

The author has made an attempt to introduce semiotic analysis to the urban geography, which was verified on the example of a multicultural city – Subotica. The work is based on a hypothesis that it is possible to adapt the semiotic approach and methods to the urban geography, bringing a new dimension to the urban semiotics – spatial analysis of the distribution and relationships of signs in the city, which, in turn, allows to study the society through space. In order to verify this assumption an attempt to carry out the semiotic-geographical research was made, which implied the need for a new algorithm for the research process. In the light of such assumptions the research subject is the space of the city considered as a system of signs, and research object are the signs in this space, their readability, layout and relationships.

In the theoretical part of the work, through the study of literature, an answer to the research questions were given. It was determined, among others: how to understand the sign for the purpose of geographical analysis and what content signs may have in urban space; the relationship between urban space and semiosphere or that the signs in urban space can be analysed spatially. Based on the theory of prototypes of E. Rosch, the author determined the possibility of linking signs with selected cultural group.

Theoretical concepts have been verified in the case study, for which separate assumptions were adopted. **The aim of empirical research** was to investigate the cultural groups and their space in Subotica by analysing signs in the city. Prior to fieldwork it was assumed that the spatial segregation is barely noticeable in the city where several nations are present and active. The **hypothesis** was then that communities in Subotica mark urban space, recording their fate and relationships, share the space with tolerance and respect, which is evident in the harmonious coexistence of signs expressing cultural identity. The **object** of analysis in the case study is a space of a multicultural city – Subotica, understood as a system of signs, and the **subject** – the signs in Subotica, their relationships, readability and distribution, which were considered in synchronic and diachronic approach. The spatial scope of the analysis includes the urbanized area of Subotica, the area of 6.426 hectares, which was inhabited, according to the census carried out in 2001, by 99.981 people. The author conducted field research in September 2011, complementing it in the summer of 2012 and 2014. Limiting the studies to summer and early autumn did not affect the reliability of the collected material. The main research tools were a detailed photographic documentation of the facilities located at Subotica and the inventory card.

Certain objects in the urban space of Subotica, like temples, cemeteries, monuments and streets names, were considered as signs that can be associated with the selected communities living in the city (Hungarians, Serbs, Bunjevci, Croats, Yugoslavs). This assignment was made after studying the history of the city, its spatial, demographic and social development. As a result, it has been shown that the multiculturalism of the city is evident in its urban space, but not all of the nations, which coexist in Subotica, mark its space. It is connected to the political situation and activity of the community, rather than its percentage share in the ethnic structure of the city. The signs reflect the spatial and social development of the city. The communities emphasize their presence in the city through the signs located in places, which are directly related to the commemorated person or an event, or their mark a representative public spaces, where the signs of many communities coexist. On this basis it can be concluded that communities living in the city record in the urban space their relationships. The coexistence of the signs, which are an expression of cultural identity, confirms the equitable sharing of urban space.

Author's original research methodology, which was exemplified in the empirical part regarding the city of Subotica, allowed for positive verification of the main hypothesis and proved that the semiotic approach can be successfully applied in qualitative analysis of geography. Moreover, the layout of signs in the city can be considered in spatial analysis.