

The creation of city brands with regard to Christian symbols in coats of arms

Alicja K. Zawadzka

University of Gdańsk, Department of Landscape Studies and Environmental Management, Gdańsk, Poland,
e-mail: alicja.zawadzka@ug.edu.pl, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1657-0767>

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Abstract. The article is about the relationship between the Christian tradition contained in symbols of coats of arms and mottos and the current methods of promoting cities in the form of modern logos and slogans (tagline, claim) to create a system of visual identification of cities. Coats of arms of all 1020 Polish cities were analysed, and Christian symbols were identified in 330. Three typologies were created: (1) types of Christian symbols in coats of arms of Polish cities; (2) types of city logos according to their structure – elements making up the logo; (3) types of city logos according to references to symbols in coats of arms. The study provides comprehensive information and analyses with regard to Christian symbols existing in three strategic places for the creation of city brands: (1) in coats of arms of Polish cities, (2) in city logos and (3) in public space.

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, the Roman Catholic faith has emerged as the dominant and universal faith in Poland (Sadlon, 2021). Currently, there is a crisis of religiosity and progressive secularisation of European countries (e.g., Martin, 2005; Pięniężny, 2024; Stachowiak, 2024). The trend towards secularisation also applies to Poland, where the percentage of Catholics attending Mass has been gradually declining since 1980, when the survey began (Organek et al., 2023). The level of participation in Mass varies territorially (Śleszyński et al., 2023). The rationale for undertaking the study is that Poland, against the background of ten European countries, has the second largest number of adherents of Christianity, with Romania in first place and Greece in third (www.pewresearch.org).

This research paper deals with the relationship between the Christian tradition contained in the symbols displayed on coats of arms and in mottos and the current methods of promoting cities in the form of modern logos and slogans (tagline, claim) used to create a system for visually representing the identities of cities. The primary aim of this research is to identify the ways in which the brands of Polish cities are created – specifically, to examine whether and how Christian symbols are used for modern forms of visual identification of a city's brand, or whether other design solutions based on other circumstances are chosen, and what trends can be observed.

City branding is a concept that has been studied from various perspectives (e.g., Lucarelli & Berg, 2011; Kasapi & Cela, 2017) based on numerous articles by authors from different fields of study. The purpose of city branding is to create a coherent system

of visual identity, which is formed by all graphic elements, such as the coat of arms, logos, emblems, regional colours and costumes, among others (Rudolf & Wrześniewska-Szymańska, 2018). The **municipal coat of arms**, which is a medium of social communication (Gut, 2020), was previously a means of representing an owner (Piech, 2018), i.e. a collective owner – in the form of a city municipality – and its symbolism referenced the city seal. The logo is the local government's own mark, and, unlike the coat of arms, its adoption is not governed by a restrictive procedure; 41% of Polish cities have them (Rudolf & Wrześniewska-Szymańska, 2018). The literature on **Christian symbols** is very extensive and includes more than 500 symbols (e.g., Lurker, 1989; Forstner, 1990; Baldock, 1993; Rożek, 2010; Chapeaurouge, 2014). The symbols serve to build, strengthen and recognise Christian identity and to remind us that Christianity is not just a theory but relates to everyday life (Bachanek, 2011).

Polish researchers have approached the subject of Christian symbols in Polish coats of arms only rarely and in regard to very few towns, e.g. selected Carpathian towns (Przybylska, 2010); towns along the Way of Saint James (Mróz, 2017) and Cittaslow towns (Zawadzka, 2019). In addition, research has been conducted on city coats of arms featuring selected saints: Saint Martin in the coats of arms of one urban municipality, one urban-rural municipality and five rural municipalities (Piechocka-Kłós, 2022) and Saint John the Baptist in early modern coats of arms in Lesser Poland (Karpacz, 2016). However, according to Gołdyn (2008), there was only one comprehensive study on religious and church symbols in literature concerning Christian symbols in coats of arms of Polish cities until the end of the 20th century. Meanwhile, between

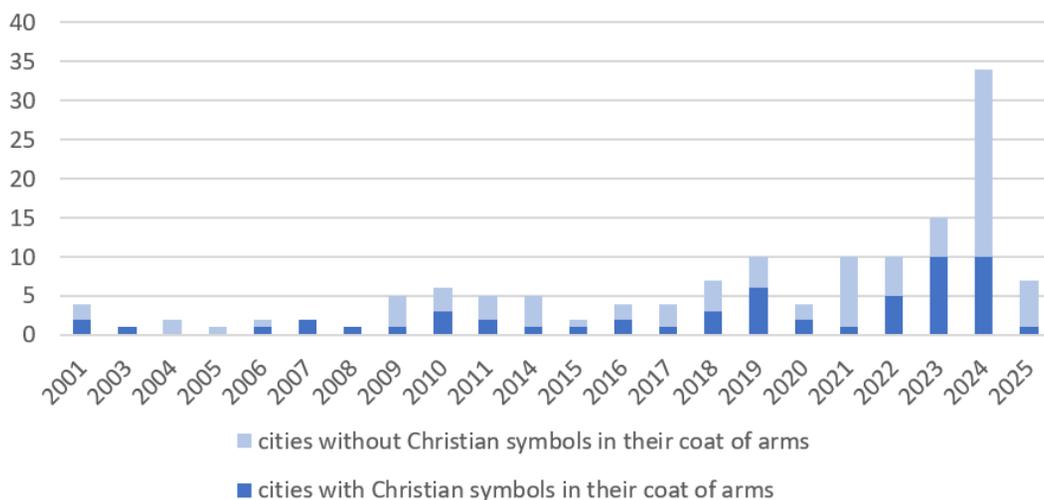


Fig. 1. Number of cities receiving city rights annually, 2001–2025

Source: own elaboration

2000 and 2025, as many as 146 Polish localities received city rights, with 58 of them having Christian symbols in their coats of arms (Fig. 1). Moreover, there is no academic study concerning the use of Christian symbols in the coats of arms of Polish cities for the promotion of cities through the placement of these symbols in modern logos. Therefore, this study provides comprehensive information and analyses with regard to Christian symbols existing in three strategic places for the creation of city brands: (1) in coats of arms of Polish cities, (2) in city logos and (3) in public space. The completed research not only has value as basic research but also has inspirational value.

In this research, the following methodology has been used: (1) identification of Polish city coats of arms containing Christian symbols; (2) recognition of sources of Christian symbols in coats of arms; (3) creation of typology 1 – types of Christian symbols in coats of arms of Polish cities; (4) creation of typology 2 – types of city logos according to structure – elements making up the logo; (5) creation of typology 3 – types of city logos according to references to symbols in coats of arms; (6) identification of the cities in public space whose logos contain references to Christian symbols in coats of arms, and of objects of modern art (murals, sculptures) inspired by symbols in coats of arms and logos.

The following research hypotheses were established: (H1) Some symbols in coats of arms of many Polish cities are Christian, and their scope is wide and varied; (H2) Modern logos are based on connotations with names and aspects of municipal space and location and refer to symbols contained in coats of arms; (H3) In the public space of cities whose logos reference the symbolism of their coat of arms, there are objects of urban art (large-format formally commissioned murals, sculptures or installations) permanently established in urban spaces.

The significance of the subject of research undertaken focuses on an important municipal issue – city branding that aims to strengthen inhabitants' local identity and to compete with other cities for regional recognisability and, consequently, new inhabitants, tourists and investors and, thereby, to stimulate economic growth.

2. Research materials

The data on symbols in coats of arms are derived from official websites of the cities under study, armorials (Gumowski, 1960; Plewako & Wanag, 1994; Możejko & Śliwiński, 2000; 2004) and Wikipedia. The data on logos are taken from official websites of the cities.

The coats of arms used in the figures are taken, unless otherwise stated, from the cities' official websites and from Wikipedia. Logos are similarly taken from the cities' official websites.

3. Christian symbols in city coats of arms

3.1. The presence of Christian symbols in city coats of arms

In 2025, there were three main local government units in Poland: urban gminas/communes (302), urban–rural gminas/communes (718) and rural gminas/communes (1,457). In order to determine which city coats of arms contain Christian symbols, an identification of symbols in coats of arms of all 1020 Polish cities was carried out. In 32.35% of cities, coats of arms contain Christian symbols – most of these cities are located in the Warmian-Masurian Province and the fewest of them in the West Pomerania Province (Table 1).

It is worth mentioning that the figure of Jesus Christ *par excellence* is present only in one coat of arms – that of the rural gmina of Święciechowa (Fig. 2).

During the analysis of the coats of arms of Polish cities, one exception was identified. The coat of arms of Władysławowo is the only one to have no Christian symbols in the coat of arms but a motto that refers to God. The motto is visible under the escutcheon in Kashubian: *Më trzimómë z Bògã* (English: In God We Trust).

3.2. Coats of arms with Christian symbols

The Christian imagery of city coats of arms is varied and encompasses a wide scope of symbols (Table 2). These include:



Fig. 2. Coat of arms of Święciechowa
Source: own elaboration

Table 1. Cities with coats of arms containing Christian symbols

Name of the voivodeship	Total number of gminas	Number of gminas with Christian symbols		Communes with Christian symbols (%)
		Urban gminas	Urban-rural gminas	
Dolnośląskie	93	10	21	33.33
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	56	8	14	39.29
Lubelskie	57	8	11	33.33
Lubuskie	44	0	10	22.73
Łódzkie	60	5	8	21.67
Małopolskie	64	4	27	48.44
Mazowieckie	111	12	24	32.43
Opolskie	37	1	7	21.62
Podkarpackie	54	5	18	42.59
Podlaskie	40	6	8	35.00
Pomorskie	43	7	7	32.56
Śląskie	74	14	6	27.03
Świętokrzyskie	51	0	19	37.25
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	50	9	16	50.00
Wielkopolskie	120	5	29	28.33
Zachodnio-Pomorskie	66	1	10	16.67
Total	1020	95	235	-
		330		

Source: own elaboration

**Fig. 3.** Coat of arms of Władysławowo

Source: own elaboration

- a. various kinds of **crosses**, e.g.: Germanic cross, Greek cross, Joannites' cross, Jerusalem cross, Knight's Cross, anchored cross, Cross of Lorraine (French: *Croix de Lorraine* or *Croix d'Anjou*), Latin cross, two-armed cross with the broken-off right part of the lower arm, three-armed cross with the broken-off left part of the lowest arm, Maltese cross, Premonstratensians' cross, isosceles cross, Saint Andrew's cross;
- b. **symbols of Jesus Christ**: Lamb of God and Paschal Lamb (Fig. 4), the pelican, which, like Christ, nourishes with its blood (Fig. 5) according to the words of the hymn *Adoro te devote* by Thomas Aquinas, as well as Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (pl.aleteia.org);
- c. **Eye of Divine Providence** (Fig. 6);
- d. **Blessed Virgin Mary**, most often with the Child Jesus in her arms (Fig. 7);
- e. **Biblical scenes** (Fig. 8) (Adam and Eve under the tree in the Garden of Eden with the serpent, the annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the angel Gabriel, the visitation of Saint Elizabeth by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Peter's denial);
- f. **Angels** (Fig. 9) (usually Saint Michael the Archangel);
- g. **Evangelical saints and their associated symbols**: Saint Andrew the Apostle and his diagonal cross, Saint James the Elder with a pilgrim's staff and a shell (being one of the symbols of pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela), Saint John

- the Baptist and his severed head on a bowl (Fig. 10), Saint John the Evangelist, including as an eagle with signatures: ST+JOHANNES (Saint John) or S+IOEVAN (Saint John the Evangelist) (Fig. 11), Saint Joseph with a white lily, Saint Paul with a sword (Fig. 12), Saint Peter with a key, or keys (Fig. 12), Saint Thomas with a spear, a shield with the Jelita coat of arms, and a book;
- g-l. **symbols of Saints Paul and Peter:** sword and key, or keys (Fig. 13);
- h. **saints and blessed people than Evangelical saints:** the historical saints and blessed of the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church and their symbols: Saint Andrew Bobola (1591–1657); Saint Anne (the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary); Saint Barbara (turn of the 4th century) with a sword and a chalice with a host; Saint Florian (250–305); Saint George (turn of the 4th century) defeating a dragon lying at his feet with a spear; Saint Catherine of Alexandria (turn of the 4th century) with the wheel on which she supposedly died, a sword and a lily; Saint Kinga (1234–1292) with a lily, a model of a church, a ducal mitre; Saint Christopher (turn of the 3rd century) carrying the Child Jesus on his arms across the ford of the river; Saint Margaret (turn of the 4th century) with a dove and a cross; Saint Martin (316 or 336–397) on a horse giving his coat to a beggar lying at his feet; Saint Maternus Bishop of Cologne (ca. 285–315), with a mitre, a crosier and a book; Saint Nicholas the Bishop (ca. 270–345 or 352), with a mitre and a crosier; Saint Roch (14th century) with a pilgrim's staff and a dog; Saint Romuald (ca. 951–1027); Saint Rosalia (ca. 1130–1165 or 1170) with a rose; Saint Stanislaus of Szczepanów, Bishop of Kraków (1035 or 1040–1079), with a mitre and a crosier; Saint Laurence (225–258) with the gridiron on which he was burnt; Saint Adalbert (ca. 956–997) with a rose, a mitre, a crosier, a cross and a paddle; Blessed Salomea (1211 or 1212–1268); Blessed Ladislas of Gielniów (ca. 1440–1505);
- h-l. **symbols of other saints** such as: the gridiron on which Saint Laurence was burnt, the wheel on which Saint Catherine of Alexandria supposedly died, shells of Saint James the Elder;
- i. **other figures:** Bishop Christian of Oliva with a crosier and a model of a church, unidentified figures with a halo, a kneeling figure symbolising Duke Casimir the Restorer, a pilgrim with a pilgrim's staff and a shell, a monk;
- j. **representations of sacred buildings** (Fig. 14);
- k. **bishops' mitres and crosiers** (Fig. 15);
- l. **other symbols**, such as: a chalice with a host; a monogram of the name Maria (Mary); a rose referring to the Poraj coat of arms that, according to legend, was used as a stamp by Bohemia's Slavník family, from which Saint Adalbert came; a wheel symbolising the Teutonic Order; flowers; monstrance; deer.

The most numerous group of Christian symbols is that of crosses (Fig. 16). Their visual identification in city coats of arms, logos and public space goes largely beyond the scope of this study and is a subject matter of a separate, upcoming study by the author. Two groups rank second in terms of size: the first contains Evangelical saints, whereas the second contains saints and blessed people other than Evangelical saints. Evangelical saints are most abundant in the coats of arms of cities in two voivodeships: Dolnośląskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie. Most of the saints and blessed people other than Evangelical saints come from the turn of the 4th century, whereas only about one saint per century from the 10th to the 17th centuries is found; most of these "other" saints are found in the coats of arms of cities located in the voivodeships of south-western Poland. The next largest three groups are similar to one another in size; they aggregate the symbols of saints. (These are Saint Paul's sword and Saint Peter's key/keys), representations of sacred buildings, and bishops' mitres and crosiers). The next largest four groups, also similar to one another size, contain symbols of Jesus Christ: the Lamb of God or Paschal Lamb and the pelican, angels and figures of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The least numerous groups are those that contain: other symbols, other figures, the Eye of Divine Providence, Biblical scenes, and symbols of other saints.

4. Christian symbols in logo of cities

A classic logo consists of two core elements: (1) the emblem or a graphic sign and (2) the logotype – the textual content (in the case of cities – the name of the city), which is also expressed in the address of the city's official website (Fig. 17). An important element accompanying the logo is the tagline, also called "the claim"; this is a phrase of a few words that specifies the character of the city (a factual or allegorical one) and shows its vision of development.

Among the 330 cities covered by the research, 160 cities have a logo on their official websites. The largest group is of logos (91) that have all three elements: an emblem, a name and a tagline [ENT]; The next largest group (44) comprises logos without a tagline

Table 2. Cities with coats of arms contain saints and blessed people in the voivodeships

	Dolnośląskie	Kujawsko-Pomorskie	Lubelskie	Lubuskie	Lódzkie	Małopolskie	Mazowieckie	Opolskie	Podkarpackie	Podlaskie	Pomorskie	Śląskie	Świętokrzyskie	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	Wielkopolskie	Zachodnio-Pomorskie	
Bl. Virgin Mary	3		2					1		1	1		2	3	1		14
St Andrew the Apostle					1												1
St James the Elder	1	1											1	2			5
St John the Baptist	2	2			1	2	2		1		1	1	1	1	1		15
St John the Evangelist	2							1						2		1	6
St Joseph			1														1
St Paul															1		1
St Peter	2						1							1			4
St Peter and Paul	1	1				1									1		4
St Thomas			2														2
St Andrew Bobola												1					1
St Anne			1														1
St Barbara												2					2
St Florian									1	1							2
St George	3		1									1					5
St Catherine of Alexandria	1					1			1		1			1			5
St Kinga						1											1
St Christopher													1				1
St Margaret		1				1											2
St Martin	1												1				2
St Maternus	1																1
St Nicholas									1								1
St Roch and St. Romuald	1																1
St Rosalia														1			1
St Stanislaus		2			1												3
St Laurence		1															1
St Adalbert							2					1			1		4
Bl. Salomea						1											1
Bl. Ladislas of Gielniów							1										1
Total	18	8	7	0	3	7	6	2	4	2	3	6	6	11	5	1	89

Source: own elaboration



Fig. 4. City coats of arms featuring a symbol of Jesus Christ – the Lamb of God and Paschal Lamb
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 5. City coats of arms featuring a symbol of Jesus Christ – a pelican feeding its young with its own blood
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 6. City coats of arms featuring the Eye of Divine Providence
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 7. City coats of arms featuring the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 8. City coats of arms featuring biblical scenes
Source: own elaboration

[EN-]; and the next (22) comprises city logos with no emblem [-NT]; while two city logos have only an emblem [E--] and one city logo contains only a tag-line [--T] (Fig. 18).

Worthy of particular attention are 15 city logos (emblems) that are rendered wholly or in part as simplified line drawings of the city's coat of arms or part thereof (Fig. 19). However, the line art logo of the city of Prudnik does not contain a cross – it is visible above in the heraldic helmet.

It is also worth mentioning the logos that contain English words in their names (San**OK**, Bisk**UP**iec); a word similar to the English “hell” (go.**hel**.pl); those

that refer to the word “now” without diacritical marks (Chocia**NOW**) and to the meaning of the word “law” or (to the Polish ear) to the sound of the word “love” (wro**claw**) (Fig. 20).

An analysis of 160 city logos was made in order to identify the logos that reference their city coats of arms. As a result of the analysis, it was found that 18 city logos reference only the **colours** of their coat of arms; 38 city logos reference **symbols** in their coat of arms, and 104 city logos **do not reference** symbols in their coat of arms (Fig. 21).

In the group of city logos that reference *the colours of coat of arms* (Fig. 22), it is worth mentioning



Fig. 9. City coats of arms featuring angels
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 10. City coats of arms featuring the figure of Saint John the Baptist
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 11. City coats of arms featuring the figure of Saint John the Evangelist
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 12. City coats of arms featuring the figures of Saint Paul or Saint Peter
Source: own elaboration

those that contain references to unique objects that are located in the commune/city and that, in the region, are considered distinguishing marks of the commune or city. For example, the logo and tagline “*Babimost* Commune – a groovy take-off point” refers straightforwardly to the Zielona Góra – Babimost airport located around 4 km from the Babimost city centre. The tagline “*Karlino* – a commune with energy” refers to the numerous wind power plants built in the commune. Elements of other logos are not so directly suggestive: the tagline in the logo of the *Dobrzyca* commune contains a pun on the name of the commune (*dobrze* means “good”), and the tagline “*Strzelin* aims high” references name of the city and the logo’s upwards-pointing arrow (*strzelać* means “shoot”).

Items that are significant from the perspective of the research focusing on Christian symbols can be found in the logos of three cities – these are the representa-

tions of local churches. (1) The emblem of the logo of *Proszowice* contains a representation of the local Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist (with the head of St John the Baptist placed in the city’s coat of arms); (2) the emblem of the logo of *Trzemeszno* contains the silhouette of the Church of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; (3) the emblem of the logo of *Złocieńc* contains a representation of the Church of St Jadwiga Queen. Although the logo of *Głogów* contains a yellow figure that may be a sacred building (located in the left bottom corner of the logo), no similar-looking church has been identified in the city.

The second group of logos are those that reference symbols in the coat of arms (Fig. 23), but it includes three city logos (Kępno, Ostrów Wielkopolski and Prudnik) where Christian symbols are absent. In five city logos, apart from a reference to Christian symbols



Fig. 13. City coats of arms featuring Saint Peter's or Saint Paul's attributes – keys/key and a sword
Source: own elaboration

in the coat of arms, there are elements with a hidden meaning that reference local objects and traditions. The logo of **Ciechanów** shows a representation of the Castle of the Masovian Dukes, which is not only the most magnificent historic object of Ciechanów but also one of the most interesting buildings of lowland defensive construction in Poland. And the key (the symbol of Saint Peter) also forms the first letter of the tagline “Open up to Ciechanów”. The tagline of the logo “**Chorzów** in motion” [original: ‘**Chorzów** wprawia w ruch’] contains a reference to the name of the Ruch Chorzów sports club established in 1920. The anniversary logo of the city of **Gniezno** is connected with the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the coronation of the first two kings of Poland – Bolesław Chrobry

and Mieszko II in 2025. The year 1237 that features in the logo of the city of **Krzywiń** refers to the first mention of the city as Civitas. The tagline of the logo of **Pelplin** is a pun referring to the Theological Seminary located in the city. The tagline of the logo of **Wadowice**, “everything began here”, expresses the essence of Pope John Paul II's words about his home city spoken during his pilgrimage to his homeland in 1999.

The third and largest group (106) consists of city logos that do not refer to Christian symbols in their coat of arms. Among them, six logos refer to the name of the city (Fig. 24), 43 are **universal logos**, and 55 are **local logos** referring to the location of the city in the given region of Poland or to objects located within its borders.



Fig. 14. Portrayals of sacred buildings
Source: own elaboration

The generally accepted paradigm in branding is the concept of a brand that stands out from other brands in the same category (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2020). In **local city logos**, there are references to historic and modern municipal objects and local traditions. Some of the taglines are puns (e.g., “Będzin is on the top!”, “The turn of Krzyż Wielkopolski” – with the literal Polish second meaning of: “Railway to Krzyż Wielkopolski”). The following logos deserve special attention (Fig. 25): the emblem of the logo of **Kraków** based on an outline of the Market Square of the Old Town in Kraków; the emblem of the logo of **Oleśnica**, whose four pictograms

present: dots symbolising inhabitants of the city; an alder leaf symbolising the derivation of the name of the city from the Olsza River or the name of the alder tree; a brick wall – a symbol of the defensive walls of the city; and a tower – a symbol of the city towers; the letter O of the name **Sobótka** contains an element of the former coat of arms – a bear with Saint Andrew’s cross; in the emblem and the tagline “Hand painted **Włocławek**” contain a reference to the tradition of faience production in Włocławek dating back to 1873, when the first factory was established.



Fig. 15. Bishops' mitres and crosiers
Source: own elaboration

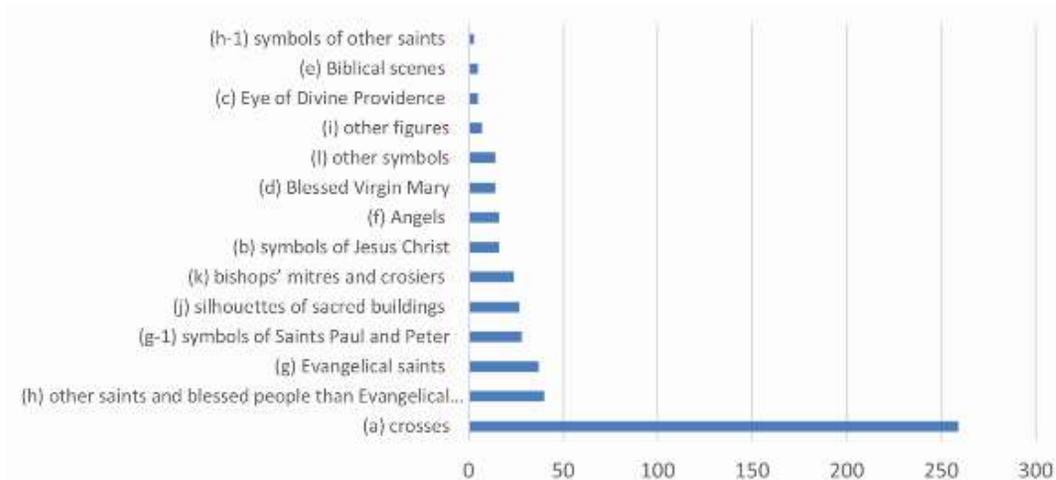


Fig. 16. Types of Christian symbols in coats of arms of Polish cities
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 17. Structure of the logo of cities in the example of Zawidów
Source: own elaboration

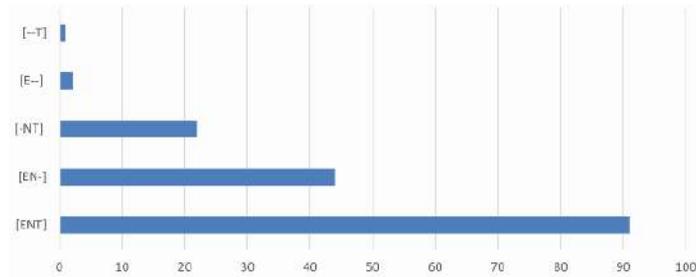


Fig. 18. Types of city logos according to their structure – elements making up the logo: an emblem, name and tagline [ENT]
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 19. City coats of arms and their line art emblems
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 20. Logos of Polish cities containing references to English words in their names
Source: own elaboration

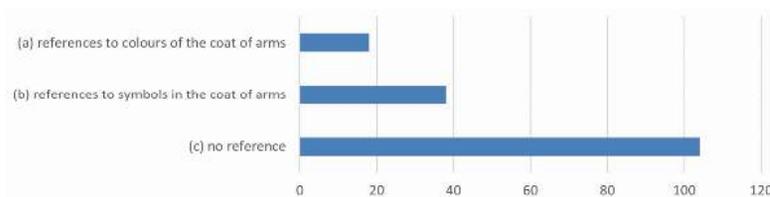


Fig. 21. Types of city logos according to references to symbols in the coat of arms
Source: own elaboration

Nine local city logos that do not refer to Christian symbols in the emblem of the coat of arms contain references to Christian municipal objects (Fig. 26): (1) the emblem of the logo of Biała Podlaska contains the tower of St Anne's Church; (2) the emblem of the logo of Bobolice – the Church of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; (3) the emblem of the logo of Bytów – the Church of St Catherine; (4) the letter U in the name of the logo of Koźuchów – the Church of Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary; (5) the emblem of the logo of Krotoszyn – the Church of Saint Andrew Bobola; (6) the emblem of the logo of Lesko – the Church of Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; (7) the emblem of the logo of Olsztyn – the Former Cathedral of St James; (8) the emblem of the logo of Sępólno Krajeńskie – the Church of St Bartholomew; (9) the emblem of the logo of Trzebnica contains representations of two sacred buildings: the Church of Saint Apostles Peter and Paul (the figure of St Peter is in the coat of arms of the city) and the monastery complex with the Basilica of St Jadwiga and St Bartholomew.

5. Christian symbols in the public space of cities

City branding is the process of creating, maintaining and developing the unique image of a city brand, allowing it to become rooted in the minds of inhabitants, tourists and investors and to be distinguished from other cities. Local governments allocate substantial funds to the promotion of cities, including the creation of unique logos and evocative slogans whose placement is not limited to official websites, social media, documents or gadgets, but goes out into public space. There, they become a permanent part of urban interiors as large-format installations placed on city market squares or street art – large-format legal murals on gable walls of buildings. The final stage of the research is the identification, in public space of 38 cities whose logos contain references to Christian symbols in coats of arms (Fig. 21), of objects of modern art (murals, sculptures) inspired by symbols in coats of arms and logos. According to an Internet resource query, murals containing references to these symbols are located in ten cities: Bełchatów, Ciechanów, Chełm, Chorzów, Gniezno, Poznań, Warsaw, Wąbrzeźno, Węzherowo and Zawidów.



Fig. 22. City logos referring to colours of the coat of arms
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 23. City logos that reference symbols in their coat of arms
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 24. City logos that refer to the name of the city
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 25. City logos containing references to municipal objects, local traditions and the old coat of arms
Source: own elaboration

Among murals located in such cities as Bielsko-Biała, Kwidzyn, Legionowo, Nowe Skalmierzyce, Ostrów Wielkopolski, Prudnik, Rzeszów, Serock, Sianów, Starogard Gdański, Stary Sącz, Susz, Szubin, Września and Wschowa, no references to symbols in coats of arms and logos have been identified. Murals in Duszniki-Zdrój do not have such connotations, either, but the city features a sculpture of a rooster made of multi-colour flower plantings, which refers to the rooster in the city's coat of arms.

Biblical motifs of Eve holding a fruit from the forbidden tree in her hand (this fruit is an apple in social consciousness, although Genesis refers simply to a fruit more broadly) are present in the public space in **Belchatów** (Fig. 27). In the city centre, over the Plac Narutowicza square, since 2018 there has been a sculpture of a balancing Eve made in cold bronze. In 2020, another mural alluding directly to the Biblical scene was placed on a wall of the building at 15 Bawelniana Street, with Eve possessing the modernised qualities of a woman from the future.

In **Ciechanów**, in 2019, the local visual artist Marek Zalewski placed an image of Polish writer Maria Konopnicka at a transformer station in the Maria Konopnicka passage, and characteristic objects

of Ciechanów, including the figure of Saint Peter with keys as a direct reference to the coat of arms as well as the silhouette of the Castle of the Masovian Dukes being a reference to the city's logo on another wall; in addition, a football mural with the coat of arms was made by anonymous authors on the side wall of a shop on Okrzei Street in 2023 (Fig. 28).

In **Chelm**, a mural was placed on the gable wall of the house at 64 Lubelska Street in 2015; one of its elements is a white teddy bear referring to the white bear present in the coat of arms (Fig. 29). Full of peace and nestled safe and sound on the woman's lap, the character of this mural contrasts with other municipal murals commemorating the Battle of Warsaw of 1920.

A mural referring to the emblem of the logo is located in **Chorzów** (Fig. 30). There is, however, no information about the artistic intention concerning its peacock feathers and flowers.

In **Gniezno**, on the wall of the Primary School No. 7, a mural was made by a local inhabitant Michał Trąpczyński at the request of the city office in 2018, referring to the 100th anniversary of the start of the Wielkopolska Uprising. The mural contains an eagle similar to the one present in the city's coat of arms, and an illuminated logo of the city has stood in front of the railway station in Gniezno since 2023 (Fig. 31).



Fig. 26. City logos containing references to Christian municipal objects

Source: own elaboration



Fig. 27. Biblical motifs of Eve holding an apple in the public space of Bełchatów

Source: own elaboration

In **Poznań**, on Hetmańska Street, a street artist nicknamed Kawu created the new slogan of Poznań promoting the new strategy of the Poznań brand and the new logo in May 2024. As has been mentioned above, the logo arouses much controversy among Poznań's inhabitants due to its absence of clear associations with the city's coat of arms. Therefore, this mural (Fig. 32) expresses the idea that the new logo should refer to symbols in the coat of arms – Saints Peter and Paul, the patrons of the city. The mural aroused many positive comments, but it was painted-over ten days after it was completed. The new logo of Poznań did not receive widespread approval, and in August 2024 the old logo returned in the form of the blue lettering POZnań with a star.

Among numerous representations of the Mermaid, whose sculptures and images can be seen in many

parts of Warsaw, it is worth mentioning the mural with an image of the Sleeping Little Mermaid in Ursynów, which was made as one of many murals in that housing estate under the participatory budget in 2018 (Fig. 33).

In 2019, a design and a space were sought in **Wąbrzeźno** to make a mural commemorating the 100th anniversary of the restoration of Poland's independence. This plan, however, never materialised – the only mural adorns the wall on the side of John Paul II Square and was created on the occasion of the 750th anniversary of Wąbrzeźno (Fig. 34).

The logo of Wejherowo, which is known as the “spiritual capital of Kashubia”, displays a reference to the colours of Kashubian embroidery. In a public space at Wałowa Street in Wejherowo, there is a mural made in 2015 with patterns used in Kashubian embroidery, and the image of Wejherowo and its inhabitants from



Fig. 28. Mural with characteristic buildings of Ciechanów and reference to symbols in the coat of arms and the football mural

Source: own elaboration

many years ago is shown three-dimensionally in three balls (Fig. 35).

Since 2017, the promotional slogan of *Zawidów* has been “Zawidów – an angel city”, and elements of the campaign include new welcome signs at the entrance to the city, designing a mural to be placed on one of the former industrial buildings, and sculptures of angels (Fig. 36). In 2021, for the reinforcement of the visualisation of the representation of the angel in the public space, one of the angel’s wings embraces any passerby who decides to sit down and rest beside it. The angel’s friendly gesture is also a symbol of the entire campaign, which refers to goodness, care, warmth and empathy. The *Zawidów* angel is also an important part of a social project initiated by the Municipal Commission for the Solving of Alcohol Problems in *Zawidów* in co-operation with the City Office in *Zawidów*. In addition, a signboard with a list of entities helping people deal with difficult life situations, bringing real help and providing support is mounted beside the bench with the sculpture.

6. Discussion and conclusions

In 2025, Christian symbols are present in almost one third of the coats of arms of Polish cities. There are various sources of Christian symbols in the coats of arms. The scope of Christian symbols contained in coats of arms of 330 cities in the study is rich and references the most important symbols and persons of the Christian world (which confirms hypothesis H1): various kinds of crosses form the largest group to a considerable extent; there are also figures of Evangelical and



Fig. 29. Mural featuring a white teddy bear, referring to the white bear visible in the coat of arms of Chełm

Source: own elaboration

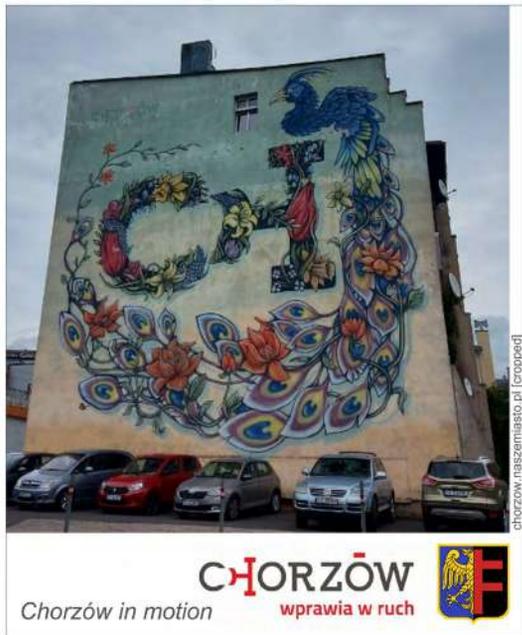


Fig. 30. Mural referencing the emblem of the logo of Chorzów
 Source: own elaboration



Fig. 31. Mural in Gniezno with an eagle similar to the one present in the coat of arms
 Source: own elaboration



Fig. 32. Mural that represented an objection to the new logo of Poznań, which was devoid of clear associations with the coat of arms of the city
 Source: own elaboration



Fig. 33. Monument of the Mermaid at Wybrzeże Kościuszkowskie Street and the mural of the Little Sleeping Mermaid at 2 Teligi Street
Source: own elaboration

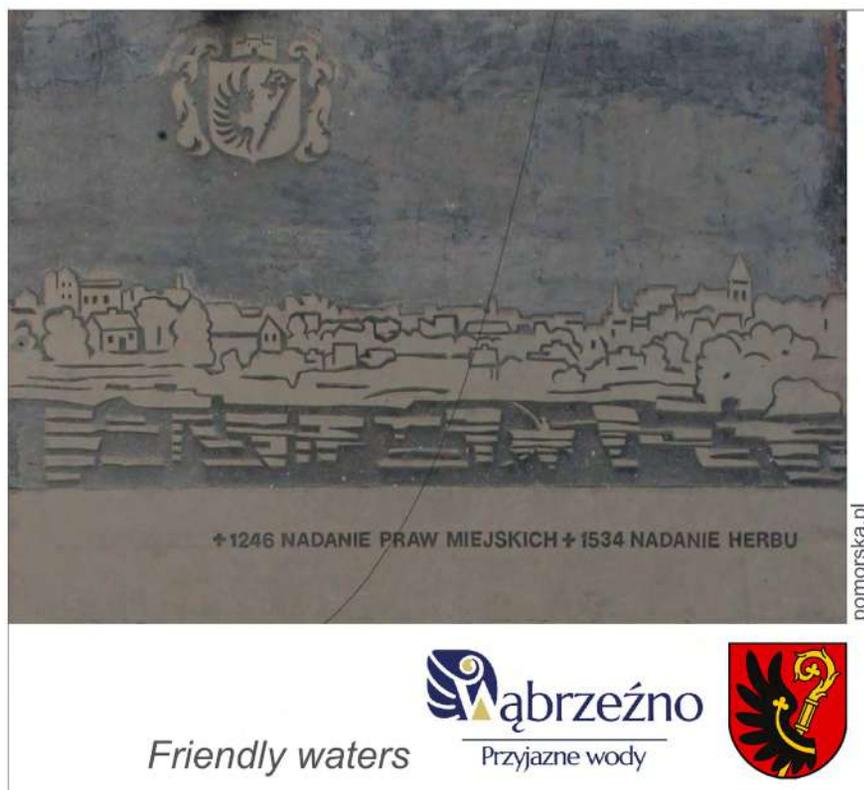


Fig. 34. Mural created on the occasion of the 750th anniversary of Wąbrzeźno
Source: own elaboration

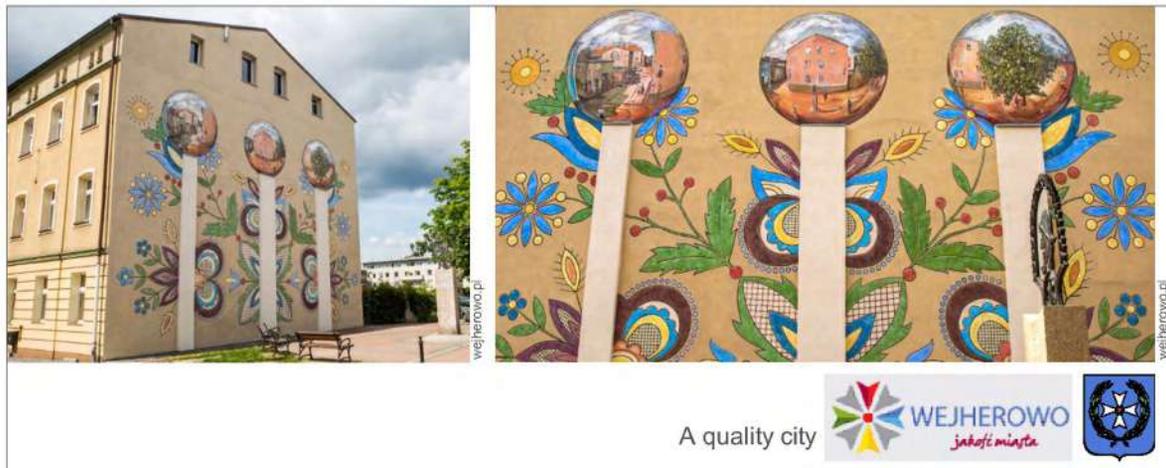


Fig. 35. Mural at Wałowa Street in Wejherowo
Source: own elaboration



Fig. 36. Proposed designs (mural) and existing (sculpture) objects in public space
Source: own elaboration

other saints and blessed people of the Catholic and Orthodox Church as well as their attributes; sacred buildings (churches and one chapel); symbols of Jesus Christ (the Lamb of God and the pelican); various angels and figures of the Blessed Virgin Mary; symbols of the Eye of Divine Providence; Biblical scenes; and other symbols. Almost one half of the 330 cities in the study that have Christian symbols in their coats of arms have a modern logo (160). These logos are usually complete, i.e., they have three elements: the emblem, the name and the tagline (91), or consist of two elements: the emblem and the name (44), or the name and the tagline (22).

The location of cities that have Christian symbols in their coats of arms varies territorially. They are most numerous in the north in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie and in the south in the Podkarpackie voivodeship, and least numerous in the west in the Zachodnio-Pomorski

voivodeship. The results obtained overlap in part with the Mass attendance survey, in which the values of the dominicantes index, as an average of 2016–2018, were also highest in the south of the country and, in the north, in the central part of Pomorskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodeships and lowest also in the west in Zachodnio-Pomorskie voivodeship (Sleszynski et al., 2023). In 2023, the dominicantes indexes were very similar (Organek et al., 2023) compared to the 2016–2018 average.

Modern logos generally do not reference city coats of arms (which partially confirms hypothesis H2): the first group of logos without these references is considerably the largest (104); the second most numerous group includes logos referencing symbols in coats of arms (38) and the third group references colours in their coats of arms (18). It is interesting to note that both the first and the third group (i.e., logos that do

not refer to symbols in coats of arms) include also logos whose emblems contain representations of sacred buildings (most often parish churches) located in the city or commune. Nine of the 38 cities whose logos on public display refer to symbols in the coat of arms (which partially confirms hypothesis H3) feature large-format murals, most of which (i.e., excluding the mural in Wąbrzeźno) were created in the last decade; in addition, a mural is currently being designed in Zawidów.

The elaboration of a coherent system of visual identification of the city brand is a capital-intensive process that first requires a smart idea based on a clear and simple message conveyed both in an *expressive visual form* and in a *suggestive slogan* (tagline) coherent with it. It is good when a logo referring to symbols in the coat of arms is light, linear and modern – in other words, when it reflects the character of the times in which it is made. Three Polish cities with Christian symbols in their coats of arms (Bełchatów, Wejherowo and Zawidów) are particular good examples of this trend. Drawing upon symbols in their coats of arms, these cities created recognisable and highly memorable logos and, in the case of Bełchatów and Zawidów, also catchy slogans (taglines). However, the clear and consistent system of visual identification adopted by these cities does not constrain artists (visual artists, sculptors, painters, street artists), who can create various kinds of objects (from small sculptures to large-format murals) inspired by the developed brand and strengthening the chosen manner of promotion – unique both on a regional and national scale – in public spaces of cities.

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