



„BAOBAB” IN LUBLIN AS AN EXAMPLE OF CREATING A NEW QUALITY OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION SPACE

„BAOBAB” W LUBLINIE JAKO PRZYKŁAD TWORZENIA NOWEJ JAKOŚCI PRZESTRZENI ZINTEGROWANEJ

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Abstract

The outbreak of the war with Russia in Ukraine has caused an increase in the number of refugees arriving in Poland and other European countries. From the early days of the conflict, support and integration centers began to emerge in many cities, changing the landscape of public and cultural spaces and creating new opportunities to address the migration crisis. Lublin quickly responded to this crisis at the start of the conflict. After more than two years, the city has gained about 20.000 new residents. Their presence is evident socially and through new places and functions for integration, assistance, and humanitarian support. The organization of these places has significantly changed, initially relying on temporary solutions and later developing permanent informational and integration centers. A notable example of successful integration is the Baobab¹ Multicultural Integration Center in central Lublin, which serves as a high-quality, inclusive space for building connections, and integrating residents.

Keywords: multicultural integration, intervention architecture, migration, safe spaces

Streszczenie

Wybuch wojny z Rosją na Ukrainie spowodował wzrost liczby uchodźców przybywających do Polski i innych krajów europejskich. Od wczesnych dni konfliktu w wielu miastach zaczęły powstawać centra wsparcia i integracji, zmieniając krajobraz przestrzeni publicznej i kulturalnej oraz stwarzając nowe możliwości rozwiązania kryzysu migracyjnego. Lublin szybko zareagował na ten kryzys na początku konfliktu. Po ponad dwóch latach miasto zyskało około 20 000 nowych mieszkańców. Ich obecność jest widoczna społecznie oraz poprzez nowe miejsca i funkcje integracji, pomocy i wsparcia humanitarnego. Organizacja tych miejsc uległa znacznej zmianie, początkowo polegając na rozwiązaniach tymczasowych, a później rozwijając stale centra informacyjno-integracyjne. Godnym uwagi przykładem udanej integracji jest Centrum Integracji Wielokulturowej Baobab w centrum Lublina, które służy jako wysokiej jakości, inkluzywna przestrzeń do budowania połączeń i integrowania mieszkańców.

Słowa kluczowe: integracja wielokulturowa, architektura interwencyjna, migracja, bezpieczna przestrzeń

¹ The Baobab Multicultural Integration Center, abbreviated as CIW Baobab, is the first multicultural integration space created by the Homo Faber Association in collaboration with the City of Lublin and other organizations.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent months, it has often been said in social organizations that the reality we live in is somehow a permanent crisis. It consists not only of migration movements caused by wars or political instability in a country or region, political populism, but also the climate crisis and the still-remembered pandemic.

The war in Ukraine, which began with Russia in 2014 and escalated dramatically in February 2022, has led to one of the largest migration crises in Europe since World War II. The conflict not only destroyed infrastructure and caused thousands of casualties, but also forced millions of people to flee their homes.

As a result of Russian aggression, more than 13 million people have been forced to flee their homes. Of this number, about 8 million were internally displaced, and more than 5 million found refuge in neighboring countries such as Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. Poland became the largest „recipient” of Ukrainian refugees, taking in more than 3 million people [1].

Social factors and dramatic events are not the only causes of the migration crisis. The rising curve of global warming will make entire regions of the planet uninhabitable in the next decade, which will entail a migration movement of enormous proportions [2].

1.1. Social Integration in the Context of Creating a New Quality of Architecture and Public Spaces

There are different aspects of integration:

- institutional, legal, and political,
- economic,
- social,
- cultural,
- spatial [3].

This article addresses the spatial aspect and the role of architecture in social integration.

The philosophy of integrative architecture focuses on creating spaces that foster mutual understanding, cooperation, and sustainable coexistence of different cultures. In the context of multiculturalism, integrative architecture plays a key role in building communities that are open, diverse, and cohesive.

In integration analyses, attention is paid to various „meeting spaces” [4] or „domains of integration” [5], not only neighborhood relations but also contacts during daily life: in public places (e.g., streets, parks, neighborhoods), in institutionalized spaces such as workplaces, schools, social organizations, and in places of entertainment and consumption.

Human behaviors not only fill spaces, encountering various types of conflicts, but they can also shape them [6].

New users appearing in public spaces can evoke different emotions among „old residents,” both positive (curiosity, compassion, willingness to help) and negative (reluctance, irritation, fear). The more migrants appear in a given place in a short time, the stronger these emotions may be. The task of architecture in the social dimension can be to minimize potential tensions and conflicts by creating friendly places for integration.

The role of architecture as a tool for social integration and the prevention of social exclusion and potential conflicts has been recognized by many researchers [7].

A separate research issue is the role of the architectural features of the residential environment in creating safe and friendly living spaces for residents of different backgrounds and cultural contexts [8].

Already in 1974, Henri Lefebvre, in his groundbreaking work *The Production of Space* [9], highlighted that space is not merely a neutral backdrop, but rather something shaped by social and cultural influences. Lefebvre argued that space is produced through various social, economic, and political processes, thus ceasing to be simply a material reality and becoming a complex socio-cultural construct. Although Lefebvre’s work does not directly address multicultural architecture, his theories have helped to understand how space is used and perceived in complex societies. They laid the foundation for concepts that would later become significant in designing spaces for multicultural integration. In 1983, Kenneth Frampton, in his essay *Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance* [10], addressed the concept of critical regionalism as a response to the cultural homogenization resulting from globalization. Frampton believed that architecture should draw inspiration from local cultural traditions, creating designs that both preserve local character and meet the needs of various groups. Critical regionalism suggests integrating elements of cultural traditions into modern projects, which helps to build a spatial identity and avoid the loss of unique cultural values. Frampton argued that architecture can be a form of „resistance” against globalization, preserving cultural diversity in designed spaces. In his 1994 book *Architecture*

and *Disjunction* [11], Bernard Tschumi analyzes how architecture can serve as a space of encounters and interactions between diverse cultural groups. For Tschumi, architecture should not be bound by traditional norms but instead used as a tool to break conventional patterns and forms. Spaces designed with multiculturalism in mind, which diverge from traditional architectural principles, have the potential to bring together people from different backgrounds and experiences. Tschumi emphasizes that architecture should foster inclusivity and serve as a space where people can explore new forms of interaction, positively impacting intercultural relationships. In the 2017 work *Heritage and Hybrid Spaces: Integrating Cultural Identity in Architectural Design* [12], L. Hussein discusses the importance of integrating cultural identities in architecture through so-called hybrid spaces. These spaces combine various styles and symbolic elements that reflect the cultural diversity of a community. Hussein suggests that architects, by designing hybrid spaces, can promote community and intercultural dialogue. Hybrid spaces foster building intercultural bonds by including elements recognizable to different groups, allowing everyone to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. This is especially important in cities where cultural diversity is a key element of the social fabric. Modern urban architecture influences the integration of different cultural groups by designing spaces that promote multiculturalism. Contemporary architect Giancarlo Mazzanti [13] notes that architecture can be a generator of new behaviors and human relationships, inspiring people to explore unconventional ways of thinking and acting. In his projects, Mazzanti emphasizes that appropriately designed space affects users' behaviors, both physically and mentally, becoming a tool that encourages people to engage in interactions they might not have undertaken otherwise. This is particularly evident in public spaces such as parks, community centers, or meeting places, where people from diverse backgrounds can come into contact and discover new ways of building relationships. Mazzanti suggests that architecture can not only reflect cultural diversity but actively support it by creating spaces that encourage new forms of coexistence and mutual understanding.

1.2. Materials and Methods

The aim of the study was to analyze the phenomenon of creating and maintaining permanent informational,

integrative, and supportive places, and to determine their role in creating a multicultural urban landscape and supporting social integration. To this end, an analysis was conducted of places offering various forms of support and integration for migrants that have been established since March 2022 (both existing and non-existing). Their locations, offerings, and degree of integration, as well as their impact on public space (immediate surroundings), were then examined. During the research, the Baobab Integration Center was identified as a standout implementation. This facility and the building it occupies became the subject of detailed research – a case study. Additionally, 25 surveys were conducted among users of the MIC Baobab, along with a series of interviews with employees and volunteers.

The analysis of available press information and reports from humanitarian organizations formed the basis for formulating the main research assumptions, as well as for obtaining quantitative and qualitative information.

2. MULTICULTURAL LUBLIN YESTERDAY AND TODAY

A city embodies diversity, which results in creating a space for exchange – a characteristic of urban spaces recognized since ancient times [14]. Lublin is the largest city in eastern Poland, with a population of approximately 324,000 residents. For about 20 years, multiculturalism has been one of the key elements in building the city's promotional policy and brand. Until 2014, this multiculturalism was primarily understood as part of the city's historical cultural identity. Lublin's multicultural history is linked to its location and political-economic conditions. From the beginning of Lublin's urbanization, there was significant „Ruthenian” settlement, and from the second half of the 15th century, Jewish settlement began to develop. By the mid-16th century, synagogues and the first social welfare institutions existed in the Jewish-inhabited Podzamcze. Since 1668, a privilege granted by King Sigismund Augustus protected the rights of the ghetto's Jewish community and prohibited non-Jews from buying or leasing land there – privilege de non toleransi Christianis [15]. Residents from Western Europe significantly contributed to Lublin's industrial development by initiating important economic and social enterprises. Among these „industrialists” were the Vetter, Moritz, Kern, Hess, and Krauze families [16]. Strong Russian influences during the Russian partition resulted in the stationing of a large military contingent and influential officials in the city.

2.1. Multiculturalism Reflected in the City’s Space and Architecture

Multiculturalism has been reflected in the city’s space and architecture. The Jewish Quarter, encompassing the area of the former Podzamcze, began to expand northward along present-day Lubartowska Street in the 19th century. The Ukrainian population settled near the church. The first industrial plants were located in the city center (occupying abandoned buildings, including former monastic ones), with subsequent ones emerging near the railway line. These buildings and complexes stood out in the urban structure. Before the war, the city had about 125,000 residents, of whom 42,830 were Jews and 574 were Ukrainians. The Second World War brought an end to this multiculturalism. It was only at the beginning of the 21st century that the city began to „rediscover” its multiculturalism, striving to build the city’s brand on it.

As part of the city’s tourism policy, the „Multicultural Lublin” tourist trail has been operating for years, including sites such as the Evangelical-Augsburg Church, the building of the former Greek Church, the site of the Great Synagogue, and the Orthodox Church. The city’s most valuable monument (on the UNESCO list) is the Chapel of the Holy Trinity with Byzantine-Ruthenian frescoes. Regular events promoting multiculturalism include the Ukraine in the Center of Lublin Festival, the Sonosfera Lubelska music event, and the Different Sounds Festival. Multicultural Lublin today results from political processes, economic conditions, and the

policies of the city and various institutions striving for internationalization. This process is most visible in the academic environment. As the total number of students decreases, the process of internationalization increases (Kruk). In 2019, Lublin ranked 4th in the country in terms of the number of foreign students.

Research conducted after several weeks of assistance to Ukrainian refugees by the Union of Polish Metropolises showed that as of April 1, 2022, 17% of Lublin’s residents were Ukrainian citizens (a 20% increase in the city’s population). Ukrainian residents have become „noticeable” since 2013. In 2013, nearly a hundred people gathered at Litewski Square – Lublin’s main public space – to protest the Ukrainian government’s decision to postpone signing the association agreement with the European Union. A year later, protests against the war in western Ukraine took place in the city center, successfully drawing public attention. In 2015, the influx of labor migrants and complicated residence legalization processes caused queues at the Department for Foreigners, leading to protests in the streets of Lublin. The outbreak of war in Ukraine dramatically changed the situation, becoming a test of hospitality, willingness to provide immediate and long-term assistance, and, above all, readiness to embrace the true, permanent multiculturalism of the city.

3. ACCOMMODATION SPACES AND PLACES OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF LUBLIN

In the first months of the war, accommodation locations included hotels, dormitories, and

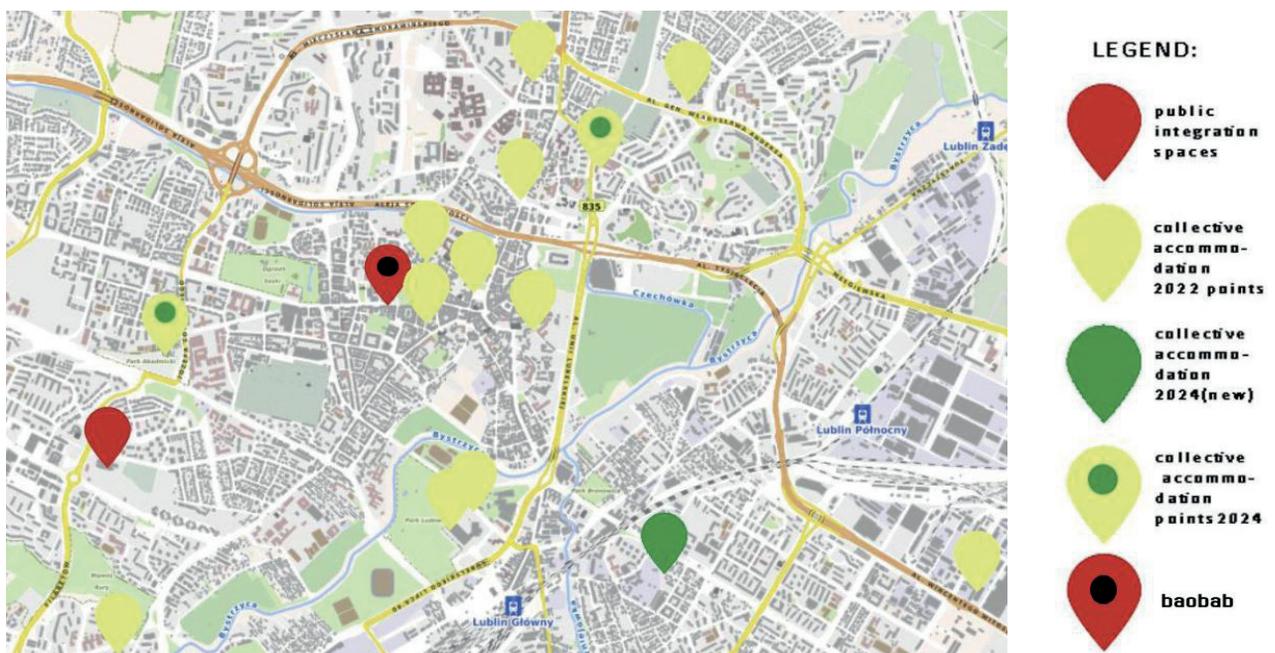


Fig. 1. Analysis of the distribution of service and integration spaces in the Lublin area. Compiled by Y. Posuniak

repurposed spaces such as swimming pools, school gymnasiums, and a hostel for the deaf. In the next phase of migration, places were organized to offer organizational help, support, and cultural and integration events. These functions were hosted in spaces either used „one-time” for specific events or in buildings for which this new function was a chance for the „life” of the building (Fig. 1).

The map shows the city of Lublin with points marked by colorful markers, indicating places associated with integration and assistance processes, as well as collective accommodation points from February 2022 and April 2024. The analysis covers

the period from February 2022 to April 2024 and identified 16 locations housed in various adapted facilities.

The analysis reveals a concentration of different accommodation points in the central and northeastern parts of the city, with several integration spaces strategically located. These spaces are crucial for supporting the integration process of migrants, allowing them to interact with the local community in open and accessible places. MIC Baobab stands out due to its central location in the city, rather than in a residential district.

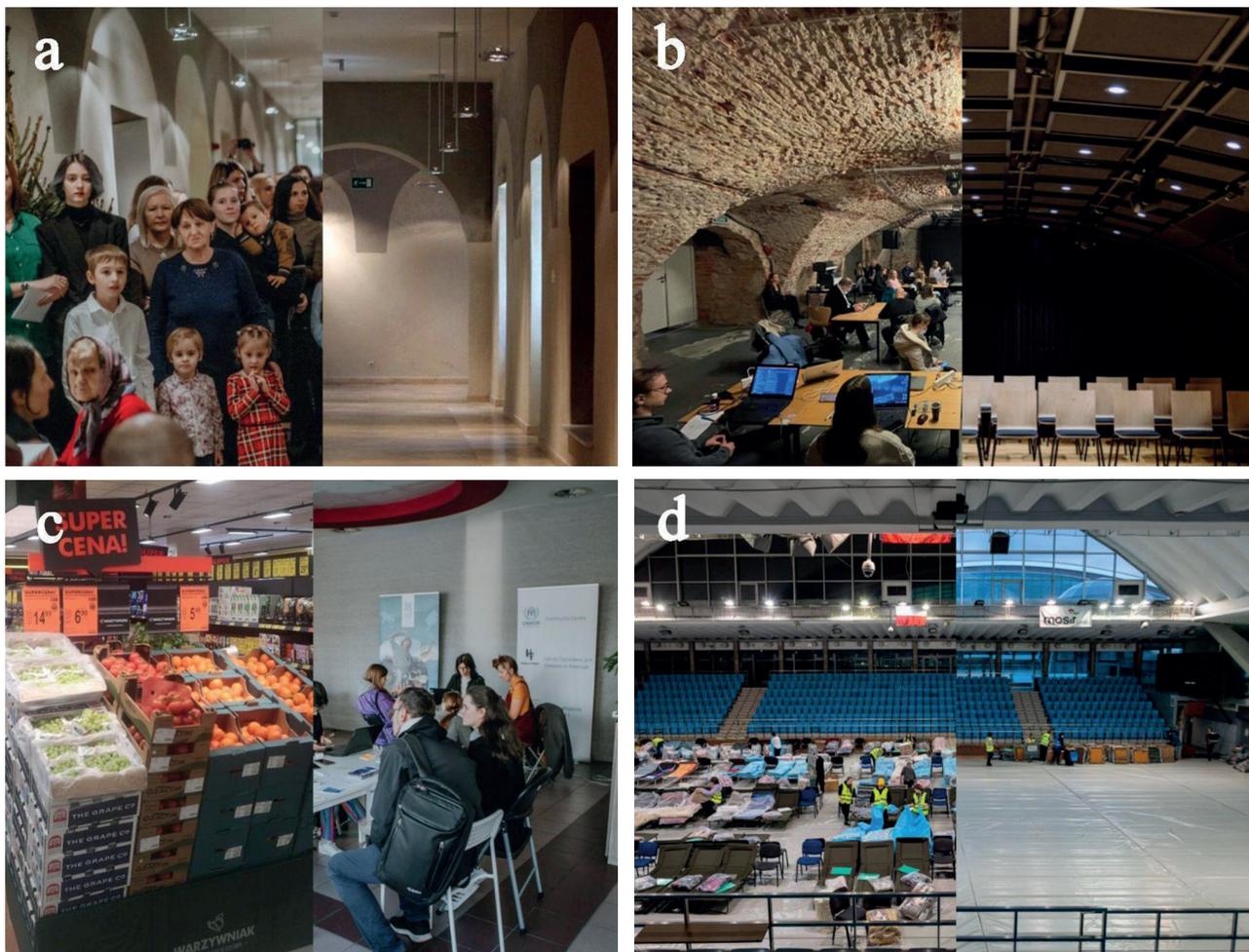


Fig. 2. Selected service and integration spaces in Lublin: a) the corridors of Lublin Culture Center (2022) have become a space for celebrating Christmas in the Orthodox rite, b) concert and cinema hall as a command center from the first days of the war, c) information center (2023) and shop (2024), d) mosir swimming pool hall as an accommodation space (2022), photo by Maciej Rukasz, Bartek Żurawski

Table 1. Overview of basic information regarding analyzed objects

No#	Type of Support Function	Type of Primary Function/Occupied Building	Remarks	Functioning time
1	accommodation point	swimming pool hall/ Hala Mosir	one of the first points	until spring 2022
2	accommodation point	sports hall /Podwale	–	until spring 2024
3	accommodation point	dormitory/ dormitory UMCS Helios	accommodated nearly 410 people	still
4	accommodation point	dormitory/ dormitory UM Chodźki	accommodated nearly 70	still
5	accommodation point	dormitory/hostel for Deaf Individuals	–	until spring 2024
6	accommodation point	sports hall/ Start	–	until spring 2022
7	accommodation point	hotel/Hotel Europa	–	until summer 2023
8	accommodation point	hotel/Hotel B&B	–	until summer 2023
9	accommodation point	hotel/Hotel	–	until summer 2023
10	„Command Center”	cultural centre/ Centrum Kultury	–	until summer 2022
11	„Command Center”	restaurant bar/Astoria	currently on the ground floor shop	until 2023
12	Integration Center	sports hall/Hala Globus	on the district rock	still
13	Integration Center „Baobab”	an inactive/former bank	on a city scale	still
14	accommodation point	school/Zembożycka	–	until 2023
15	accommodation point	hostel/Magnoliowa	–	until 2023
16	accommodation point	kindergarten/Bronowicka	nearly 50 people were accommodated	still

Against the backdrop of the analyzed initiatives and facilities, MIC Baobab stands out for its lasting function and significant development potential. Its central location enhances accessibility. The building is occupied by the Homo Faber organization, which, in collaboration with other non-governmental organizations and with the support of the city of Lublin, manages the space and continuously adapts it to meet the users’ needs.

4. CASE STUDY: FUNCTIONAL AND SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF MIC BAOBAB

MIC Baobab is a multifunctional space designed to meet the diverse needs of the community. The architecture combines modern solutions with accessibility and flexibility. The headquarters of MIC Baobab is housed in a building constructed between 1923-1925, originally the Bank of Polish Land (designed by architect B. Żurkowski), which is the first building in Lublin with a reinforced concrete frame structure [17]. Until 2012, the building served as a PKO Bank branch. By 2022, the space was unused due to its specific function. In 2022, the city of Lublin, the construction company Strabag, and Ikea supported the organization in preparing the

building for its new function. Located in the city center among tenement houses, the building has five floors, including two underground levels.

The entrance to the building is from Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, which at this section extends the main pedestrian route in the city center, known as Deptak. Since the building is in the second line of buildings, the entrance is preceded by a gate in the first-line tenement and a cozy courtyard.

The ground floor is arranged as the “Witalnia”. In Ukrainian (вітальня), it means living room, while in Polish, (witalny) means welcoming. To understand the difference, compare the English term (living room) with the German (Lebensraum). For English speakers, a (room) is just part of a house’s interior, while a (living room) is defined by the daily activities of its residents. In the concept of (Lebensraum), the sense of life approaches what philosopher Martin Heidegger described as the fundamental feeling of dwelling – not just occupying a built world but the process of inhabiting the earth [18]. The philosophy of the Witalnia is about meeting, conversing, and being together. The central point of the “Witalnia” is the information point (Front desk), clearly marked to ensure easy orientation and communication. This

space, through its arrangement and functionality, aims to create a home-like atmosphere, representing the daily space of a home.

On the ground floor, a multilingual library is organized. This space is located in the corner of the building and has the potential to expand as the number of volumes grows. Large windows provide natural lighting for the reading area. An essential element is the children’s play area – a safe, colorful space designed according to child safety principles.

A multifunctional culinary space with modern equipment supports communal cooking and learning. A multifunctional stage with appropriate lighting and sound is used during cultural events, though it faces some acoustic issues due to strong reverberation.

Another important daily use area is the coworking space, an adaptable work environment equipped with ergonomic furniture, promoting collaboration and individual work.

The ground floor restrooms are accessible to all users, designed with convenience and hygiene in mind, and are architecturally accessible.

The first floor houses workshops, offices, and workspaces. One of the workshops is an advanced

kitchen with a space for cooking lessons, appropriate equipment, an ergonomic layout, and dining areas. Another workshop is the “Light Workshop” – a space for manual work requiring precision, with customized workstations. It is spacious and well-lit.

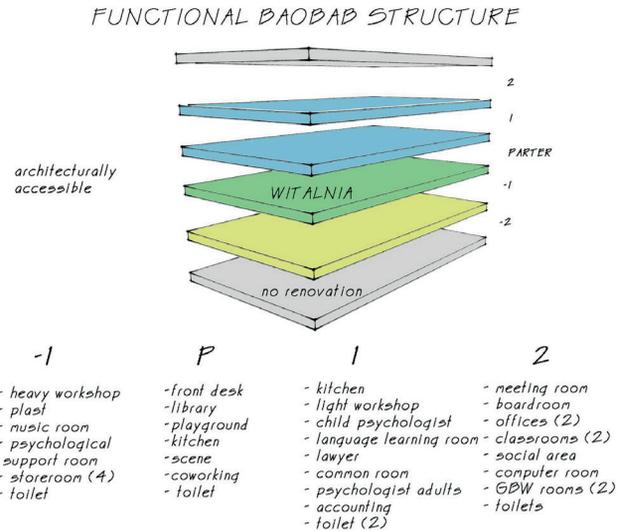


Fig. 3. Functional diagram of the Baobab Multicultural Integration Center in Lublin. Compiled by Y. Posuniak



Fig. 4. Interior of the Baobab Multicultural Integration Center during adaptation works. Photo by Bartek Żurawski

On the second floor, the following have been organized: a child psychologist's office (a cozy office with colorful decoration, adapted to work with children, well-lit), a psychologist's office for adults (providing privacy and comfort, with neutral, calming decor), language study rooms (fully equipped classrooms with modern teaching aids and flexible arrangement of furniture, blackboard and large screen), a lawyer's office (providing privacy and comfort for clients, with appropriate office equipment). The whole is complemented by a common room. It is a space for spending time together, with facilities for children, with comfortable seating and interactive elements, books and toys, and has a separate toilet.

The administrative area, which is distinguished by limited access (locked, exit only for employees with access), is also located on the first floor. The accounting office, with ergonomic equipment conducive to administrative work, has 3 workstations and an archive with a separate entrance from the corridor.

For the second floor level, there are also two toilets adapted to hygienic standards.

The second floor houses offices, administrative rooms (including management offices), a meeting room (spacious rooms with appropriate technical equipment, suitable for meetings and conferences for the team). This level also houses two classrooms with flexible furniture layout and modern teaching equipment, a computer room (equipped with modern computers and internet access, designed for study and work). GBV Room (2): classrooms for group activities and workshops, with flexible furniture layout and appropriate equipment.

Additional features include restrooms and a social space for employees and building users, conducive to relaxation and integration. Below-ground levels are currently partially utilized. On level -1, several studios have been organized:

Heavy Workshop: A space equipped with ergonomic workstations and tools for heavier manual tasks, including areas for electronics work. The design incorporates ventilation and meets occupational health and safety standards.

Art Studio: A lounge for Ukrainian scouts with a separate entrance, ensuring independence from other areas in the building. It comprises a large room, restroom, storage area, and vestibule.

Music Room: Fully equipped for musical activities.

Psychological Aid Room: A comfortable, intimate space designed for privacy and tranquility, featuring decor and colors that support relaxation and safety.

Former bank vaults have been repurposed into four warehouses, serving as functional and spacious storage facilities, such as for office materials. The restroom on level -1 includes a shower but is not accessible to persons with disabilities.

The second underground level is currently unused but awaits adaptation, potentially for future development or as reserve space to meet changing needs.

Analyzing the functional-spatial layout and architectural features, architectural accessibility is a key consideration. The building is listed as a historical monument, requiring adaptations for users with special needs, particularly for the Baobab MIC headquarters. Currently, the ground floor is fully architecturally accessible, with plans to install an internal elevator for the remaining levels.

The functional-utility scheme of the analyzed facility exemplifies the introduction of a modern, multifunctional space into a historically significant structure whose original function became obsolete. Through thoughtful architectural adaptation, the interior promotes social integration, education, and psychological support. The space is also accessible to users with pets.

4.1. Integration through activation: A case study of Baobab Multicultural Integration Center

MIC „Baobab” offers a wide range of activities that can be conducted within its space. The community must be free from physical and social threats, including all forms of violence, and should serve as a focal point for residents, providing various types of living and integration spaces, and creating life opportunities. Residents should have the opportunity to play a significant role in both long-term planning and making immediate decisions. In the case of MIC „Baobab,” a series of cultural and support events, as well as ideas for addressing specific architectural issues, have been consulted with users. The space and its potential activities are expanding systematically and flexibly adapted to current needs. MIC „Baobab,” as a place on the cultural map of the city, is increasingly noticeable and recognizable to the residents of Lublin, making the space more visible within the cityscape. The former bank building has acquired a new function that aligns with its original architectural structure and allows the facility to be returned to public use.

The results of the survey answered how MIC „Baobab” truly meets the needs of its users and the merits of its current architectural arrangement (Fig. 6).

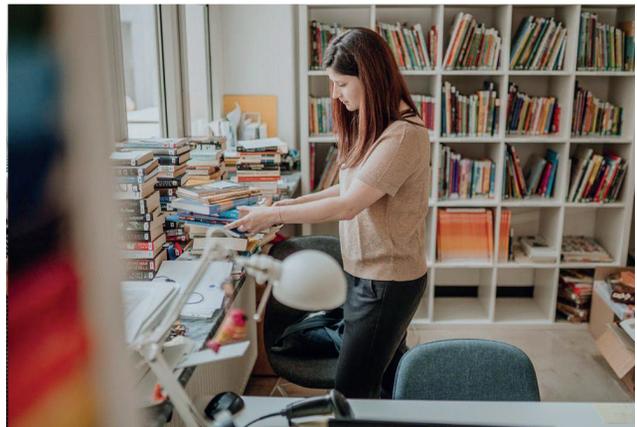


Fig. 5. Selected activities integrating the local community and migrants at the Baobab Multicultural Integration Center.
Photo by Bartek Żurawski

The integration of multicultural communities can be significantly strengthened through activation, which involves creating opportunities for social and cultural engagement. Activation encourages individuals from diverse backgrounds to participate in collective activities, fostering understanding and cooperation. Organizing social events, educational programs, and cultural activities allows people to connect on a common platform, breaking down barriers and stereotypes. Social activation creates space for mutual understanding and building lasting relationships,

not only among multicultural and multigenerational groups, which is crucial for integration processes.

One way of integration is through the process of creating and caring for shared spaces. The „Heavy” and „Light” studios offer opportunities for woodworking, furniture repair, welding, electrical work, sewing, and embroidery, providing a hands-on way for participants to get to know each other.

Another aspect of activation is access to education: classes in Polish and English language, computer software training, lessons on the job market, human

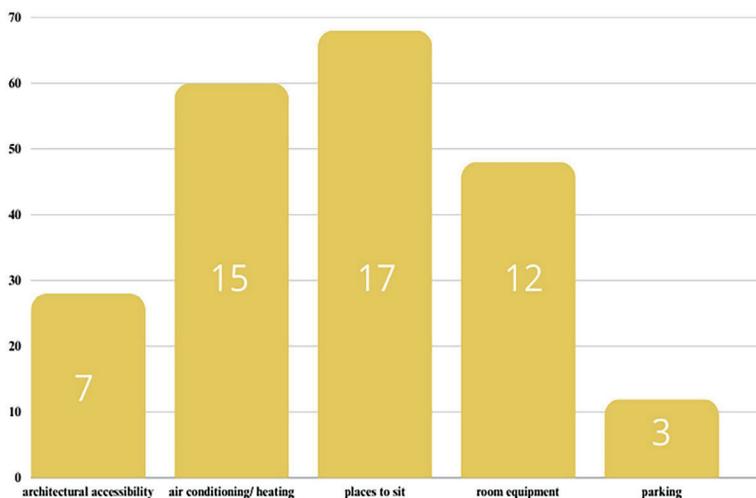


Fig. 6. Architectural amenities identified by respondents as most important – percentage share of responses in a multiple-choice survey. The number of mentions is indicated on the bars. Compiled by Y. Posuniak

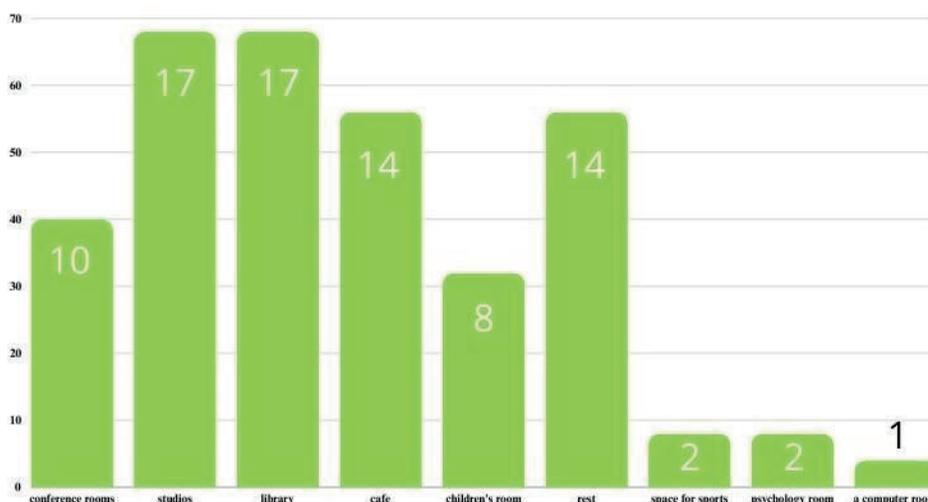


Fig. 7. Functions identified by respondents as most important at the Baobab Multicultural Integration Center – percentage share of responses in a multiple-choice survey. The number of mentions is indicated on the bars. Compiled by Y. Posuniak

rights, and minority groups. Users of Baobab are encouraged not only to use the facilities but also to co-create and independently organize events for others.

This situation is similar to spatial planning, where participants can be individuals, groups of people, or more or less formalized organizations. All participants in urban space management can be classified based on the type and activities of active and passive participants [9]. The opportunity to realize one’s social potential contributes to a sustainable process of assimilating individuals with varying migration experiences, as well as „ordinary” residents of Lublin.

The bar chart illustrates the results of a multiple-choice survey where respondents indicated the most important architectural amenities (Fig. 6). Each bar represents a different amenity, with its height corresponding to the percentage share of responses. The numbers on the bars

indicate the number of responses for each amenity. The categories „seating areas” received the most responses (17 answers), followed by „air conditioning/heating” (15 answers), suggesting that these fundamental aspects are considered most important by the respondents.

Other categories such as „room facilities” (12 answers), „architectural accessibility” (7 answers), and „parking” (3 answers) were also considered but received fewer votes. This indicates a diversity of user needs, but with a strong emphasis on comfort related to seating areas and climate control within buildings.

From the analysis of responses regarding the current functional program, it appears that the most important facilities for respondents are „studios” and „library,” each receiving 17 mentions (Fig. 7). The next significant functions are „cafe” and „rest area” with 14 mentions each. „Conference rooms” received 10 mentions, and

the „children’s room” received 8. The least significant were „sports area,” „psychological room” (both with 2 mentions each), and „computer lab” (1 mention).

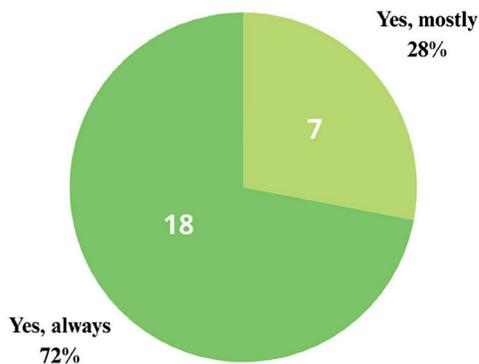


Fig. 8. Pie chart reflecting respondents’ answers to whether they feel safe at the Baobab Multicultural Integration Center. The numbers are indicated on the segments. Compiled by Y. Posuniak

The issue of safety is crucial in the context of designing integration spaces. Individuals using such places should have the opportunity to experience meetings and open themselves to new cultures and religions. At the same time, it’s important to consider that migrants may have traumas associated with migration experiences. Well-designed spaces can facilitate their adaptation by creating conditions that promote a sense of security and emotional comfort. All respondents answered positively regarding their sense of safety at MIC Baobab.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the relatively short but intense period (2022-2024) of creating new spaces for social integration and support in Lublin highlights the significant role these functions potentially play in shaping new quality social spaces and in revitalization processes.

In recent years, Lublin has practically returned to its multicultural tradition, with the war acting as a catalyst for this process. Before the conflict in Ukraine, the city’s international character was primarily defined by its academic environment [19]. However, the war has brought noticeable changes not only to Lublin’s social structure but also to its public spaces. A new symbolism, language, and new users have become visible. Among the functions and services that emerged with the outbreak of the war (supportive, intervention, and cultural), those that align with the city’s cultural offerings have persisted to this day. Baobab serves as an example of an institution with both integrative and cultural functions. Its implementation in a previously unused historic building

contributed to its revitalization and made it accessible to „new and old” residents of Lublin.

6. SUMMARY

Diversity offers an opportunity for development and enrichment, but for it to be effectively used as a tool for positive change, education and openness to experiences of otherness are essential. Throughout the centuries, we have embraced various cultural elements like Italian Baroque, French Gothic, or enjoying Indian tea from German porcelain, often forgetting that everything we touch is woven from the culture and people who create it.

Adolf Loos recognized that modern life unfolds on two independent yet interconnected planes: individual experience and social existence. These are two irreducible but related systems. Interior spaces speak the language of culture and experience, while exterior spaces speak the language of civilization and information [20]. Often, these languages intersect and complement each other, sometimes challenging to understand, and their combination should be seen as an ongoing process. The role of architecture in multicultural integration is also a part of this process.

Architecture and migration are closely linked in the context of integration because urban design significantly influences the integration process of migrants. Well-planned architecture can support community-building through public spaces that facilitate meetings and interactions among residents of diverse backgrounds. Conversely, neglecting this aspect in urban planning can lead to ghettoization and isolation of migrants, hindering their social and cultural integration. Therefore, a balanced approach to urban design is crucial for effective migrant integration into society [21].

It is noteworthy that researchers from diverse backgrounds have begun to develop methods to study the connections between public spaces and urban life simultaneously. They all responded to the fact that people have been overlooked in urban planning [22]. Migrants and ethnic minorities are becoming invisible residents of cities.

Thoughtful design of public spaces and facilities, such as integration centers, supports meetings and interactions among residents. Architecture that considers the needs of different social groups promotes inclusivity and accessibility, creating an environment conducive to integration. Examples of such projects include open shared spaces that can be used for various activities, and buildings designed

with multiculturalism in mind, where diverse groups can feel comfortable and safe. Architecture, as a physical expression of social values, can effectively support integration processes through activation.

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