
EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS: PROGRAMS: A CASE STUDY INTO GIVE SOMETHING BACK TO BERLIN



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Give Something Back to Berlin



Abstract

Inclusive community-building programs aim to build a more cohesive community by organizing activities and events. These programs often lack resources and are overlooked by donors in favor of more traditional non-profit aid organizations. Our project was designed to take a program as a case study, Give Something Back to Berlin's Open Kitchen, and determine how inclusive programs build community, describe the environment the Open Kitchen fosters and its benefits, identify the factors that impact retention and transience of program attendees, and recommend viable adaptations to the Open Kitchen program. During this research we observed participants in the Open Kitchen's social cooking sessions and conducted semi-structured interviews with community members about their experiences with the Open Kitchen. This research led us to observe the benefits and replicability of the Open Kitchen and community-building programs at large. We received enthusiastic praise of the Open Kitchen, and many participants wished that a similar program existed where they lived. Through our research we determined criteria to evaluate a setting for feasibility of a community-based inclusive program and determined the key characteristics of the Open Kitchen as an inclusive program. Based on our findings, we made recommendations on accessibility, program outreach and preparation, program frameworks and how to get involved aimed at three groups. These groups are program developers and NGOs, researchers, and new attendees of community-building programs.



Figure 1: Pictured above are the booklet authors. From left to right: Paige Mesick, Alice Kelly, Sean Thal, and Zane Altheimer

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Introduction

With an influx of immigrants into Germany in the last 20 years, the desire and need for cultural change and awareness has increased. As a hub of cultural acceptance, Berlin has continued to innovate and attempt to improve its community integration. The focus of this project was to examine inclusive community building programs and determine what makes these programs work.

Our sponsor organization, Give Something Back to Berlin (GSBTB), is a nonprofit organization that helps immigrants and refugees integrate into Berlin through a series of creative programs and community-run projects.

We aided GSBTB's Open Kitchen program to collect information from selected community members about their life story, a recipe they make for a cultural celebration, their experiences with the Open Kitchen program, and their reasons for attending Open Kitchen events. Ultimately, GSBTB will use this information to publish a community-based cookbook.



Figure 2: A GSBTB painting

To guide our research we created a set of research objectives as follows: Determine how inclusive programs build community in population-dense areas, describe the environment that the Open Kitchen program fosters and its benefits, identify the different factors that impact retention and transience of social service attendees, and recommend viable adaptations to the Open Kitchen program. The research we conducted addressed these objectives, to investigate the qualities of an inclusive organization, and how communities are formed by these organizations.



Figure 3: This photo is from Week 2's Open Kitchen cooking event. Pictured here are participants preparing food and choosing recipes to work on.

Background

To address the problem, three guiding questions were posed in order to provide a stable background to inform our project.

These questions include:

- What framework effectively builds a community?
- What factors lead to an increase in a community's population and how has this been observed in Berlin?
- Why do we need to build communities?

The following literature review describes relevant topics regarding the population of Berlin, the current practices in place that allow isolated members within a community to integrate. We also included how the work of GSBTB conforms to these areas of interest.

Creation of Densely Populated Areas

In the mid-1990's Germany offered protection to 345,000 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, but by 2022, 90% of those accepted had left! The number of refugees and immigrants entering Germany continued to decline from 2005 to 2008.² An exponential curve of refugees and immigrants have been accepted into Germany, with the largest year of growth occurring in 2013, during the Syrian Civil War. At this time, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany would be welcoming Syrian refugees with open arms.³ In 2015, Berlin announced that all Syrian refugees would be welcome to stay regardless of their county of entry into the EU, rolling back protocol from 1990 requiring refugees to remain in the first EU country they entered.⁴

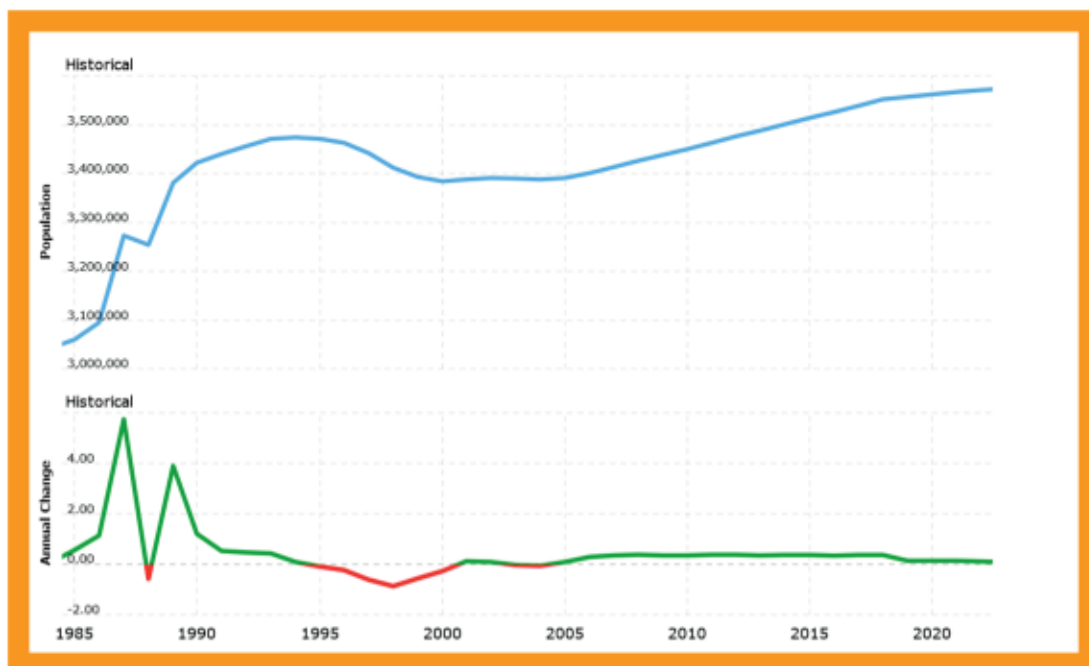


Figure 4: This graph depicts the total population and the rate of change in population in Berlin from 1985 to 2021. As you can see, the population is increasing steadily over the most recent 20 years.⁵

Background

A heavy influx of new people can have several impacts on a host country, whether they be socioeconomic, legal, or cultural. The most noticeable impact is often seen socially, as the people in host countries can exhibit many different views on immigrants and asylum for refugees, and therefore have the power to influence a newcomer's integration into the culture. The need to uphold the rights of native citizens while uplifting newcomers on the legal aspect, as well as cultural and religious differences or even language barriers, can cause both a host culture and asylum seekers to clash when trying to merge these differences into a new identity that represents all parties.⁶

The acceptance of Syrian, Afghan, Iraqi, Albanian and Iranian refugees has provoked powerful reactions in both positive and negative ways. In some cases, an influx of people can lead to increased attacks on refugees or hostility towards them, a trend which was seen in Germany in 2015. Following the rise in acceptance of refugees that year due to Angela Merkel's policies, the number of attacks on foreign-born people increased as German politics were divided over whether the country should accept such numbers.⁷ The acceptance of these refugees incited significant public pushback from various groups, notably contributing to the rise of Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany), a radical, far-right, anti-immigrant political party. However, with every negative reaction comes positive pushback on behalf of the newcomers. The sudden influx of refugees in Berlin also sparked new NGO initiatives to aid the newcomers.

Examples of these organizations include GSBTB, founded in 2013 to help aid refugees become a part of their community, or Mada, an organization founded by a Syrian refugee to aid other refugees in Berlin⁸. More governmental influence, social support systems like GSBTB, and public encouragement for the acceptance movement could be seen in recent years as more German people wished to counteract xenophobia in their country.⁷

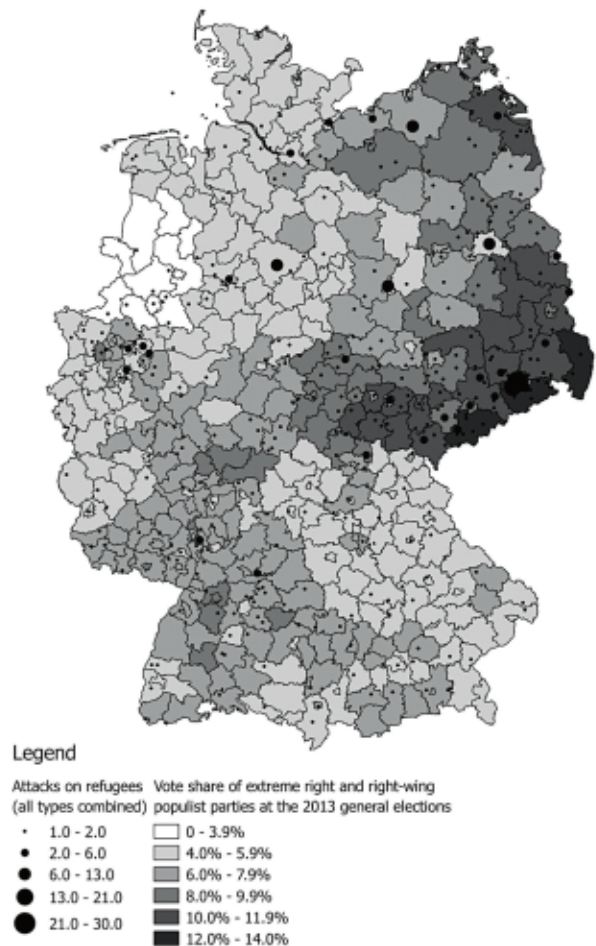


Figure 5: This map depicts the vote share of right and far-right populist parties and the number of attacks on refugees in Germany⁷

Background

The refugee experience is complicated and multifaceted. It has several different stages: the fleeing of their country, first entry into their host country, officially integrating, growing accustomed, and finally a longer-term commitment to an area. This time in their lives can be traumatic, confusing, and exhausting, and many speak to a loss of identity or uncertainty when it comes to an individual or group's place in a new culture.⁹ Isolation stems from both the old timers' wariness of the impact newcomers can have, and the refugees' lack of access to resources that will help them effectively incorporate into a new country. After the unprecedented wave of asylum seekers in 2015-2016, many Turkish refugees felt it was easier to turn to groups of similar background to socialize with, rather than native Germans. But when interviewed on their experience in Germany, many refugees have also remarked that they think the most vital part of their experience was social integration and connections with locals.⁹ Right from those effected, it can be concluded that community meshing is the most challenging, yet most necessary component, to counteract alienation and estrangement. This is why the work of organizations like GSBTB, who seek to build those community relationships, are so important to the refugee experience.

Refugee resettlement also happens in waves – with different groups seeking asylum in Berlin in response to geopolitical and environmental disasters. Today more refugees are coming from Ukraine, escaping the Russian invasion.

An estimated 3.6 million Ukrainians have fled Ukraine, many going to Poland and through Poland to Germany.¹⁰ Berlin is a refugee center where many newcomers come through and either stay or figure out their plans for where they will go next.¹¹ Many wish to stay in Germany and Berlin and will join other refugee communities in the city. The waves of people entering Germany have had a significant impact on the lives of the refugees as well as the communities around them, as the communities adapt to new cultures and the immigrants begin to become comfortable in their new surroundings. The representation of migrants and refugees in narrative-building and media is a key component of political and social reaction to newcomers, and the most critical time for positive representation is at the peak of these influx trends.

Narrative Building of Refugees and Migrants

The acceptance of large amounts of refugees and migrants can create very adverse effects to the current and incoming community. There are two opposing sides that are created due to this tension, the side that wants to portray newcomers in a negative light, and the side that wants to reduce them down to the hardships they experience. "Deficit discourse" is a term that refers to the framing of groups or people in narrative representation in terms of their deficiencies rather than proficiencies¹²

Background

When applied to refugee or migrant stories, this means representing them in terms of the negative experience of their background and the potential effects that they can have on a community, instead of the skills and contributions they can bring to the table.

Both in the media and in legal documentation, there is a focus on asylum-seekers as a hindered collective, who survived disaster despite all odds and now need a helping hand!³ While it is important to provide support for those seeking asylum, this framing reduces each individual person to a single narrative, particularly because journalists and politicians tell the stories, rather than refugees or migrants. The downsides of this pattern of half-complete narratives are that it assumes each migratory experience is the same, frames both the newcomers' past and future in a negative light, and does not educate others on the knowledge, experiences, and potential that newcomers can bring!⁴ Due to the ever ebbing and flowing influx of people, there remains a constant need for existing integration policies to maintain consistent support for newcomers.



Existing Integration Policies

After refugees are granted asylum and residency in Germany, they are required to complete integration courses, regarding both language and orientation. The language courses are comprised of 430-700 or more units depending on the knowledge of the refugee. It is expected that each unit takes around an hour, and at the end of the language courses they are required to achieve a Goethe-Institut B1 level of proficiency in the German language. If this is not accomplished at the end of the course, participants are allowed to retake up to 300 units and re-test free of charge.

The orientation course consists of 100 units, with a "Life in Germany" exam at the end. The course aims to teach newcomers about the German legal system, history and culture, rights and obligations of German citizens, and forms of community life. Additionally, it instructs on values that are important to German culture such as freedom of religion, tolerance, and gender equality. It is possible to take the integration courses at either a part-time or full-time pace, however part-time is typically only granted to those who are employed before starting the courses. There are special additional courses for different groups of people such as women, parents, children, and adolescents!⁵ These courses are provided at cost, currently courses are €2.29 per unit, with a total course cost of €1,603 for a typical schedule of 700 units in total!⁶ Those who receive social benefits such as unemployment assistance, or are undergoing difficult personal circumstances may have this cost waived.

Background

In comparison to other countries in the European Union, Germany's immigration policies have stagnated while many other countries have improved their practices. The major weakness in its policies center around the idea of "temporary integration." German integration policies in their current state pose barriers to family reunification, and access to justice as victims of discrimination. Germany is one of few Western European countries that restricts dual citizenship. This feeds into its lower rates of political participation and sense of belonging in Germany between immigrants and the locals. Newcomers to Germany struggle as the two-way integration poses newcomers more closely as being locals' neighbors, but not on the same footing as a "ethnic" German citizen.

While Germany does not have poor immigration policies, it is being surpassed by other countries who are improving their policies regarding family reunification and political participation. Germany's policies have remained relatively the same in terms of quality over the past few years.⁷ These government-led integration policies are uneven, causing uneven resourcing, guidance, and legal frameworks that affect how individuals are culturally and socially incorporated in Germany. As a result, measures have been taken to balance out the existing governmental policies with social resources meant to embrace and include new cultures, ideas, and experiences.

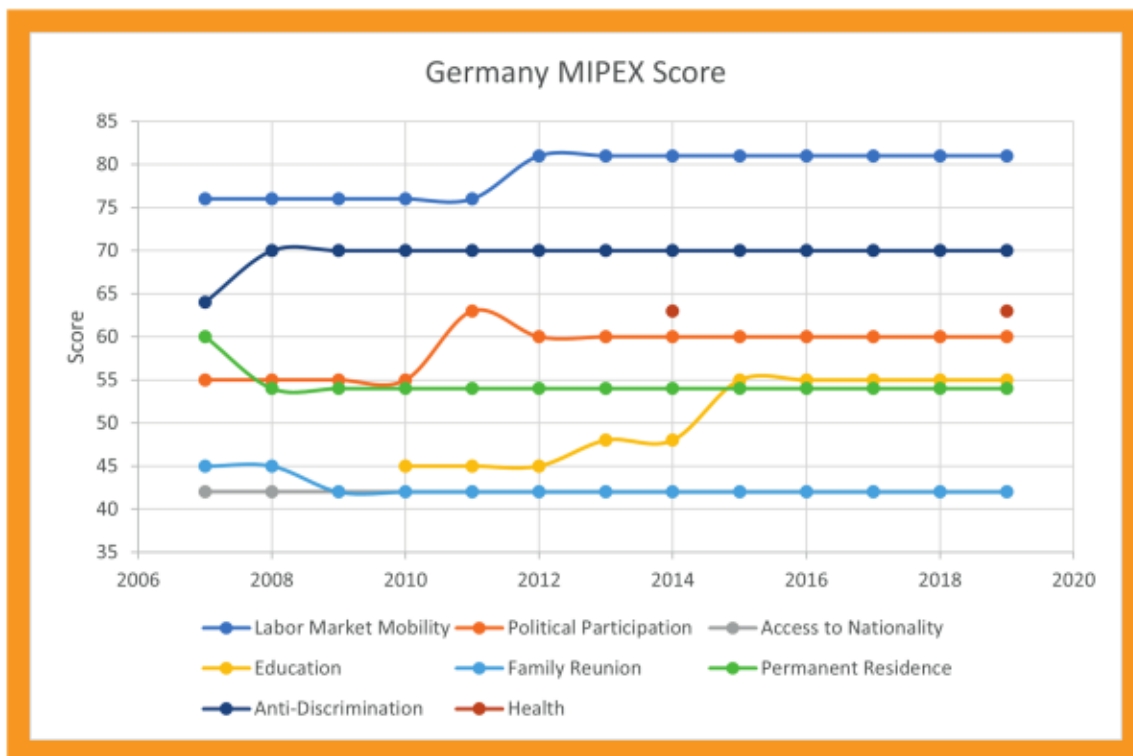


Figure 6: This chart depicts Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) indicators of migrant quality of life. As shown, in recent years, Germany's policies have not changed, leading to it slipping behind other countries' improving policies.¹⁷

Background

Cultural Integration

With its acceptance of peoples of all backgrounds, Berlin is often seen as a multicultural center. Today, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are trying to create a more diverse and integrated culture that allows for its eclectic community to shine. The House of World Cultures is a great example of this effort to share the individual cultures of the metropolis that is Berlin. This building holds many events that both share traditions and bring modern culture to the city's public. Music events, film festivals and permanent art installations are several of the many ventures that the House of World Cultures hosts!¹⁸ Many NGOs also hold events and programs to help the smooth meshing of cultures. GSBTB organizes many creative programs focused on finding common ground while sharing one's culture. Many other programs within Berlin help with skill training and help newcomers gain independence within the city!¹⁹ Cultural acceptance gives way to social inclusion practices, as new and old members of the community look to engage with others.

Community Engagement Frameworks

Engagement frameworks can be placed into two distinct categories: service and democratic programs. Service frameworks are groups that assist in locating essential needs, such as jobs and housing, by providing resources to the beneficiaries of the program.²⁰ The focus of these groups is typically to help serve vulnerable populations. These services are often run by volunteers, as they tend to be centered around issues pushed aside by more influential parties. They are utilized by those who find it difficult to gain access to services through governmental bodies.

On the other hand, democratic frameworks are groups that hold community activities, such as art, music, and cooking classes, in a way that partners participants with organizers and allows participant voices to be a core characteristic of the program.²⁰ These groups are typically seen in community centers that provide a wide range of classes and activities. Democratic frameworks are meant for the community as a whole but can occasionally be aimed at underprivileged groups more specifically. The focuses of these frameworks tend to be community building and the improvement of community dynamics.²⁰



Background

Purpose Integration

The need for successful integration has increased in recent years due to movements of refugees and migrants around the world. Purpose integration uses social dynamics and social community building as a way to help integrate refugees and migrants into a new area.²¹ Purpose integration focuses on the integration of vulnerable populations in terms of social, economic, and citizenship incorporation. These types of voluntary programs have become especially important with decreasing government assistance.²¹ Purpose integration has been seen to have effects on those joining the workforce or starting businesses as it acclimates migrants to a new area and culture through social interaction. It has also been seen that the further the voluntary sector focuses on social integration, public and private sectors may start to merge in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Purpose integration has been proven successful when examining connection building within migrant communities. It is extraordinarily important for migrants to be able to connect within migrant communities during a period of settlement.²² While it is seen as a very important course of action by those helping with resettlement, it may still have a downside. When refugee and migrant resettlement groups focus solely on the social integration of migrant groups without the thought of including the local community, purpose integration tends to have a negative effect on public discourse.

As purpose integration has been seen as highly successful within migrant groups, locals may see division and start to reject those coming into the country. Influential locals, such as politicians, may take this division as a way to create negative discourse and utilize this division to isolate migrant communities.²²

Conclusion

Berlin is a culturally rich, densely populated city that continues to accept newcomers. Highly transient, it is composed of a mix of migrants, refugees, and locals. Existing systematic and social integration processes are highly important to breaching cultural barriers, breaking stigmas, and providing a sense of belonging to all people. Amidst a variety of programs set up to achieve this, GSBTB is a highly awarded non-profit that seeks to bring the community together through free programs without the necessity of language. This preliminary literature review provided a necessary background of the important topics behind this project and the potential for our research.

Methodology

Introduction

Throughout this project we utilized two different research methods, interviews and participant observation. These were used in hopes of satisfying the following objectives:



To address these objectives, our methods were employed to get to know each subject on a more personal level, while also learning about the atmosphere and effects the Open Kitchen program creates. We hoped to address these objectives by observing the social behaviors of people at the Open Kitchen events, noting the demographics of the attendees of the Open Kitchen, and learning their reasons for attending Open Kitchen events.

Our methods were designed to improve our understanding of the Open Kitchen and how the program creates community and lasting relationships between its participants. Through this, we have determined how the Open Kitchen may be replicated in other cities or other settings and draw conclusions on how it succeeds in combatting isolation. Our project timeline generally followed a weekly format, rather than a singular seven-week long project, as we had deliverables for our sponsors each week.

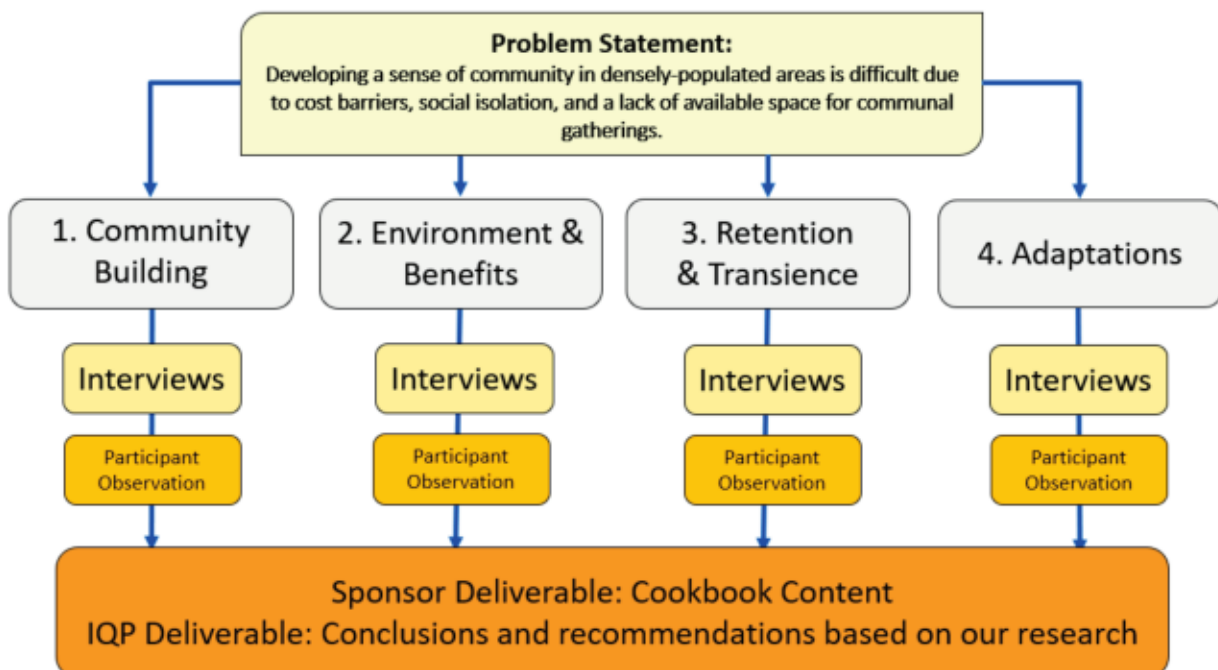


Figure 7: This figure demonstrates how our research objectives relate to our problem statement, methods, and final deliverables.

Methodology

Research Design

Community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) is a research approach focused on partnership and involves more engagement between the researchers and the community members.²³ CBPAR was identified as the ideal research design for this project as we collected personal narratives from interview subjects and identified different characteristics of the Open Kitchen program through participant observation. While participant observation and semi-structured interviews are not inherent components of CBPAR, they are commonly associated with it as methods ideally suited for community-based research.²⁴ The semi-structured interview format was selected as the partial structure allows for some direction of the interview by the interviewer, but also gives the participant control over their responses.²⁵ The semi-structured interview format allowed for interviewees to describe their experiences in their own words and follow their own narrative of their life. This empowered interviewees to give the narrative of their life to the scope that they preferred. It allows interviewees to avoid specific events or descriptions of their life that they would rather not disclose to interviewers without potentially triggering feelings of embarrassment or distress.



The implementation of our methodology relied on forming strong interpersonal relationships with our interviewees and the participants of Open Kitchen events, as well as collaborative design, review, and evaluation with our community sponsor. To form these relationships, we spent time at Open Kitchen events and attended outside events with community members. In addition, we had weekly meetings with our partners from GSBTB to discuss progress, troubleshoot issues, and plan next steps.

Through interviews we gathered qualitative data, as the questions were not focused on numerical data (see Appendices A through C for interview questions). With the analysis of the narratives we gathered, we were able to draw conclusions that led to more quantitative and mixed methods data.

Participant observation was ultimately useful to strengthen our interview responses and information.

The combination of these two methods gave our research a large and rich dataset of qualitative information to use for our study into inclusive communities, how they are built, and what their framework looks like.

Our deliverables were alike but separate from each other. Our sponsor's needs were addressed through edited and chaptered transcripts from the interviews we conducted, as well as secondary research to accompany the information from the interviews. The information and stories we gathered from our interviewees informed both our research and our sponsor deliverable.

Methodology

Interviews

To compile a collection of personal stories and recipes from the Open Kitchen community, semi-structured interviews for selected community members were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were the most desirable method for gathering information as it allowed for some flexibility of follow-up questions to get a better understanding of the interviewee's story. Beginning with simple questions and working towards more complex questions was a more courteous and effective way to learn about the interviewee and their celebration of interest. The open-ended questions provided the interviewee with the opportunity to fully express their thoughts without the confinement of a schedule or other restraint. The responses we received from interviewees naturally deviated from the original question, however this is to be expected in a conversational setting in the semi-structured format. Other methods would have lacked a personal connection between the interviewee and the interviewer, hindering the ability to gather accurate and interesting information from the interviewee. This method was also requested specifically by our sponsor, as it was the most accurate method of learning about a person's life story, their connection with their selected celebration, and their recipe for the cookbook.

Participant Observation

Participant observation allowed us to gain a better insight into the inner workings of the Open Kitchen project and the community they have built. Each week, the group holds a social cooking event where people gather, shop for the ingredients for the event's recipes, and cook together while socializing. We joined the group on Wednesday evenings to participate, while also observing the group's dynamics. This method allowed us to get to know the Open Kitchen outside of the individual interviews, as those were performed outside of the Open Kitchen events. Attending these events helped us better portray the environment that the group harbors.

Interviews

We gathered several layers of information from our interviews, through a spectrum of more surface-level questions moving onto more thought-provoking questions (see Appendices A and B). The interview questions in Appendix A were categorized into "Biographic Information", "Experiences", and "Celebration". The first set of questions sought baseline knowledge of the interviewee's childhood, family life, and simple reflections on life. The second category of questions covered the interviewee's good or bad experiences in Berlin, and the interviewee's sense of belonging in Berlin. The third category of questions addressed how their recipe and cooking were connected to their culture, or how their cooking had changed after they arrived in Berlin. We supplemented this original question base with more questions about individuals' experience within the Open Kitchen (see Appendix B).

In addition to the interviews required for our sponsor deliverable, we conducted a couple interviews with senior community/organizational members. These interviews were focused on the Open Kitchen over time, how attendance had potentially changed, and what the program was like earlier in its life. These interviews were shorter in length and focused more heavily on the interviewee's personal experience with the Open Kitchen as both a participant, and as an organizer. We were interested in how they perceived the development of the Open Kitchen over time, and any potential trends they observed over the course of the program's life. These questions are included in Appendix C.

Interviews aided in addressing all of our research objectives. As previously stated, the interview questions incorporated a broad range of topics, spanning from life stories, significant celebrations in different cultures, different recipes, and the impacts of the Open Kitchen in participant's lives.



Participant Observation

Being in the community allowed us to see how the group functioned and how the members interacted with each other. It also showed how community is formed within the group, as we could observe how newcomers and regulars to the program interact with each other. This information strengthened the content we learned from our interviews and helped inform the scope of our study.

This method was useful to investigate how social services, specifically the Open Kitchen, help facilitate community in Berlin, and to observe how people choose to interact with the program. Through our participation in Open Kitchen events, we have gained unique insights into each individual, their experiences with the Open Kitchen, and how the program forms connections between people.



Figure 8: This photo is from Week 1's Open Kitchen event. Participants are shown preparing a salad.



Figure 9: This photo is from the special event the Open Kitchen participated in with other organizations on Week 4.

Ethics

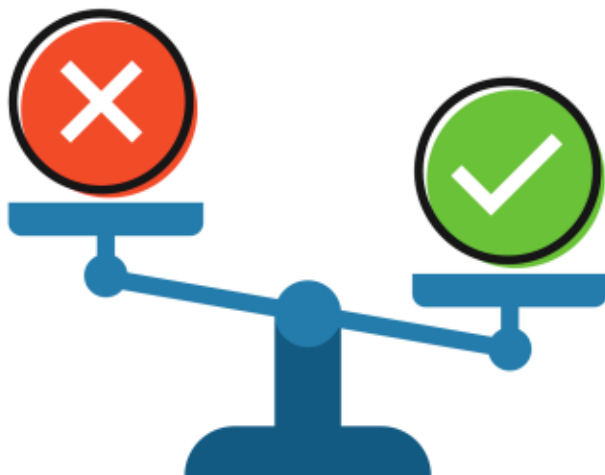
Our methodology primarily revolved around collecting information about the participants, volunteers, and ecosystem of the Open Kitchen, and as such ethical concerns regarding all human subjects were considered. At the beginning of interviews, we made it very clear that participants could refuse to answer a question if they were uncomfortable or did not want to answer it for any reason and were free to leave at any point if they wished. We acquired their consent to be recorded before and after starting a recording of our interview and ensured that any information we received would be anonymized in this report.

During interviews we took care to not ask the interviewee to answer any questions that could be exploitative, particularly because some participants have been through upsetting and/or traumatic events. In regard to the wording of our transcriptions, we wanted to ensure that we did not reduce anything into a one-dimensional story at the expense of their own personal stories or culture. In regard to the sponsor deliverable of the cookbook, each interviewee will approve their personal chapter before the book is published physically or online.



Figure 10: Food we cooked at the Open Kitchen special event on Week 4. Pictured here is borscht, beet salad, a green salad, and veggie crackers with a red pepper dip.

We were encouraged to form personal connections with Open Kitchen community members, and more specifically, our interviewees. However, throughout our time here we remained diligent in maintaining the difference between work and personal connections by not collecting any research information while interacting with them outside our field research (during interviews or the Open Kitchen events).



Results and Outcomes

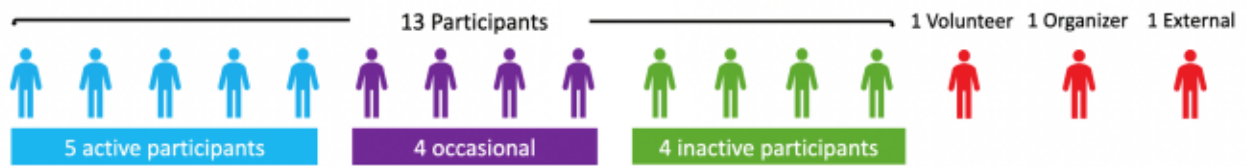


Figure 11: The interviewees we spoke to, organized by participation in the Open Kitchen, and separate from organization interviews we conducted.

The total number of interviews we conducted was 16. Of that total, 13 of the interviewees were participants, one was a volunteer of the Open Kitchen, one was an organizer of the Open Kitchen, and one was an external representative of an NGO that is focused on sharing migrant and refugee stories.

Of the 13 participant interviewees, 5 are active members of the Open Kitchen meaning they consistently attend, 4 are occasional members meaning they come whenever they can or are visiting Berlin, and 4 are inactive meaning they do not attend anymore due to scheduling conflicts, location, or not feeling the need to make those social connections anymore..

When asked how each interviewee found the Open Kitchen, the most common response was through their own research, whether that was for their job or while trying to find ways to meet people.

The other categories for responses included learning about it through other GSBTB programs, through word of mouth or friends, through a founding member who extended the invitation, or through other NGOs who collaborated with GSBTB. This data can be seen in Figure 12 below.

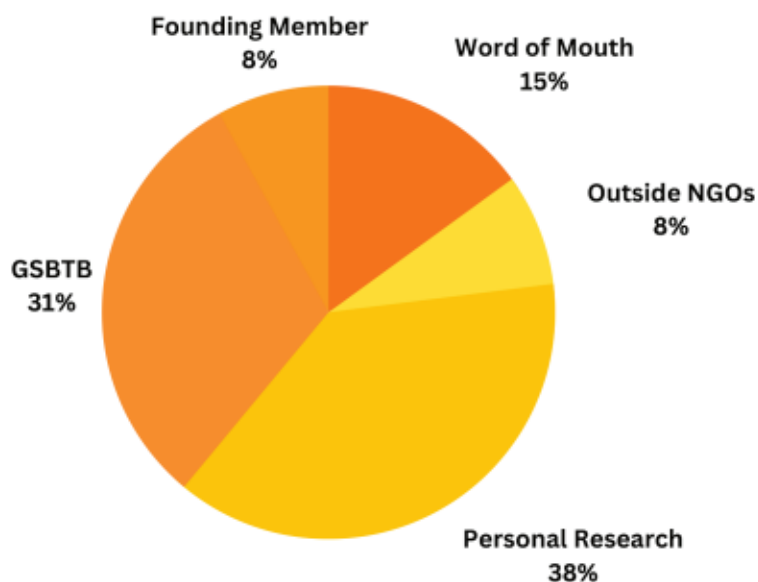


Figure 12: This pie chart depicts the way Open Kitchen interviewees learned about the Open Kitchen.

Results

Our interviewees consisted of 2 refugees and 11 migrants from all over the world, as seen in the graphic below. These locations spanned four continents, with two from North America, one from Africa, six from Asia (three from the Middle East), and three from Europe, as well as one from Oceania.

Despite the assumption that the population of the Open Kitchen is comprised of solely refugees and vulnerable populations, it is really a broad community from all over the world. This includes refugee-sending countries, but also North America, Mesoamerica, and other countries in the northern hemisphere.

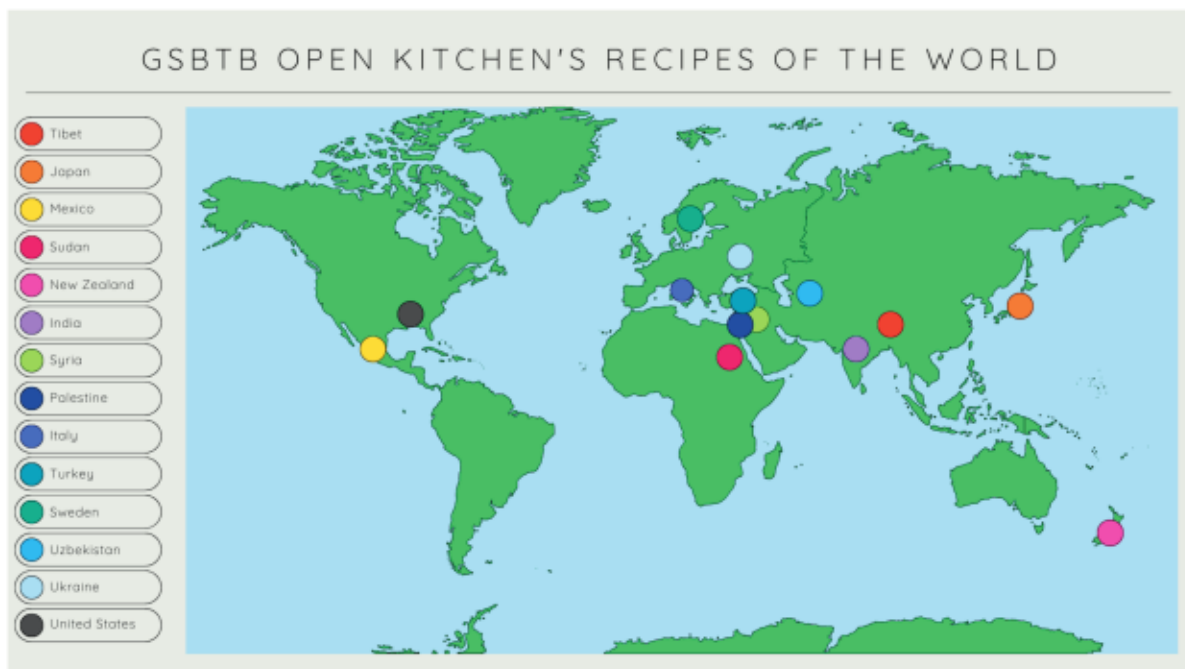


Figure 13: This world map depicts the cultural origins of all the recipes we spoke with interviewees about.

Results

Table 1: This table shows our observations from each weekly Open Kitchen event.

Week	Open Kitchen Participant Observations
1	Approximately 25-30 people attended the event. In the beginning most people were quiet, but as more people arrived and the cooking began, people became more talkative and comfortable with each other.
2	Approximately 25-30 people attendees helped cook, more people, around 10-15 joined to eat after the event had moved outside. The outdoor space was utilized to eat in, as there were more people than anticipated there, and the indoor space was not large enough to accommodate everyone. An organizer of the event said typically they have 15-20 attendees each week. Many newcomers to the event were students. A German attendee brought another person from French Guinea to join, with the express purpose of getting them to meet people and get involved in the community, as they were physically isolated due to physical disability.
3	Approximately 15 attendees helped cook, 25-30 people ate. The group was primarily composed of newcomers, one group of around six attendees came from Portugal, they were coworkers. The room was very full, several (around 10) attendees moved outside into the stairwell to eat and talk. A travel guide had found out about the program and specifically traveled to Berlin to attend the Open Kitchen event. The travel guide and two other attendees had learned about the Open Kitchen program through a television segment, which we later learned the Open Kitchen organizers didn't know about.
4	Observations for the Open Kitchen this week have been altered, as the event was held elsewhere in collaboration with other organizations. This event had a participant limit and was not solely an Open Kitchen event. The group of attendees was mostly made up of participants from the Open Kitchen, with a smaller group being made up of representatives from other organizations based in Berlin.
5	Social cooking did not occur this week, as the Open Kitchen was in the process of renovating their kitchen. Three of us assisted in removing the old kitchen from the space and socialized with the other handful of volunteers. The attendance of this week was much smaller due to it not being publicly advertised. Several first-time visitors attended, including an attendee from the previous week's event. A tourist stopped by under the impression there would be social cooking, and they spoke with us for a short period of time before leaving.
6	Approximately 20-25 people attended. Around 5 attendees were at the Open Kitchen for the first time. The new attendees heard about the Open Kitchen through other GSBTB programs, and friends/word of mouth.

Results

From our participant observation, we developed four key findings regarding the Open Kitchen.

The first is that there is increasing interest for the program, with total attendance at a consistently high number compared to other time periods, and a large portion of newcomers each week.

The second is that there is consistent positive feedback for the program. Both our interviewees and participants of the Open Kitchen expressed it was different than anything else they'd ever done before, and those who are no longer active in the community are still in contact with people they've met there.

Our third observation is that there are varying motivations for why people attend the Open Kitchen. Some come from other GSBTB programs and are interested in language exchange while at the kitchen, some want to meet people, others are more motivated by the actual cooking and food at the event.

The fourth and final observation is that there are different demographics that make up the attendees of the Open Kitchen. There are people who are at varying points in their lives, at different ages, of different genders, and from different socioeconomic or geographic backgrounds.

With these findings, we have also observed some resulting effects. We've seen that resources are spread relatively thin, from the hours people can work for the organization to commentary about balancing the budget from week to week.

However, through the increasing interest in the organization and the number of new people coming each week, the organization is reaching a wider audience.

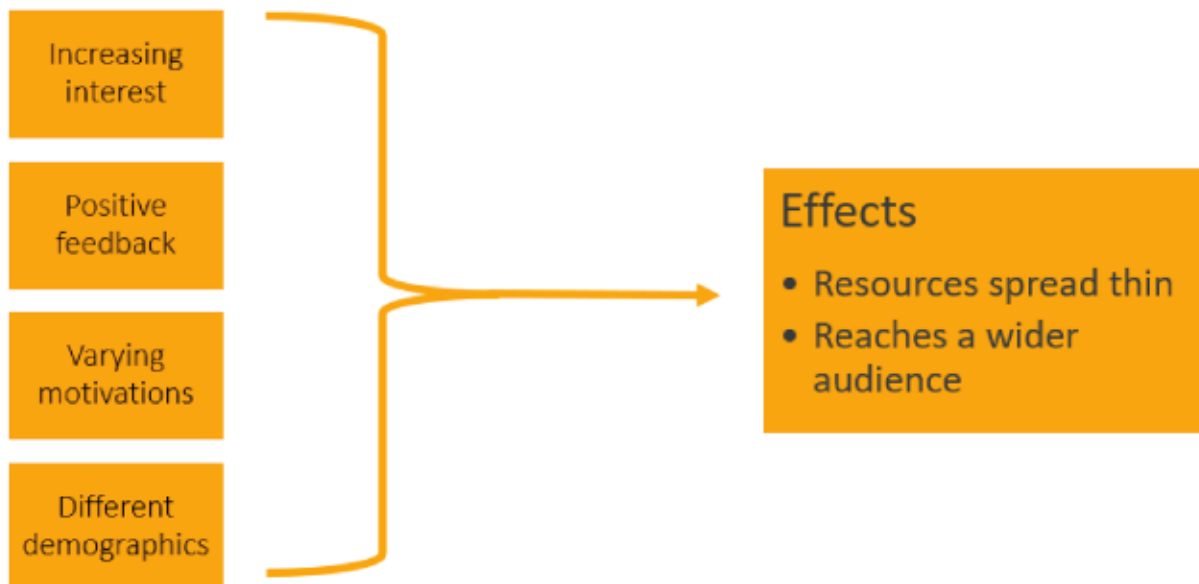


Figure 14: This flow chart shows our observations, and the effects they have created in the Open Kitchen organization.

Outcomes



Key Characteristics of the Open Kitchen Program



Basic criteria that qualify a setting for an inclusive democratic program



Benefits that members gain from a period of attendance



Outcomes

Throughout the seven weeks of data collection, we observed three main categories of findings, Open Kitchen characteristics, criteria for a program's setting, and benefits for members. Each of these categories demonstrated why this program is beneficial and how it can be replicable.

Open Kitchen Characteristics

The Open Kitchen characteristics consist of aspects that have made this a long running, successful program. The first main characteristic of the group is its inclusivity. Each week, GSBTB places an open invitation to "social cooking" on their Instagram page. They also have a separate group chat for already attending members to state what is happening in the kitchen that week. They consistently welcome people of all backgrounds with open arms and accept anyone with varied cooking experience. The group also ensures that the food is inclusive to those with religious dietary restrictions. Despite the program gaining more traction in recent months, they still aim to accommodate all participants with the resources they have. It encourages its members to be involved in a creative activity that fosters teamwork and collaboration. The recipes agreed upon for the week allow for everyone to have a chance to participate and get to interact with those around them. Allowing anybody and everybody to have common ground and participate in similar activities creates a low barrier for entry and helps reduce the stress of making common connections.

Program Criteria

The criteria for the program's setting is in reference to its replicability. To ensure a program similar to Open Kitchen can thrive in an environment, we have concluded that the space needs to have the four following criteria: a densely populated setting, an eclectic target audience, a transient environment, and an emphasis on participant ownership and voice. The reason this program thrives in Berlin is due to the city's busy atmosphere which makes meeting others very difficult. With so many people of such different backgrounds in one area, many tend to keep to themselves as the effort to make connections can seem insurmountable due to language barriers, uncertainty in new situations, and a fast-paced environment. However, this does not mean that the members of the community do not desire a space to gather and meet others. This makes a place like the Open Kitchen so popular. Berlin is also a great case study for an area with a highly eclectic population. Those with different perspectives and backgrounds have a lot to share but also a lot of common ground. Providing a space to foster this dialogue allows the community to flourish. A transient environment also allows for those in the community to reap the benefits and be able to use the programs as a springboard into other areas or just create lifelong connections within the program.

Outcomes

Benefits to Members

The benefits for the participating members is truly what allows a program like the Open Kitchen to thrive. Their service is a democratic framework, so attendees have a lot to gain from the program. Many strengthen interpersonal skills by being put in a setting where communication is key. They also gain strength in being in a diverse group. With such a diverse community, there will always be differences in perspectives, and being able to overcome this can be an exceptional skill, especially for the more transient members. Other benefits include the people they meet throughout the program and the memories and connections they create. Many of the attendees have expressed positive feedback regarding how the program has helped them settle in the area and find friends they otherwise wouldn't currently have. Each of these findings showed why this program should be replicated and the ways in which it can be done. But with every program such as this, a need for resources can cause issues. The Open Kitchen program exhibited a lack of space and funding which can hinder its inclusivity and community building missions. With limited space but a determination to welcome anyone who wants to participate, the overcrowded and under resourced environment can push some participants away. Funding also caused a similar problem. With unknown amounts of people attending each week, gathering proper amounts of supplies was typically very difficult and limited how much people could participate.

These issues still exhibit that the organization is succeeding in its mission, as they are a result of increasing interest and satisfaction with the program. It also shows that while many attendees and senior members understand these issues, they have run out of ways to better their program to make it that much more successful.



Recommendations

Following the collection of our results and the analysis of our outcomes, three sets of recommendations were made for three different groups. These recommendations are for program developers and NGOs, community researchers, and newcomers/attendees of community-based programs. Each recommendation is paired with its potential pros and cons, along with a further description of the recommendation.

1

Program Developers and NGOs

- a. Incorporate an RSVP for Events
- b. Improve Accessibility

2

Community Researchers

- a. Utilize Participatory Research Styles
- b. Conduct Semi-Structured Interviews

3

Newcomers/Attendees

- a. Get Involved
 - b. Share Your Expertise
-

For Program Developers and NGOs

1a. Incorporate an RSVP for events

- Guidance for how many supplies to purchase
- Can limit the number of attendees to the room capacity

PROS

- May discourage some people from attending
- First-timers are not likely to receive the RSVP

CONS

When a program advertises that it is all-inclusive, they can sometimes underestimate their reach. Including an RSVP feature to events will help the volunteers better prepare for the event and avoid overcrowding. It will also help ensure that all attendees have a something to do and the supplies necessary to do it. With that in mind, an RSVP may also reduce the inclusivity of the event and discourage some from coming. It will also be more difficult to ensure that newcomers are able to RSVP, as that is not as easily advertised.

1b. Accessibility Improvements

- Allows for a more inclusive environment
- Increases outreach and likelihood of newcomers coming back

PROS

- Can be costly depending on the improvement
- Physical limitations of the space

CONS

Accessibility improvements are helpful in both physical and visual accessibility. Including ramps or elevators into a program space mitigates the physical accessibility barriers that some people face. Having signs or directions to the space will facilitate the discovery of and navigation to the space. Physical accessibility improvements may be costly and the building may not be able to accommodate these. The posting of signage may not be allowed in some public spaces.

For Researchers

2a. Utilize Participatory Research Styles

- Allows for closer community insight
- Better see the inner workings of the community

PROS

- Hard to separate research and friendship
- Uphold participation while conducting research

CONS

Participatory research styles allow for a researcher to experience a community and see the inner-workings of a group while upholding their place as a researcher. This can also create an interesting dynamic between a researcher and the community. In welcoming groups, creating friendships can be easy, but may also interfere with the quality of research. Keeping that in mind, participation is still a main asset to this style of research. Putting yourself into the group, rather than standing to the side and solely doing research, helps gain better insights.

2b. Conduct Semi-Structured Interviews

- Important questions will still be asked
- Makes the interviewee more comfortable

PROS

- May be more demanding than a less structured interview
- Difficult balance between conversation and research goals

CONS

Semi-structured interviews are important when you are trying to build a rapport with someone. Having a set of questions allows for the interviewee and the researcher to be prepared for what is coming and can foster some comfort. It also ensures that all questions are asked and nothing is missed. These types of interviews can also lend to a deep level of conversation which can lead to the interviewee straying from the questions. Interviewees with less experience may be more stressed with a structured interview where the questions are more hard-set and rhythmic.

For Newcomers/Attendees

3a. Get Involved

- Receive more personal benefits from the program
- Learn about lesser-known events in the program

PROS

- May be difficult to join a group that is already close with one another
- In a busy environment, it is easier to stand to the side

CONS

Getting involved in a program is the easiest way to reap its benefits. When one helps with the setup or activities, socialization in a group becomes easier. It can also help to diversify who you talk to and what you learn through the program. It should also be understood that some programs have groups of regular attendees that know each other well, which can be harder for newcomers to mesh with. It can also be difficult to participate in a group in a crowded space, when it becomes easier to simply observe.

3b. Share Your Expertise

- Other members will come to you for help
- Enriches the experience of others

PROS

- May end up overloaded with responsibility
- Do not want to overstep if you are a newer member

CONS

In a program that sees many people coming and going, skill sharing can be something that makes or breaks the experience. Learning from others, as well as sharing what you know, enriches the experience and ensures a less monotonous environment. It can also help create conversation with others in the group. This may also create a delicate balance between members. Some may find it easier to follow rather than lead or vice versa. It can also be difficult to step into a leading position if you are a newcomer.

Conclusions

Throughout this project, the data we gathered and the research we completed allowed us to determine the replicability of this program and the importance of the continuation of this research. Using the interviews and our participation in the program, we observed the importance of democratic social programs in places with a large influx of newcomers. Programs such as these, which help socialize newcomers in an area, are extremely beneficial in community building and the creation of important skills. The low barrier to entry and the networking that these programs provide make purpose integration much easier and more effective.

With the continuous growth of many major cities and other areas of mixed demographics, the importance of democratic social programs is at its peak. Continued research within the WPI IQP community in democratic programs and their connection to purpose integration and community building can create lasting benefits and positive changes needed in our world today. The work that GSBTB and the Open Kitchen program do will grow in importance in Berlin as the city grows and becomes more diverse.

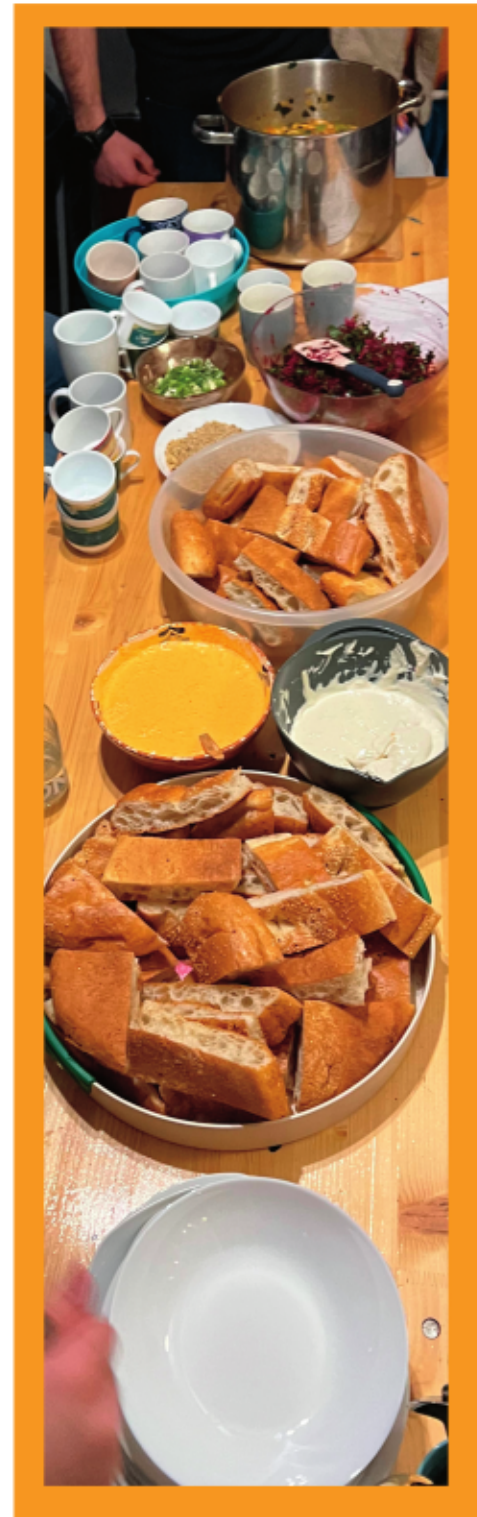


Figure 15: This photo contains the food the Open Kitchen prepared on Week 3.

Appendices

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

These questions are intended for our sponsor deliverable, to be posed to interviewees for the cookbook. Questions written by Böbe Barsi.

Biographic Information:

Where are you from?
Where did you grow up?
What was your family like? Your parents, your siblings?
Who was your role model as a child?
Who had the biggest impact on you?
Where did you attend school?
In which countries did you live?
How did you end up in Berlin?
What do you do at work?
Which was the biggest disruption in your life?
With whom do you live now?
When are you the happiest?
Do you have a dream you would like to realize?

Experiences:

Since when have you lived in Berlin?
In which district do you live?
What is your biggest challenge here in Berlin?
Do you feel that you belong?
What have you learnt from the experience of building your life here?
How would you describe Berlin?

Is there anything you are missing from your country of origin?

What does cooking mean?
When did you start cooking?
How did you learn to cook?
Did anyone teach you?
What do you bring from your home country to your cooking? (ingredients, methods)
What did you add here? (ingredients, methods)
How do you cook?
What do you cook most often?

Celebration:

For which occasion do you cook this food in your home country? What do you celebrate when you eat this dish?
Why is this celebration important in your culture?
Why is it important to you?
Why did you choose this recipe? Why is it important to you? What is your personal story behind it?
When did you eat this dish for the first time?
Who cooked this dish for you?
For whom do you cook this dish now?
Do you prepare it the same way as in your country of origin?
Does it have any ingredients that are hard to find here in Berlin? If yes, where do you buy them?
How do you celebrate this occasion here in Berlin?

Appendices

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

These questions are intended for our research project, to be posed to interviewees.

Do you think the atmosphere/food in the Open Kitchen is reflective of Berlin?
What are your favorite restaurants in Berlin?
What is your favorite thing you've tried since you've gotten here?

How did you find out about the Open Kitchen?

How long/often have you participated in the Open Kitchen?

If you don't go anymore, why not?

If you go regularly, why? What brings you to the Open Kitchen?

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

These questions are intended for our research project exclusively, given to senior Open Kitchen members and organizers.

How did you find the Open Kitchen?
How long have you been involved with the Open Kitchen?
What aspects of the Open Kitchen have led you to return on a regular basis?
When did you take on a larger "organizing" role within the Open Kitchen?
How have/has the program's attendees changed over time? Number of people, demographics, newcomers vs. Regulars? If there has been a change, has the atmosphere created by the program changed because of that?

How would you describe the mission of the Open Kitchen?

Do you think the Open Kitchen is fulfilling that mission? If not, how do you think they could go back to achieving that?

Have you noticed more people becoming regulars of the Open Kitchen or do they tend to be transient/one-time visitors?

Do you still keep in touch with people you've met at the Open Kitchen who no longer attend? Do you know why they no longer attend?

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