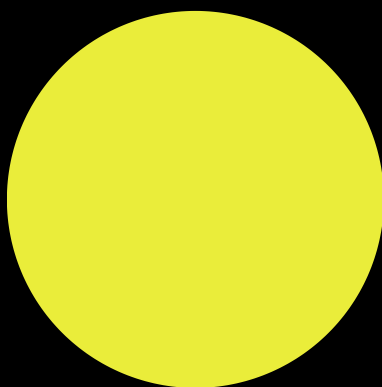




NATIONAL INDEX

SHARED SPACES: CO-CREATING INCLUSIVE
ENVIRONMENTS FOR MIGRANT AND LOCAL
COMMUNITIES

March, 2024



CULTURE GOES EUROPE
SOZIOKULTURELLE INITIATIVE ERFURT E.V.



Co-funded by
the European Union

National Index - Germany

Shared Spaces: Co-creating inclusive environments for migrant and local communities

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This publication is the result of the project “Shared Spaces: Co-creating inclusive environments for migrant and local communities” (Pr. Nr.: 2023-1-SE02-KA210-YOU-000160073), co-funded by the European Union.

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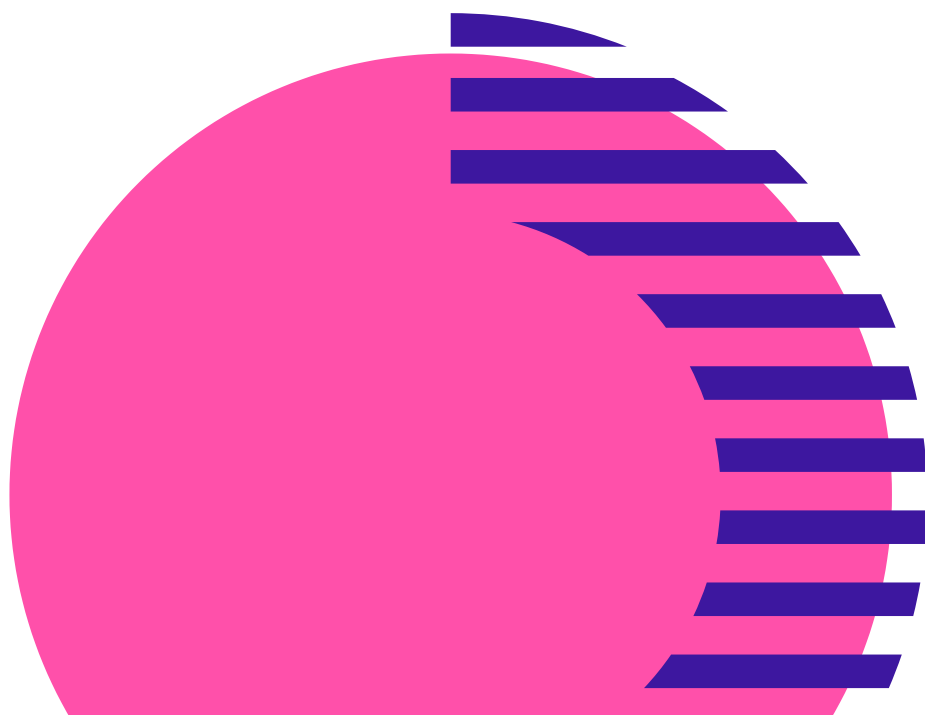
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INTRODUCTION



In an era where migration patterns are increasingly complex and diverse, the challenge of social integration and cohesion within communities has never been more critical. "Shared Spaces" aims to address the pressing issues of social isolation and exclusion that many young migrants face in marginalized and remote districts. These areas, characterized by their lack of diversity and inclusive community spaces, coupled with limited resources and ineffective communication channels, pose significant barriers to community involvement and social integration.

At the heart of "Shared Spaces", our consortium is committed to the co-creation process, a method that not only involves but actively empowers migrant communities in the design and execution of community activities. This approach recognizes young migrants not merely as beneficiaries but as key stakeholders with agency, insights, and the capacity to contribute meaningfully to the social fabric of their new environments.

INTRODUCTION



By granting them a voice in decision-making processes, "Shared Spaces" aims to foster an inclusive environment that is culturally sensitive and relevant to their diverse backgrounds. This is not just about creating spaces for migrants; it's about reimagining community spaces as inclusive places for social interaction and mutual learning.

This project's target groups are young migrants (18-30) and social workers dealing with migrants, youth workers, and educators. The focus of this project is directly embedded in German, Swedish, Polish, and Spanish realities, where our consortium is located at.

The initial phase of our project has been dedicated to research on understanding the complexities of the issues at hand and the needs of our target groups. This involved conducting focus groups with young migrants and educators, disseminating surveys to young people, and interviewing youth workers whose roles intersect with our project's goals. The following report outlines our research in Germany, detailing the methodologies employed and insights gained.



CHAPTER 1: FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

A decorative graphic on the right side of the page, consisting of a large, semi-circular shape with a gradient from light blue to dark blue, and a series of vertical bars of varying heights in shades of blue and green.

FOCUS GROUP WITH YOUNG MIGRANTS: METHODOLOGY

Our research team developed a list of questions aimed at understanding young migrants' perspectives on the topic. From this list, a representative selection of questions was chosen for discussion.

We engaged a diverse group of six young migrants, aged between 18 and 27, in a conversation that covered a wide array of topics.

These included their understanding of what constitutes a "Safe Space," challenges they face in accessing community activities or spaces, their vision for ideal inclusive community activities or events, specific activities or events they would like to see organized, essential information necessary for effectively communicating about community events, and strategies for improving outreach to young people with immigration backgrounds.



CHAPTER 1: FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

FOCUS GROUP WITH YOUNG MIGRANTS: KEY FINDINGS

First, the concept of a "Safe Space" was underscored as an environment free from judgment, where participants feel comfortable and welcomed, with familiarity enhancing their sense of safety.

Significant barriers to accessing community activities or spaces were identified, including language challenges, and personal factors such as a sense of alienation or lack of connection.

Participants expressed a strong interest in inclusive community activities that offer flexibility and encourage participation without pressure. They favored events like documentary screenings, workshops, art festivals, board games, and outdoor activities, suggesting a variety of specific events they would like to see organized.

Communication about these events should include comprehensive details with any additional offerings like free food or drinks, and be disseminated well in advance to allow for adequate planning. To improve outreach to young migrants, the focus group recommended using social media platforms and informal communication channels such as Whatsapp and Facebook groups, highlighting the effectiveness of building a community over time and the critical role of word-of-mouth referrals within migrant communities.



CHAPTER 1: FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

A SAFE SPACE CANNOT BE
HOSTILE, IT HAS TO BE
WELCOMING



A PLACE WITHOUT
JUDGEMENT, THAT IS A
SAFE SPACE



CHAPTER 1: FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

FOCUS GROUP WITH EDUCATORS: METHODOLOGY

We also convened a second focus group comprising youth workers and educators who work directly with migrant populations.

Similarly, this session began with a set of questions prepared by our research team, aimed at understanding the educators' perspectives on several critical areas.

The discussion topics for this group included the communication channels most frequently used to reach young migrants, the effectiveness of these channels, the role of street work and face-to-face interactions, the primary barriers encountered in communication, strategies for overcoming language barriers during events, and suggestions for improving both communication and accessibility of community events and programs.

FOCUS GROUP WITH EDUCATORS: KEY FINDINGS

Educators and youth workers shared valuable perspectives on engaging young migrants and facilitating their integration into community activities. The use of social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, alongside newsletters, was noted, although the effectiveness of these channels varies. Face-to-face interactions, especially during community open events, were identified as important methods for directly engaging with potential participants.





CHAPTER 1: FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

FOCUS GROUP WITH EDUCATORS: KEY FINDINGS

Communication barriers, both in terms of language and the perception of the organization's accessibility, were acknowledged as significant challenges. Efforts to address these barriers include providing translations at events and improving the visibility and accessibility of activities.

Educators highlighted the need for increased presence in the community, collaboration with local partners, and outreach beyond the city center to enhance communication and accessibility. Despite challenges such as limited resources and volunteer engagement, there is a commitment to organizing inclusive and accessible events, with a focus on fostering a sense of community, respect, and inclusivity among participants.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

This dual-focus group approach enabled us to capture a holistic view of the ecosystem surrounding young migrants and their interactions with community spaces and activities.

By comparing and contrasting the insights from both groups, we aimed to identify both common challenges and divergent experiences that could inform the development of more effective, inclusive, and responsive community engagement strategies.

CHAPTER 1: FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

The overall recommendations for enhancing community integration focus on creating inclusive and accessible environments, addressing communication and language barriers, and fostering community collaboration.

KEY STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

- 1. Fostering safe and familiar spaces:** Establish judgment-free zones where young migrants feel comfortable and welcomed, using consistent activities to build familiarity. Focus on building sustained relationships and a sense of belonging among young migrants in community spaces
- 2. Addressing barriers to access and prioritizing inclusivity:** Provide language support and create flexible participation opportunities to mitigate feelings of alienation and language difficulties. Design events that cater to diverse interests, ensuring they are inclusive, respectful, and accessible.
- 3. Enhancing communication strategies:** Utilize preferred social media platforms for outreach and ensure event information is comprehensive and disseminated well in advance. Employ street work and direct interactions, especially during public events, to engage young migrants effectively.



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES



INTRODUCTION

This chapter delves into a series of interviews conducted with youth workers and educators from a variety of organizations. These interviews serve as case studies that exemplify the concept of shared spaces in action.

Through a careful analysis of these discussions, we aim to present the key insights that emerged, providing an overview of the practices, challenges, and successes experienced in these diverse community spaces.

This exploration covers the range of activities and initiatives offered within these spaces, the communication strategies employed and their effectiveness, the challenges faced and strategies for overcoming them, and the critical considerations necessary to ensure these spaces are truly inclusive and welcoming to all.

Additionally, we examine the tangible benefits and impact these shared spaces have on both individuals and the wider community.



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

1. VALENTIN & WIEBKE – FACK E.V. – ALTENBURG, GERMANY

Valentin and Wiebke are part of FACK, a young organization that offers young people a space to work on their own ideas and projects, promoting empowerment, leadership, and teamwork. More information can be found here: [Fack-ev.com](https://fack-ev.com)

FACK is an organization that operates as a big network of young individuals offering each other support. It emphasizes the importance of having a physical space for projects, taking responsibility, and serving as a symbol for the community's social structure. It hosts various events and initiatives, such as workshops, communal cooking, and project-based activities (e.g., cosplay, games, and movies nights), to bring the community together and cater to diverse interests.



VALENTIN



WIEBKE



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

Valentin and Wiebke emphasized the importance of adapting spaces to the needs and ideas of young people. Spaces are seen as methods to empower youth by allowing them to execute their projects and come up with new ideas.

Effective communication with the community is achieved through a large WhatsApp group and the physical space itself, which is open to young people at specific times. Personal relationships and trust are deemed crucial for engaging young people in new experiences.

The discussion touched on the challenges of building trust and reaching out to families. Accommodating a diverse group within the space, ensuring inclusivity while maintaining democratic values, and addressing physical accessibility were also pointed out as ongoing challenges.

Therefore, the organization focus on recognizing the unique backgrounds and stories of individuals for societal benefit, with inclusivity extending to engaging with differing political and societal views to foster change. Valentin and Wiebke reflected on the positive impacts of the space, including personal growth, community engagement, and leadership development among young people.



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

CHECK THE FULL INTERVIEW HERE:



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

2. THE OTHER MUSIC ACADEMY E.V. – WEIMAR, GERMANY

The Other Music Academy e.V. (OMA) aims to be an empowerment center, focused on creating a society where everyone is welcome to contribute to its shared culture.

It has three main parts: a Creation Tank for collaborative projects across different fields, a Life-long Learning Center with courses that grow from these projects, and a Sociocultural Center that acts as a home for these activities and a place for people to meet and network. More information can be found here: othermusicacademy.eu



ANNA AND THE TEAM

CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

OMA highlights innovative approaches to fostering community engagement and integration through music and culture. This initiative leverages various communication channels, with a strong emphasis on social media, alongside face-to-face interactions within migrant communities.

Direct engagement in city centers, particularly during festivals, plays a crucial role in promoting events and enriching Yiddish culture, demonstrating the academy's commitment to accessible cultural education.

However, the academy faces challenges due to language barriers and the physical accessibility of their spaces. Addressing these issues involves providing translations and explanations at events, especially those featuring international artists, to ensure inclusivity and understanding among diverse audiences.

Efforts to revive and promote inclusive community events, such as the Samba series, underscore the academy's dedication to creating spaces that respect, include, and accommodate the diverse needs and backgrounds of participants.



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

CHECK THE FULL INTERVIEW HERE:



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

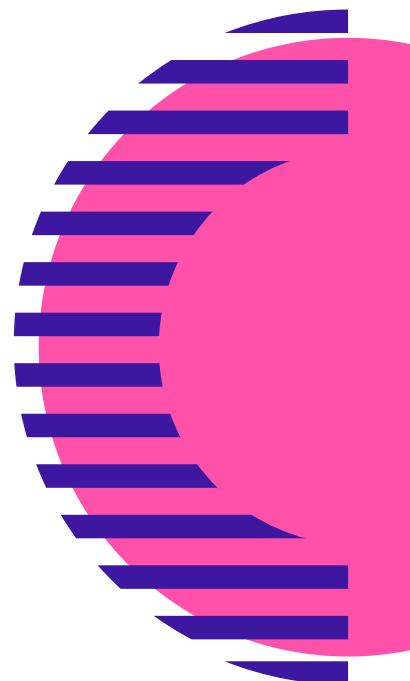
3. STZ AM HERRENBERG – ERFURT, GERMANY

Stadtteilzentrum (STZ) am Herrenberg, is a project by Plattform e.V., and it works as a district center. Located in Herrenberg, southeast of Erfurt, it offers every resident the opportunity to have a place to realize their own ideas. More information can be found here: stz-herrenberg.de

STZ is dedicated to fostering civil society in the Herrenberg neighborhood by enabling the community to self-manage and eventually operate independently of professional support. The center achieves this through on-site assistance, sharing expertise, collaborating with local councils for community improvements, providing spaces for activities, and offering micro-funding up to €400 for local projects.



**MURAL IN THE
COMMUNITY CENTRE**



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

Its core activities include a weekly schedule with a diverse program such as children's activities, dance groups, and creative workshops, along with more specialized interests like chess and line dancing. Additionally, social gatherings like coffee meetups for older residents and knitting groups create spaces for interaction and mutual support. Communication is mainly through notice boards and social media, aiming to engage a wider audience and support isolated community members through neighborhood-based volunteering.

The challenges STZ faces include securing consistent municipal funding, which impacts long-term planning and project sustainability, and engaging isolated individuals who are hard to reach through conventional means. Despite these hurdles, the benefits and impact of STZ on the Herrenberg community are significant. It promotes active participation, enhances social cohesion, and empowers residents to influence their living conditions positively.

Initiatives like micro-project funding encourage creativity and innovation, while networking efforts lead to tangible community improvements. STZ's model of empowering residents for self-reliance and active participation sets a sustainable framework for community development, emphasizing long-term impact and community ownership.



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

4. PIXEL SOZIALWERK – ERFURT, GERMANY

Pixel Sozialwerk operates with the Erfurt community, particularly in the districts known for their less privileged status and unequal opportunities. Its mission is to provide children, irrespective of their backgrounds, with the means for development, career opportunities, and a promising future. More information can be found here: pixel-sozialwerk.de

The organization's efforts are primarily channeled through their children and family centers located in Rieth and Berliner Platz. These centers serve as hubs for open meetings and educational opportunities, offered free of charge to school-age children on weekdays. The centers also host holiday programs that include excursions and projects, enriching the children's experiences and learning during school breaks. For parents, the initiative of a parents' café fosters a sense of community and provides a support network.



CHAPTER 2: INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

The playground festivals, a signature event of Pixel, embody the spirit of the organization. These festivals bring the community together in celebration and play, traveling to various locations in Erfurt with a mobile festival setup or e-bike and trailer. These festivals are not just about entertainment; they are a powerful tool for community building and fostering hope in areas that are often stereotyped as underprivileged.

The organization's utilization of physical spaces to serve the diverse needs of children and families aligns with the shared spaces' core values of inclusivity, resourcefulness, and community development. Pixel Sozialwerk's transformation of places into spaces that are accessible and welcoming to all, particularly in underserved areas, enhances community engagement.

The organization's activities, such as the versatile use of indoor and outdoor playgrounds and the organization of neighborhood festivals, foster social cohesion and offer adaptable solutions to the community's needs. Through their efforts, Pixel Sozialwerk not only offers opportunities for personal growth and skill development but also works towards altering the negative perceptions of less privileged districts. Their commitment to creating inclusive and dynamic environments where hope and positive community identity thrive is what makes Pixel Sozialwerk a case study on the topic of shared spaces.



CHAPTER 3: SURVEY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



METHODOLOGY

The survey conducted aimed to delve into the perspectives of young people regarding their participation in community activities, their involvement with youth organizations, and their preferences for future engagements.

Participants were asked about their level of activity in their local communities, examples of activities, and frequency of their participation. Young people were also asked about how they stay informed about local events and activities and the most effective ways for organizations to communicate with them.

Additionally, the survey explored the skills young people are keen to learn or practice through community events, the accessibility of existing community spaces, and their willingness to organize activities voluntarily in available community spaces, including the types of activities they would be interested in leading.

Demographic information such as country of residence, country of origin, age, gender, duration of residence in the current community, and feelings of integration provided a comprehensive understanding of the respondents' backgrounds and their perspectives on community involvement.

CHAPTER 3: SURVEY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



KEY FINDINGS

Regarding participants whose country of residence was at the time Germany, 40% of participants were between 22 and 25 years old, and 64% identified as male. Most participants were migrants, coming from a variety of countries such as France, Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Russia, Norway, Argentina, Kenya, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Afghanistan, Ghana, Ukraine and Vietnam. Most participants have been living in their current community for less than a year, followed by those who have lived there for 1-2 years.

The participants indicated a range of engagement levels in activities such as volunteering at NGOs, being part of college committees, engaging in political and social groups like Amnesty International, and even individual contributions like paying taxes as a form of civic participation.

The respondents are active in various areas, including sports, political participation, culture, arts, youth work, activism, and informal groups. Their involvement varies from occasional to frequent, with information about events and activities primarily sourced through social media, including WhatsApp groups, Instagram, LinkedIn, and also word-of-mouth, and local notice boards.



CHAPTER 3: SURVEY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

KEY FINDINGS

A significant portion of participants is interested in organizing activities if a community space was made available, with responses almost evenly split between 'Yes' and 'Maybe'. For those interested in organizing activities, there's a wide range of interests, including cinema sessions, intercultural karaoke, and workshops on different topics.

Additionally, when asked to rate their interest in a range of activities, participants showed interest in cultural exchanges, language courses, and practical workshops, followed by sports, arts and crafts, and networking events, and finishing with culinary events and sessions about entrepreneurship. Insights from the survey highlight a desire for more inclusive and accessible community spaces, with suggestions for events that cater to diverse interests and skills development opportunities.



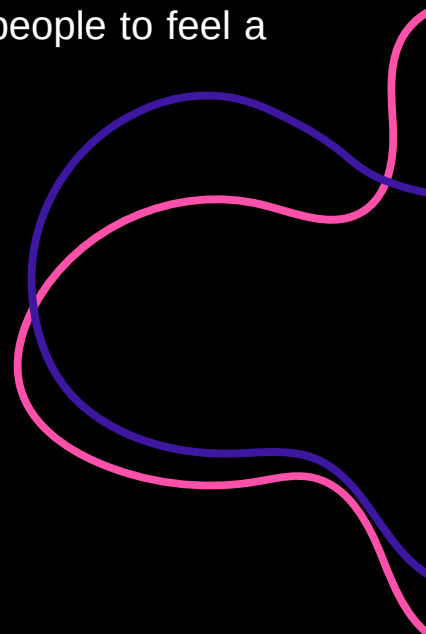
CHAPTER 3: SURVEY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

KEY FINDINGS

The survey results reveal a nuanced picture of how young people feel about their integration into the local community. A significant portion, 40%, feel 'somewhat not integrated,' indicating that while they may have some level of engagement with their community, there are barriers or feelings of disconnect that prevent them from feeling fully part of it. Meanwhile, roughly 30% of respondents feel 'somewhat integrated,' suggesting they have found ways to connect with their community but still lack a complete sense of belonging.

On a more positive note, 17% of the participants consider themselves 'integrated,' showing a satisfactory level of involvement and comfort within their local settings. Notably, 13% express feeling 'fully integrated,' which demonstrates a strong sense of belonging and likely reflects deep community ties and active participation.

These insights highlight a diverse range of experiences with community integration, underscoring the need for initiatives that can enhance inclusivity and provide more opportunities for all young people to feel a part of their local communities.



CONCLUSION



This report has uncovered both challenges and opportunities that shape the experiences of young migrants. Their varied levels of engagement and the barriers to feeling fully integrated into their communities call for thoughtful and actionable responses. The information gathered showcases the importance of creating 'Safe Spaces' where young people can feel comfortable, accepted, and connected.

The recommendations throughout this report converge on a central theme: shared spaces must be adaptable, responsive, and rooted in the needs and desires of the communities they serve. They should provide a variety of activities that reflect the rich diversity of interests and backgrounds. These spaces should be platforms for empowerment, offering not just activities, but also opportunities for leadership, learning, and growth.

To foster an environment where young migrants feel more included, special attention should be given to programs that assist newcomers in building social connections, thus aiding their integration into the community. It is also crucial to empower young individuals by providing them with the resources to lead and organize activities, which in turn can enhance their sense of belonging.

In conclusion, if these insights are taken into consideration, youth organizations can create vibrant, inclusive, and dynamic community spaces that empower young migrants to become not just participants, but also creators and leaders within their communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our gratitude to Valentin Ruehlmann and Wiebke Schricker, Anna Grochocka and Ulrike Nonn sharing their expertise and experiences, which have enriched our understanding of shared spaces. Additionally, we extend our gratitude to the participants of the focus groups for their valuable insights and contributions to this research, as well as to those who have taken the time to participate in our survey.

This project is co-funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ program. Its consortium is assembled by Culture Goes Europe e.V. from Germany, Goodness of People from Sweden, Logos from Poland, and Fedelatina from Spain.



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Project number: 2023-1-SE02-KA210-YOU-000160073



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