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reimagine

restaurant

resilience

rooted restaurants process book

Resilient systems are learning systems.

B. Walker, 2020

Designed by
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Preface

After a busy day of work, where do you go to shake off the fatigue and hunger of the day? What is the go-to local spot where some of your favorite memories still linger? That fun night out? The place that feels like home? We all have a soft spot in our hearts for the restaurants we love in our community. It is not just the food connecting us, but the carefully selected ambiance, thought, welcoming faces, and bright spaces that continually invite us in for another meal. These restaurants not only add flavor and livelihood to our communities but also support our local economy.

Devastatingly, COVID-19 has left the restaurant industry scrambling for survival. In March 2020, New York City restaurants began to close preemptively, just days before the state-mandated shutdown order came through. A study by the National Restaurant Association shows that as of December 1st 2020, over 110,000 service-industry businesses were "closed permanently or long-term" across the country. These small businesses were struck hard, and seeing their gradual disappearance is heartbreaking.

We began Rooted Restaurants from our deep appreciation of food that connects us all, and the deep sorrow we felt when the restaurant industry struggled during the pandemic. What followed our initial interest was an uncovering of issues that have long plagued the restaurant industry, and are what make restaurants uniquely susceptible to instability.

Together we imagine a future where restaurants are resilient. We believe that by acknowledging the mutual interdependence of the restaurant ecosystem, the restaurant industry can be more resilient and centered on the ideas of cooperation with their communities that they serve. A future where workers, restaurant owners, and local communities can adapt, learn, and be flexible when faced with challenges such as COVID-19.

— DSI

The School of Visual Arts' Design for Social Innovation (DSI) master's program is where it all happens. It is at DSI that we practice design methodologies, system thinking, ethics of sustainability, collaboration, and leadership. We celebrate inclusion, diversity, creativity, equity, resilience, and social justice. We are taught and believe that design is a tool and a mindset. How we use design wisely and effectively is an overarching question we consider throughout the program. At DSI we hope to use design to drive social change, little by little, starting from right where we are.

— Setting

This thesis project takes place in the East Village, NYC, which is a lively historical neighborhood that celebrates diversity in food and culture. We partnered with a local community organization, the East Village Community Coalition (EVCC). Along with the EVCC and a cohort of 8 diverse restaurants, we co-created solutions together to address not only immediate needs but also a plan to promote resilience long term. The restaurant industry has very few organizing approaches and tools that enable them to knowledge share, innovate, and bring together local community stakeholders for assistance. The lack of organizing tools is why we developed this project and our ultimate intervention which you will find in the close of this process book.

As our thesis advisor Mari Nakano would say "A designer is an advocate."

BUTTER FILM　　　　　SAVE THE MOMENT

Evan

Bridget

Dasha

021
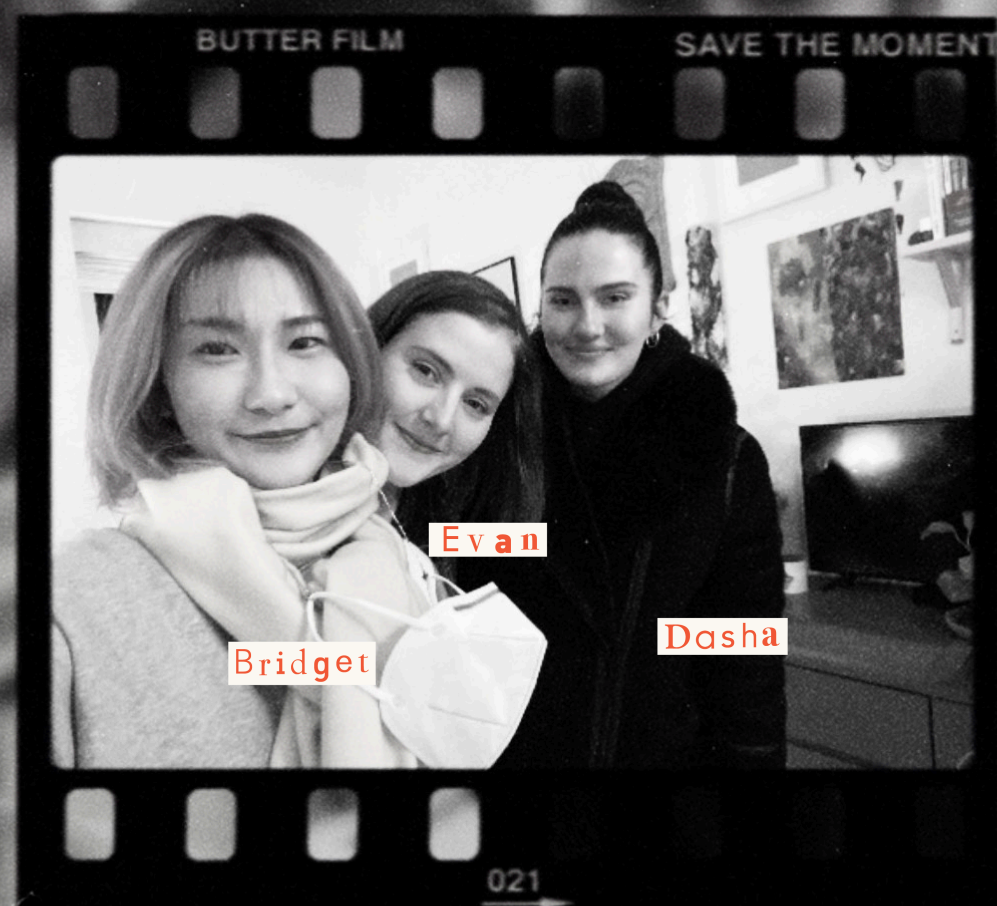
Moments of bonding

— **Bridget**

Qingyi Bridget Qian was born and raised in Beijing, China, and came to study in the U.S. at a young age. Growing up as multicultural and bilingual shaped her into a rigorous learner who is cautious when need to be, but also loves to explore new ideas. She believes in designing with, not designing for. Working closely and learning the needs of the community is the number one priority for her as a social design practitioner.

— **Dasha**

Dasha Zlochevsky (she/her) is a social impact designer and data feminist. She has always been curious to understand the relationship between health and social systems. She is passionate about research, building relationships, facilitating dialogue, and building individual & community resilience.

— **Evan**

Evan Ressegger is a design researcher and strategist. She believes that communities are their own experts and uses a community design lens to turn design insights into an actionable plan for the future. Her background in the social sector continues to inform her understanding that good work takes time, patience, thought, and care.

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My Restaurant Was My Life for 20 Years. Does the World Need It Anymore?

Forced to shutter Prune, I've been revisiting my original dreams for it — and wondering if there will still be a place for it in the New York of the future.

CURBED

REASONS TO LOVE NEW YORK
DEC. 7, 2020

Reasons We've Loved New York
A send-off to the many places, big and small, that closed in 2020.

By The Editors | Introduction by Carl Swanson

9 of Every 10 Restaurants and Bars in N.Y.C. Can't Pay Full Rent

A survey conducted by an industry group found that many establishments were still facing a financial crisis even after opening for outdoor dining.

More Than 90 Percent of NYC Restaurants Could Not Pay Full Rent in December, Survey Says

A new survey shows the city's restaurants can't pay rent while subsisting on takeout, delivery, and outdoor dining — especially during the winter.

by Luke Fortney | @lucasfortney | Feb 16, 2021, 11:39am EST

Glossary

Capitalist economic model: An economic model where industry and trade are privatized. Often prioritizes competition over cooperation.

Co-liberation: Integrating oneself, community, and institutions toward a greater good. The idea that none of us are free until all of us are free.

Collaboration: The act of working with someone to make or create something. Collaboration may feel closer to your heart.

Collective work: Different types of processes and structures that involve a group of people working together in some way. It may imply a longer-term working relationship that spans multiple projects.

Community: People who live in the same geographical area or/and have mutual interests. A feeling of fellowship with another.

Cooperation networks: Groups of people who work together on addressing issues in restaurants and sharing of resources, navigating resources.

Equity: Is each of us getting what we need to survive or succeed—access to opportunity, networks, resources, and supports—based on where we are and where we want to go.

Equity vs. Equality: Equity understands that people are not starting from a level playing field. Every individual has different positionalities in society and because of this has different needs. On the other hand, equality promotes the notion of fairness, but often causes existing inequitable social relations to intensify.

Hackathon: is an event where people with mutual interests come together to propose and "hack" solutions in a set amount of time.

Health: Successful human adaptation to particular environmental circumstances (Moore, Van Arsdale, Glittenberg, & Aldrich, 1980) and change (Wilson & Kneisl, 1983) in order to promote individual wellbeing and vitality (Roy, 1984).

Health Disparities: Preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantafes populations.

Interdependence: Broadly interdependence means that we are dependent on each other and interconnected. It is an understanding we need each other to survive and live.

Pivot: Fundamentally changing the direction of a business when services aren't meeting the needs of the market.

Place-Based: Engaged people in the community at a neighborhood level. This approach centers local knowledge and lived experience as expert knowledge.

Power: A force that allows people to enact change that they seek.

Resilience: The capacity to recover and adjust in a crisis. Requires adaptability, learning, and flexibility.

Solidarity Economy: Refers to a wide range of economic activities that aim to prioritize social profitability instead of purely financial profits.

Theory: A set of interrelated constructs (variables), definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena (Kerlinger, 1979)

Trust: Belief and shared understanding of reliability in a relationship (friendship,work, or partnership). Trust of a person or systems honesty and integrity. Adrienne Maree Brown in her book Emergent Strategy, suggests that impactful relationships and projects "move at the speed of trust,". It is necessary to have trust as a basic building block of cooperative and collaborative work.

Why Should We Care About the Restaurant Industry?

Our research indicated that restaurants provide much more to their communities than just a proper meal. Restaurants contribute to the health, safety, economy, and joy of those they reside near and serve. Listed below are a few explanations on why we should want to build more resilient systems for the restaurant industry.

— Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) is a theoretical framework which proposes that the places we play, live, and work affect our health and quality of life outcomes. Reducing social vulnerability can decrease both human suffering and economic loss.

Restaurants are at the heart of culture, gathering spaces and local economic vitality. Market forces can also play an important role, with grocers, restaurant owners, and fast food chains all contributing to the landscape of food availability for communities (AHIP, 2018). SDOH are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, and worship that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. Restaurant wellbeing impacts economic, social and community context, and neighborhood and built environment points of social determinants of health. Researchers have found that 80% of our health is around social determinants and only 10-20% is related to medical care (Hood, C. M., et al., 2016).

The link between social determinants of health, including social, economic, and environmental conditions, and health outcomes is widely recognized by researchers (CDC, 2021).

Restaurants add vitality to human life and to the economy in which they dwell. This trickles down to our communities and impacts our individual health. We must challenge the notion that economic vitality has nothing to do with the health of our communities. Thus, restaurants contribute to social determinants of health for community members.

Three dimensions that are relevant to our Restaurant Resilience Project:

Economic:
Economic mobility allows for housing, healthcare, and for personal needs to be met. In the absence of economic health it has been proven that health outcomes and access to quality healthcare greatly decrease (Susser and Watson and Hopper 1985; Krieger et al. 1993; Lynch and Kaplan 2000). We believe that restaurants provide employment to their neighborhood residents along with improving the local economy.

Cultural & Social Context:
Having meaningful interactions with those you live with, near, and visit greatly affect social and emotional wellbeing (House and Landis and Umberson 1988; Yen and Syme 1999). These interactions translate into health outcomes (House and Robbins and Metzner 1982; Schoenbach et al. 1986). We believe that restaurants contribute to our social well being and are an important cultural and social context for our daily lives.

Employment:
Increased employment in areas where people live impact health outcomes. Areas of where unemployment is high are frequently the same areas with poor health outcomes (Guest an Almgren and Hussey 1998; LeClere and Rogers and Peters 1998). Restaurants provide jobs to their communities and therefore have the opportunity to contribute to more positive health outcomes.

— Equity

Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland stated that "Small businesses are growth engines of our economy, that's where you get innovation. We learned from every recession that small businesses are not as resilient as large businesses". Small businesses usually need much more intentional and focused assistance from the government. Further, the retention and recruitment is difficult for small businesses and this impacts the workers the restaurant employs.

Moreover, restaurants are gathering spaces and add to the vibrancy of the community. They are often a source of community-based resources and opportunities for recreational and leisure time activities.

The struggles faced by the NYC restaurant industry impacts the NYC economy and its inhabitants in a significant way. The NYC restaurant industry had 23,650 establishments in 2019, provided 317,800 jobs, paid $10.7 billion in total wages citywide, and made nearly $27 billion in taxable sales (DiNapoli, 2020). In 16 NYC neighborhoods 70%-90% of workers are immigrants (DiNapoli, 2020).

What restaurants provide to our local communities and economies is vital, and we believe it is imperative that something be done to make them more resilient for the future.

— Resilience

We want our restaurants to be resilient so that they can survive. Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity resulting from personal or environmental stress. To be resilient is to bounce back and can also involve profound growth (Walker, 2020).

Resilience requires adaptability, growth, and flexibility. Stress arises from the transaction between person and environment (Mason, 1975). The environment requires adjustments based on obstacles, threats and constraints. Stressful events can include trauma, life events, daily stressors, physical environment, chronic role strain, cumulative adversity. Stress has lasting effects on health. People are motivated to conserve valuable resources (objects, conditions, personal, energies) and are stressed when resources are threatened (Hobfoll, 1989).

Resilient systems include resilient individuals. To build resilience we must target the system that impacts the health of the restaurant industry, the people within the restaurant industry, and surrounding community.

From September 2020 to April 2021, it has been a total of 237 days of research.

Process Snapshot

24 Expert interviews

23 Residents intercepts

7 Restaurants closely worked with

17+ Hours of participatory activities

90+ Literature & media reviews

3 Organizations worked alongside

1 Community hackathon

15 Hackathon participants

Research
Research
Research
Research

For our project in the East Village we used research to serve as preparation for our project. Before moving forward with primary research and participatory research with our community, we first conducted secondary research to understand the space and context. It is in this stage that we reviewed academic literature on resilience, social determinants of health, food justice, interdependence, restaurant industry history, and how COVID-19 has impacted the industry. We also reviewed various media sources like new articles, social media, blogs and attended relevant talks. Lastly, we read books for some perspective, history and context, and of course in person observations of the restaurant environment. In this section you will find our most significant findings.

Systemic Issues in the Restaurant Industry

— Bottom lines

Restaurants have never had great profit margins. When COVID-19 hit restaurants were fortunate if they had a month of reserves to hold them over. As one of our restaurant owners shared "I am trying to lose money as slowly as possible to make it to summer 2021." Many restaurants have been at risk of losing their business, and many have not received support issued by government relief programs and other grants. The problem is two-fold:
1. Restaurants do not have a cash flow reserve leaving them unable to pay staff, cover safety measure costs, or pay rent.
2. Existing inequities in the restaurant industry are exasperated and marginalized groups are facing barriers to receive government aid.

— Barriers to funding

Many black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and women owned businesses are particularly struggling and are often excluded from the grants because they do not fit into the rigid criteria or are unfamiliar with navigating these systems and seeking assistance. As of summer 2020 85% of BIPOC & women-owned businesses believed they won't survive the next 6 months, and 30% believed they'll be out of business within a month (Stringer, 2020).

— Cultural standards

The restaurant industry has low profit margins and issues around pay equity. We heard from our interviews that the relationship between employers and employees tends to be adversary. This has to do with wage disparity between front of house and back of house staff. The culture is not necessarily around "what is good for the employee = good for the employer". Irene Li, who is the owner of Mei Mei restaurant in Boston talked to us about restaurant equity and culture issues. She explained how some restaurants, including hers, seek to remedy this. She shared how many restaurant owners see the importance of educating their customers on one fair wage, COVID-19 guidelines, and third party fees. She also shared that these owners feel like they are complaining when they try to educate customers. Storytelling around these issues are important and valuable, but it is difficult to educate the customer when they are dining at a restaurant.

Change requires a mind-set shift on the part of the customer to understand the cost of food, fees, and tips. We also spoke to a long-time restaurant worker, Leah Brown, who shared "It is really hard to educate guests while they are dining out, not a great time to educate people on how restaurant economics works."
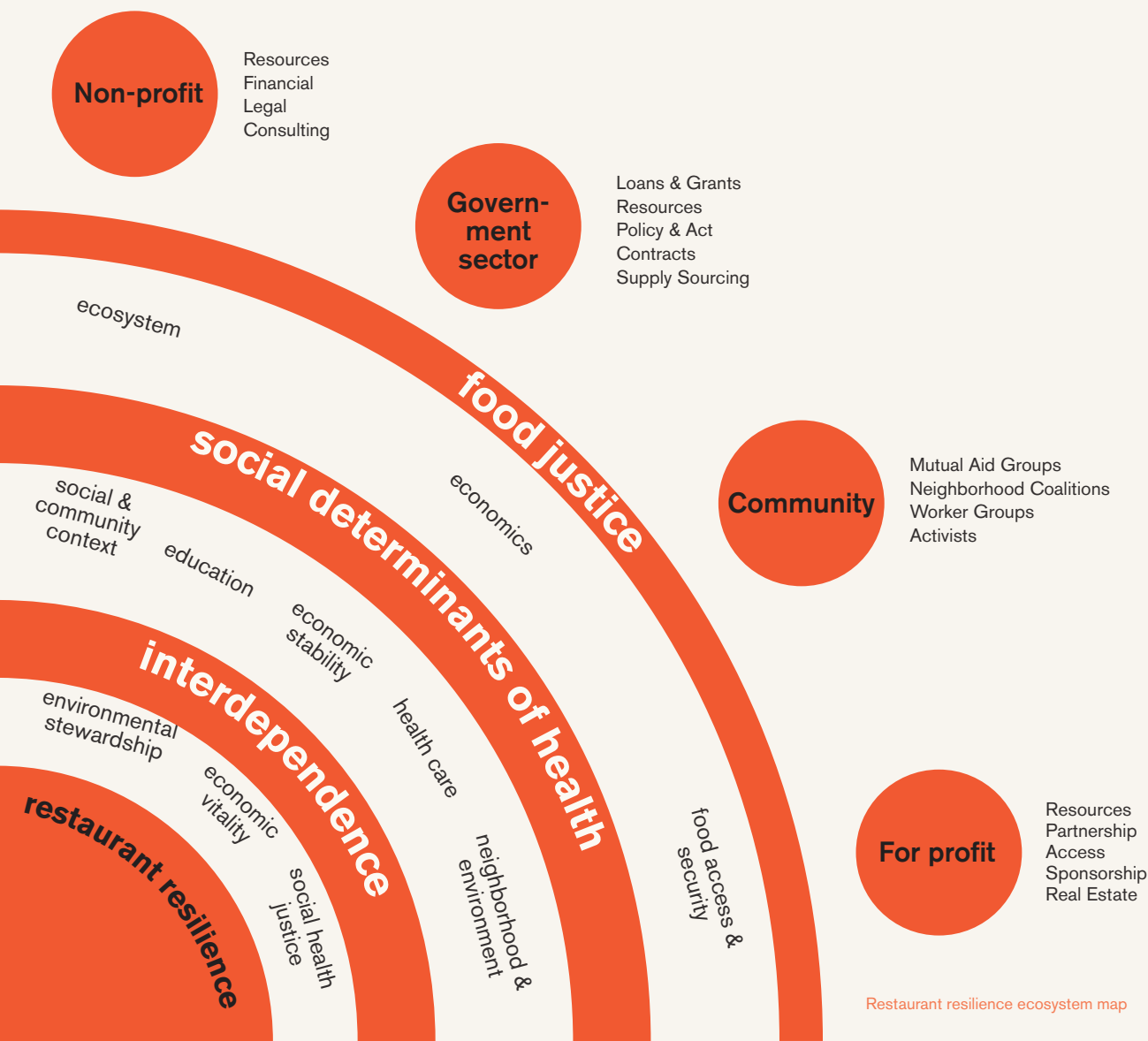
— One Fair Wage (OFW)

Tipping in restaurants results in racial and gender discrimination. Restaurant workers have reported an increase in discrimination and sexual harassments during COVID-19. At the federal level, the sub minimum wage of tipped workers is still $2.13. Tipped workers receive their minimum wage and must rely on tips to make up for the low wage. A total 43 states have persisted with a sub minimum wage for tipped workers.

Since COVID-19, the situation has only worsened. Further, the sub minimum wage has become a public health crisis. One Fair Wage (OFW), a restaurant advocacy group that aims to end all sub minimum wage, reports that out of the 220,00 restaurant workers who apply for the OFW Tipped and Service Workers Emergency Relief Fund, 90% reported that they did not have enough money for the next two weeks for basic needs and rent (OFW, 2020).

We learned that this issue is a direct result of slavery and how during emancipation the restaurant lobby hired newly freed slaves, and opted not to pay them anything. Instead, these newly freed slaves were forced to live on tips.

Findings

As we progressed in our research we began to conduct interviews with industry experts in all sectors: Non-profits, government, advocacy groups, restaurant owners, and restaurant workers. We looked at the different ways each support restaurants in the time of COVID-19, and what are some points of intervention for unmet needs. This section includes insightful quotes, meaningful takeaways, and a closer look at what restaurant's needs were during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic along with what solutions were being created.

Non-profit

Resources
Financial
Legal
Consulting

Government sector

Loans & Grants
Resources
Policy & Act
Contracts
Supply Sourcing

Community

Mutual Aid Groups
Neighborhood Coalitions
Worker Groups
Activists

For profit

Resources
Partnership
Access
Sponsorship
Real Estate

ecosystem

food justice

social determinants of health

economics

social & community context

education

economic stability

health care

interdependence

environmental stewardship

economic vitality

neighborhood & environment

food access & security

restaurant resilience

social health justice

Restaurant resilience ecosystem map

Rooted in community → Resilience

"What I've learned over the course of the last few months is to connect these restaurants with each other through a community building processes."

– Mikey Knabb
RAISE Director One Fair Wage

"Restaurants that were already connected to their community (places of worship, community stakeholders) were able to recover more quickly from the pandemic."

– Jin Kim
Senior Advisor,
NYC Office of Economic Opportunity

We also learned that the restaurant industry has very little organizing approaches that enable them to knowledge share, innovate, and bring together local community stakeholders for assistance. All of this left the restaurant industry particularly vulnerable during the pandemic. Hyperlocal restaurants that are connected to their communities are more adaptable, innovative, and supported by patrons. Despite restaurants desire to be more connected to their broader community, one challenge restaurants face now is the lack of ability to do so. We believe that by acknowledging the mutual interdependence of the restaurant ecosystem, the restaurant industry can be more resilient and centered on the ideas of cooperation with their stakeholders and communities they serve.

"Restaurant owners are not talking. Each have expertise in certain issues— can there be working groups based on loca- tion/tiers of industry to cross pollinate and share ideas?"

– Nicole Biscardi
Hospitality Specialist
Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Partnership

Our project is amorphous with a moving target.

Throughout 2020-2021 restaurant regulations would change almost weekly. Going from indoor, outdoor, carryout or delivery only, and the needs for restaurants and their "targets" were always changing.

At the beginning of our project we had interviewed Laura Seawell, who is the Executive Director of the **East Village Community Coalition (EVCC)**. The EVCC is "working to preserve the unique vibe of the East Village" and they do this through working with community members in the arts, merchant owners, restaurant owners, residents, and nonprofits to make sure the community is cared for and preserved. Through multiple conversations, we decided to pitch to Laura the idea that we would work together with the EVCC to co-create restaurant solutions with immigrant owned restaurants in the East Village. She was all for it!
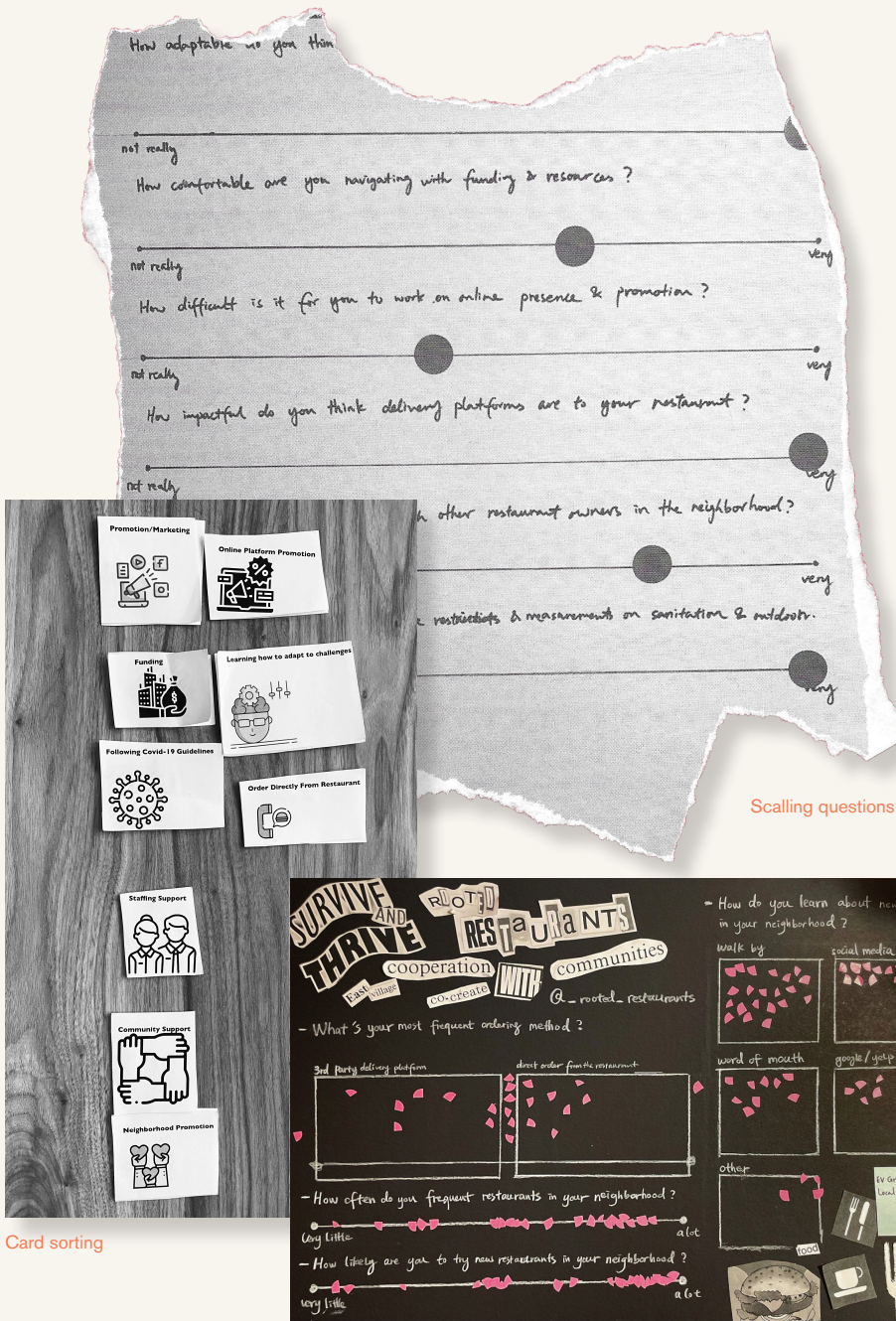
A neighborhood with a punk and immigrant past...

The East Village, situated on the land of the American Indigenous/Native American Lenape people, has a history of colonization, wealth, immigration, and punk rock. What was taken by settlers from the Lenape and turned to a wealthy neighborhood became an immigrant neighborhood in the 19th century, from there the neighborhood became the meeting grounds for artists and musicians alike. (Kugel, S., 200 7; Kimmerlman, M., 2020). Currently, the neighborhood tries to hold onto its artistic and immigrant roots by keeping out franchised businesses and continuing community initiatives that support local businesses.

Rooted Restaurants

Our restaurant cohort

With the assistance of our community partner, East Village Community Coalition, we were able to identify eight restaurants, seven along avenue B and one along first avenue. All of the restaurants we worked with are immigrant owned and include both tenured and new restaurants in the neighborhood.

-Khiladi
-C&B Cafe
-Jose Luis
-Haile
-B Cup Cafe
-Desi Gali
-Sabor A Mexico Taqueria
-Frangos

B Cup Cafe

Sabor A Mexico Taqueria

Jose Luis

Frangos   Haile

Khiladi

Desi Galli

C&B Cafe

EVCC Pigeon Logo

Scalling questions

Card sorting

Community storytelling board

Participatory Method

We used several participatory methods during our interviews with restaurant owners. Through this participatory activities, we generated better understanding of their concerns and stories. These are three activities we used shown on the left:

1. Card sorting methods:
We created sorting cards that had various business issues listed on them such as: online promotion, delivery platform cost, COVID-19 regulations, etc. We asked the owners to sort these issues from most difficult to easiest. We wanted to understand some of the restaurant owners immediate needs and what they found difficult executing themselves. After these activities, we discovered that restaurants struggled most with: Marketing, funding, and delivery platform cost.

2. Scaling questions:
We asked restaurant owners to answer interview questions by placing stickers on a scale of "not really to very" in order to understand their confidence and comfort level such as: operations, pivoting, knowing their target users etc. We asked inquiring questions simultaneously as restaurant owners place the stickers to expound on their needs.

3. Community storytelling:
We also attended community Open Street events to engage with locals and community members to hear their understandings on restaurants and restaurant resilience. Learning their interactions with local restaurants helped us understand what was working for restaurant marketing and identifty some possible issues.

How might we work with immigrant owned restaurants on Avenue B in the East Village by co-creating a community centered interdependence framework?

Interdependence
(Is possible in business)

As we have already discussed in the research section, existing structural inequities in the restaurant industry can be traced back to structural racism. Further, many social and food justice advocates have discussed the link between racism and capitalism (Holt-Gimenez, E., 2015). Siddhant Issar (2020) expands further on this relationship and calls for merging of theories under racial capitalism.

Capitalism is inherently competitive (Patomäki, Heikki,2017) which can lead to: exploitation (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017); inequities (Spektor, A., 2014); threats to local economies and culture (Laster Pirtle, Whitney N., 2020). We postulate that moving from competition models to interdependence models we can co-create solutions that are rooted in community and go beyond thinking about profits.

From our research we have both observed, and had others tell us, that many restaurants that have successfully pivoted were more cooperative and shared resources with each other. But, most restaurants do not communicate with each other and have no existing relationships, so we worked to co-create a way to begin building these relationships.

Further, restaurants with the strongest community ties have been doing better because they did not solely rely on tourist economies to sustain them during the pandemic. This is an interesting finding because it suggests that economic vitality can be generated with local power where communities invest in themselves. For instance, the East Village Community Coalition found that for every $100 spent locally, $68 stays in the local economy. Our project aims to amplify these efforts to build up the local economy.

We are realizing our own inseparability from each other and from the totality of life.

– Charles Eisenstein,
Sacred Economics

— Co-operation

Our thesis aims to explore the transition from individualistic business interest to one that focuses on collective needs. Cooperatives are grounded in a strong force of community empowerment for the common good. Cooperatives aim to move towards a solidarity economy. A benefit of cooperative businesses is that they have lower failure rates than traditional corporations and small businesses. For instance, about 10% of cooperatives fail after the first year, while 60-80% of traditional businesses fail after the first year. After 5 years, 90% of cooperatives are still in business, while only 3 - 5% of traditional businesses are still operating after 5 years (Jessica Gordon Nembhard, 2014).

We appreciate cooperatives for their values which typically include:
1.Democratic control and sovereignty of the workers
2. Integration of individual cooperatives into cooperative networks
3. Commitment to the neighborhood or place in which they are based
4. Based on principles of social justice

We did not believe that we could sufficiently address and move restaurants to become cooperatives in such a short time and lack of resources to support this. We aim to address the first step to becoming a cooperative, that is with relationship building, creating a framework of cooperation, and a playbook that will mirror these efforts.

— Interdependence

Many of us have been socialized to think about ourselves and immediate circles. We forget to remember that we are dependent on a cycle of life where each of us, plants, and animals contribute to survival. Today, we see examples of a fragmented society because we fail to notice our collective interdependence to one another and the planet. This leads to oppression, racism, and climate crises. Thinking in terms of interdependence requires shifting mindsets. When we realize our role in this cycle we can build a society that is healthy and not rooted in oppression and competition for resources. From our work we noticed that most people don't disagree on interdependence, rather it's a matter of getting people to think about it and apply this thinking to everyday solutions. The challenge is to celebrate and acknowledge both our diversity and interconnectedness (Escobar, A.,2021).

— Food justice

Food justice scholars have long noted that food insecurity is disproportionately experienced by low-income people, black people and people of color. This is not because of poor choices, but rather because of structural racism and economic inequalities (Ladter Pirtle, 2020). In our project in the East Village we are interested in how communities demonstrate their interdependence. For instance, restaurants that were embedded in the communities did better and were more resilient from shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many restaurants also supplied meals to nearby hospitals, donated to churches, food pantries, and local nonprofits.

We were working at the intersection of the creative process and economics.

We considered our thesis process to be non-traditional because we were applying our community design lens to a very traditional business industry. In order to work with our community we needed to keep in mind that what is most important for restaurants right now is their bottoms line, due to COVID-19 margins are non-existent and many of the restaurant owners we talked to shared that they trying to stretch their dwindling budgets to stay afloat to summer 2021. Throughout our project we knew that for them finances were an imperative point of discussion,and that every minute of their time we took for this project was time that we were taking away from their business. Although we knew that as graduate students we would not be able to provide monetary assistance, we wanted to make sure that they knew this was important to us, and we took great care in explaining how we hoped or project could eventually impact their business in some way. What we found was that our honesty and their candor allowed for the meeting of the creative process and economics.

Through all of the "things" and "activities" that we built, we kept in mind that time and creative thinking needed to be utilized. We also consider all of these to be continually iterative, and in the playbook they we preface that these can be co-opted to fit each unique community and their needs.

Rooted Restaurants

Prototyping

In our prototyping phase we tried many different methods to improve communication and knowledge sharing between restaurant owners, as well as restaurant owners and community members. For owner to owner initiatives we tested a community chat, and design sprints. For communication between restaurant owners and community members we utilized a hackathon and social media.

Jan 25th

Social media launch
– engage & connect
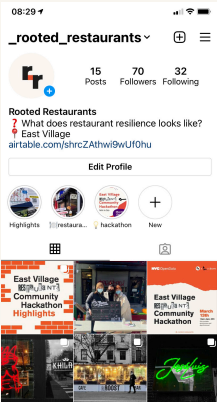
Jan 27th

Social media x NYC
Restaurant Week promotion

Mar 7th

OpenMap promotion
– leverage community resources

Open street East Village event–
participatory activity with local residents

Mar 13th

Community hackathon –
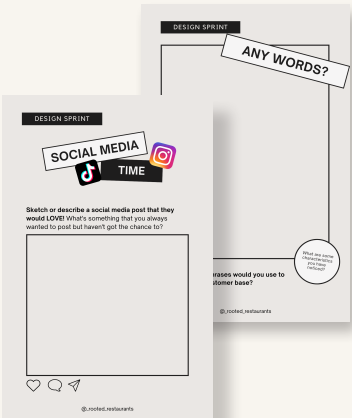local engagement to problem solve & co-create

Mar 21st

Open Street East Village event –
participatory activity with local residents

April

**Design Sprint** –
conversational tools

Group Chat – access to knowledge & resources sharing

— Community hackathons, hackerspaces

Hackathons are spaces where people with a special skill set meet for a few hours or days and "hack" solutions for a certain issue. They are traditional anarchist spaces that challenge both capitalism and authoritarian communism but have been unfortunately co-opted by technological solutionism (Constanza-Chock, S., 2020). We think they can be taken back! Our team organized a community-centric non-traditional Hackathon as part of NYC Open Data Week which celebrates civic engagement with data and technologies. This hackathon was an opportunity to explore how hackathons can be used to involve diverse people to participate in solution finding at a hyper-local level. Our broad goal was to use data and technology to move away from tourist economies to build resilience. Our hackathons had long and thoughtful discussion, ideation & prototyping sessions around community interdependence, alternative economies, missing representative community focused datasets, and how to improve and promote what community support looks like for restaurants, and how restaurants can invest in the communities where they reside.

To do this we set up teams to work on improving existing community digital mapping tools, and focused promotion in physical and digital spaces. We had people with different backgrounds, skills and lived experiences whom participated, such as East Village residents, poets, architects, creative technologists, designers, engineers, data & algorithm specialists, marketing specialists, and user experience researchers. Initially, we wanted to invite restaurant owners, but their schedule was a barrier to participation. We got creative and asked them to articulate and frame the challenges for Hackathoners.
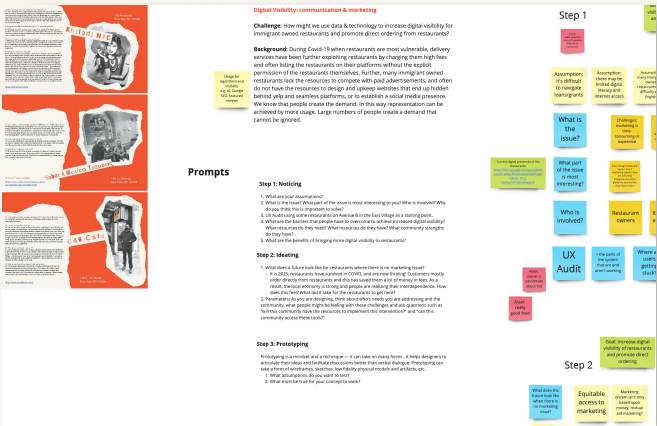

Collaborative Miro board
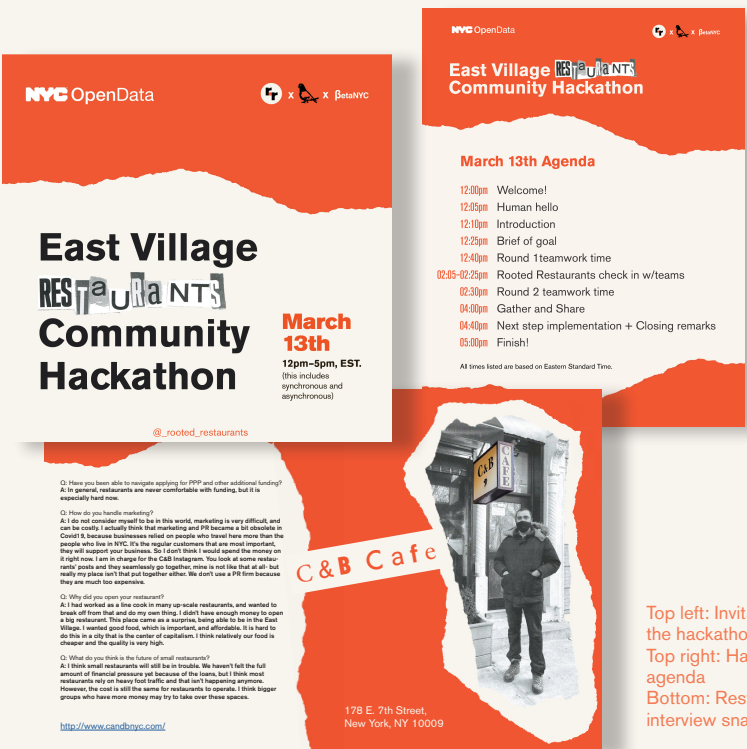
Top left: Invitation post of the hackathon
Top right: Hackathon agenda
Bottom: Restaurant interview snapshot

— Internship program

Often time is a large constraint. Restaurant owners have never been known to have lots of free time, and this especially rings true in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic where owners are now assuming even more roles in their businesses than they were before. One idea that was continually expressed by the restaurant owners was the desire of a marketing intern. And the internship program was also a solution that one of our community hackathoners came up with.

For the restaurant owners we worked with, time and marketing were two of their biggest issues. Our community partner, the EVCC, agreed to fund a marketing internship, so we wrote up a proposal for an undergraduate internship and sent it out to multiple schools. Our hope is that this can be a seasonal position that keeps restaurant owners supported in navigating their marketing needs and keeping up with the latest marketing strategies, as well as a learning opportunity for the intern.
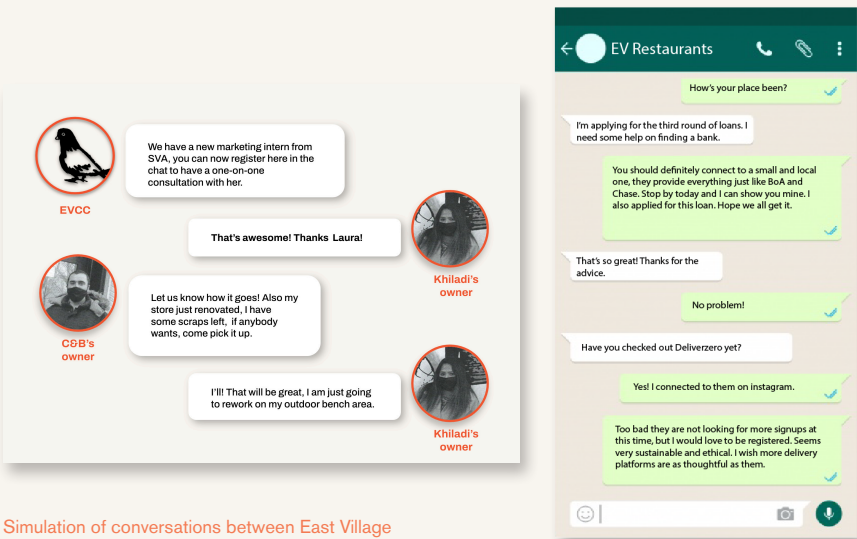
Simulation of conversations between East Village Community Coalition and restaurant owners

— Community conversation

Our research indicated that restaurants are often not connected to each other in a manner that allows for knowledge sharing, yet many of them have the knowledge that another owner needs. Knowledge sharing allows for the breakdown of barriers, the flow of ideas, and the development of solutions.

In the East Village we started a restaurant owner group chat. This enabled owners to ask questions in real time. An example of this idea in action is when one owner wanted to set up outdoor dining but had a fire hydrant in front of her restaurant, meaning that she would not be able to have outdoor dining directly in front of her restaurant. Since she didn't have the group chat yet, she drove around her neighborhood looking for another restaurant with a fire hydrant in front so she could ask them what solution they used. Ideally she would have a community to pose this question to, which is why we started the community chat.

— Design sprint as conversation

We made mini design sprints to use as conversational tools with our restaurant owners. Restaurant owners are creative, but they don't often get to take part in fun creative exercises. For these sprints we really wanted to engage our restaurant owners and ask them questions they don't usually get around to thinking about. Such as:

Who is our ideal customer?
What do you want customers to feel when they walk through the front door?
What have you wanted to post on our social media but haven't?
Sketch out what you would like to post on your social media account.

These led to enlightening conversations and insights on possible future solutions for these owners. We encourage these design sprints in the playbook to use as conversational tools among restaurant owners.
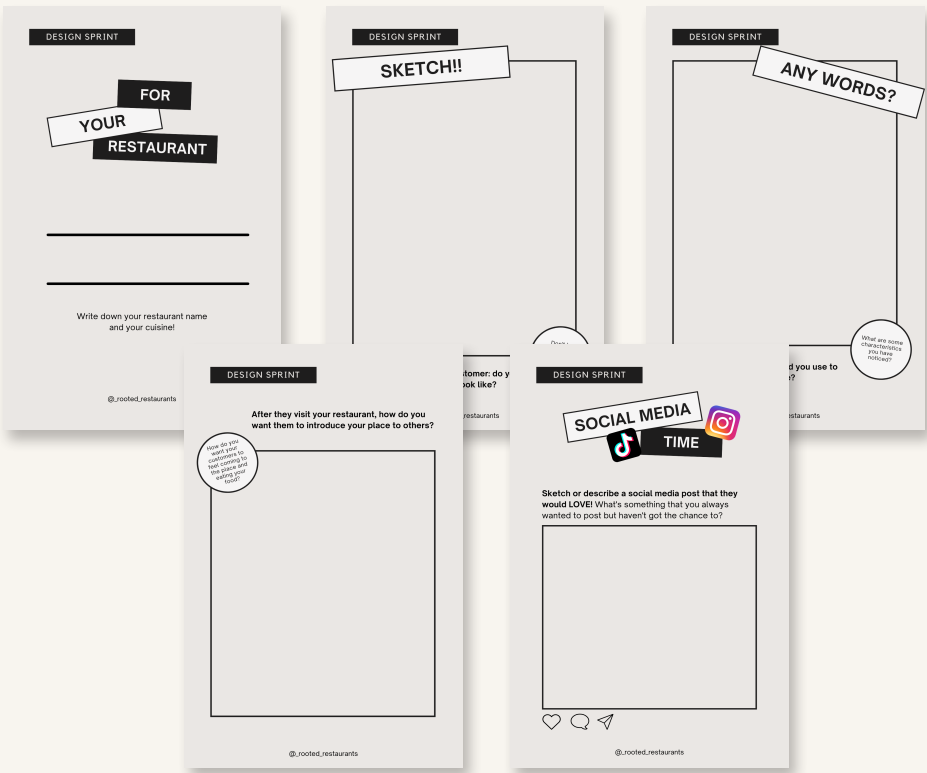
Marketing design sprint

Intervention

— **The beginning of something more**

For our final thesis intervention we took the prototypes from the most recent chapter and compiled them into a playbook. The goal of the playbook is to provide insight on how to support local restaurants byway of community. It is designed to be used by community organizations, organizers, and small restaurants who are looking to strengthen relationships with people who live and work in their neighborhood.

This is a playbook for restaurant crisis, a road map for restaurant resilience, and a possible future.

The playbook is based on the idea that we are all dependent on each other and interconnected with one another. The Rooted Restaurants playbook provides both internal and external communication practices, strategies, decision making processes, facilitation guides and the research findings and thinking behind the understanding that local restaurants can become resilient.

Our final intervention is a **playbook for restaurant crisis**, a road map for restaurant resilience, and a possible future.

— Who's it for?

Immigrant owned, BIPOC, woman owned and independent restaurants

Anyone who wants to practice community with local restaurants and small businesses

Community organizers

Community coalitions and organizations

The process of working towards local restaurant resilience can be convoluted and is not linear. We designed this playbook to be used more like a menu of tools and resources. We utilize a hospitality analogy for our playbook because to us preparing a meal for friends and family is a sacred act and in line with.

The playbook is divided into multiple sections:

Meal Prep:
-Developing a team
-Setting team values
-Goal setting
-Relational upkeep

Getting Acquainted:
-Identifying community leadership
-Relationship building
-Research
-Co-creation

Setting the table:
-Theory as a tool
-Interdependence
-Food Justice
-Social Determinants of Health

Dining Together:
-Leveraging community resources
-Internship program
-Community hackathons
-Resource and knowledge sharing
-Design sprint as conversation
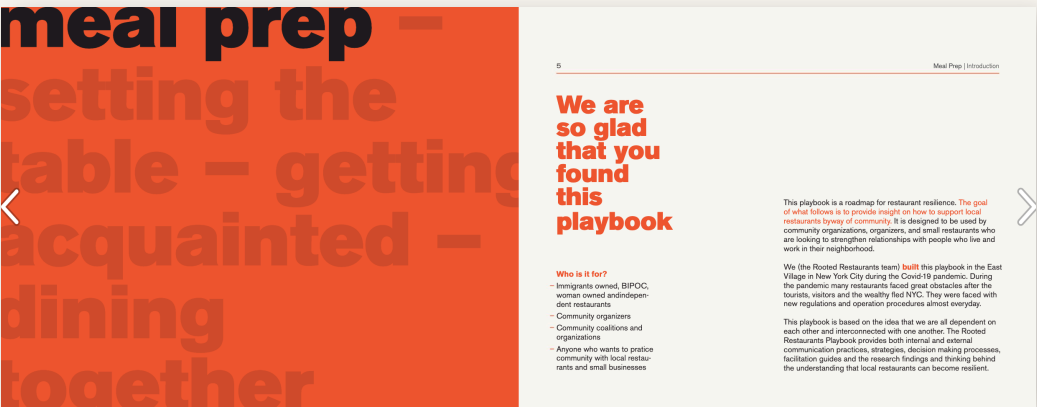
Inside the Playbook
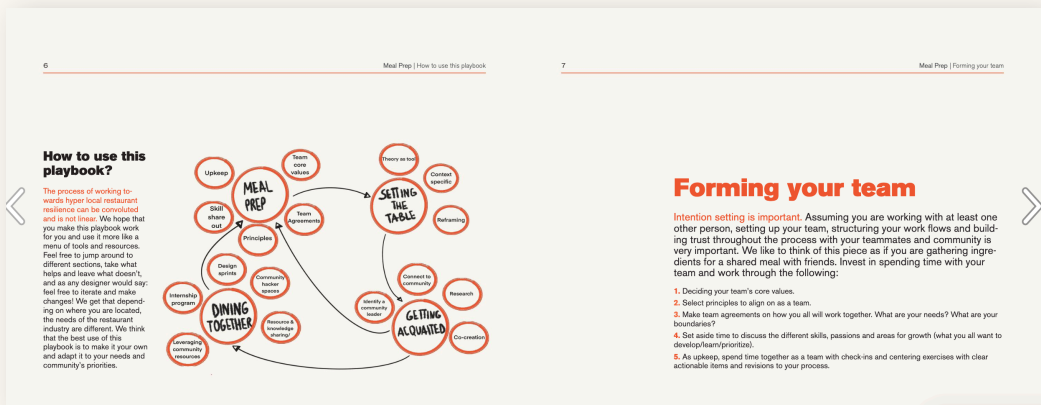
Inside the Playbook

Inside the Playbook

Measurement & Evaluation

— Narrative

Goal:
We imagine a future where restaurants are resilient, where workers, restaurant owners, and local communities are able to adapt, learn, and be flexible when faced with challenges such as COVID-19.

Outcome:
To achieve our goal we aim to support both restaurants and community organizers. Our intervention focuses on increasing knowledge sharing between restaurants, community support, public support, storytelling, business patronization, advocacy from consumers on behalf of restaurants.

Intervention:
Our intervention is a playbook to build resilience for restaurants, community organizations, and organizers navigating challenging times like COVID-19. This resource contains tactics and guidance on how to build local resilience for immigrant, BIPOC and women owned local restaurants. This playbook is based on ideas of interdependence, and applies a hyper-local community centered design lens to

address aspects of systemic challenges in the restaurant industry. The publisher defines the process in five phases: meal prep, setting the table, getting acquainted, & dining together. Each phase contains the thinking behind the approach, guidance, approximate phase timeframes, facilitation templates, and tools for deciding to proceed to the next phase.

Assumption:
Despite the extensive research and prototyping conducted for this Theory of Change, there are some important assumptions to acknowledge. Firstly, we assumed at least a portion of East Village residents want to support restaurants in their neighborhood. We also assumed that restaurants want to participate in this program and local residents want to help through collective organizing. In the end, we assumed that our community partner EVCC has the capacity to continue hosting this program and that this program can be adopted by other neighborhoods.

Macro Goal: Improve the capacity for Restaurant & Community Resilience

Goal: Increase cooperation and understanding of interdependence between restaurants and their respective communities to build adaptive capacity for the restaurants

Thesis Goal: Increase communications between restaurants on Avenue B in the East Village and their respective communities

Increased communication between restaurants

Increased communication between restaurants & community members

Relationship Building

Increase willingness to cooperate & problem solve

Build awareness, increase empathy, & understanding of restaurant industry challenges to increase participation in larger restaurant industry social issues

Increase understanding of local interdependence (shifting mindset)

Preconditions
- Increased access to knowledge sharing
- Increased frequency of knowledge sharing
- Increased capacity to collectively problem-solve
- Adaptive mindset of co-operation and interdependence
- Increased community efforts to support restaurants hyperlocally
- Increased capacity to host community events with both restaurants and public

Outcomes
- Increased knowledge sharing between restaurants owners
- Increased co-operation among restaurant owners
- Increased public transparency of operational needs from restaurant owners
- Increased capacity to market for their restaurants themselves
- Increased storytelling of local restaurants and their contribution to communities
- Increased advocacy from consumers on behalf of restaurants
- Increased business patronization
- Increased co-operation between local community and restaurants

Outputs
- Aggregated conversations between restaurant owners
- Marketing materials
- Public knowledge and awareness of the needs of restaurants in their neighborhood
- Collective problem solve and co-create
- Engagement of locals in community events

Inputs
- Design sprint prompts that can be self-faciliated by restaurant owners
- Group chat for knowledge and resource sharing among owners
- Marketing internship program for East Village Community Coalition
- Social media account for storytelling of restaurants and resilience building practices
- Community hackathon as a model of engaging locals into solution finding

Intervention: Rooted Restaurants Playbook

Assumptions
- Restaurants want to participate in this program
- Community organizations have the capacity to host this program
- At least a portion of East Village residents want to support restaurants in their neighborhood
- Local residents want to help through collective organizing
- Restaurants will have access to the Rooted Restaurants Playbook
- Restaurants are interested in supporting EV community members
- Restaurants and community organizations and organizers will be able to navigate and use the Rooted Restaurants Playbook
- EVCC will continue with this program
- This program is scalable and can be implemented in other neighborhoods

Key questions to address during prototyping:

1. What systems of support already exist for restaurant owners?
2. How can the program be adoptable by other communities in the city?
3. How can the design sprint material be inclusive and apply to various restaurant owners?
4. Are restaurant owners interested in being connected to each other?
5. Do restaurant owners feel that they have spare time for creative exercises?
6. Are community organizations interested in hiring an intern for restaurants?
8. Are restaurant owners immediate needs addressed through the toolkit?
9. How to ease the process and save time for restaurant owners to participate in local events?
10. Do diverse teams of people work well together in a hackathon space?
11. How do we promote the toolkit to stakeholders?
12. Can the chat be used to notify announcements?

Key questions to address during monitoring:

1. Downloads of playbook.
2. Number of times the design sprints are used.
3. Number of hackathon participants.
4. Number of restaurant owners engaged in Rooted Restaurants Program.
5. Longevity of Rooted Restaurants internship program.
6. How often restaurant owners use chat.
7. Level of confidence in helpfulness of design sprints.

Key questions to address during measuring:

1. How does the restaurant chat improve communication among owners and promote knowledge sharing?
2. How do the design sprints improve restaurant owner innovation and generation of new tools?
3. How does increased knowledge sharing promote adaptability of restaurants?
4. How do hackthons engage community members in solution finding?
5. Does the playbook provide organizing tools for restaurant owners?
6. Is the playbook applicable to other local restaurant groups?
7. How willing are restaurant owners and community members to work together ot problem solve.
8. How are local community members working together with restaurants?
9. How aware are local community members are on restaurant issues?

Final Thoughts

Rooted Restaurants is reimagining restaurant resilience. We imagine a future where restaurants are resilient. Where workers, restaurant owners, and local communities are able to adapt, learn, and be flexible when faced with challenges such as COVID-19. This project works on the development of more collaborative, cooperative and placed-based approaches to tackling restaurant resilience. By acknowledging the mutual interconnectedness of the restaurant ecosystem, the restaurant industry can be more equitable and centered on the ideas of interdependence with its employees and communities at the center.

Our community partner in our project, the East Village Community Coalition, is continuing on this project by implementing much of what you have read. Our hope is that our learnings can inform you in your own work towards a more resilient future.

The three of us will never forget and will forever be grateful for DSI, East Village restaurants, and the East Village community. We hope that this work will live on and evolve. We have shared moments of joy, celebration, laughter, gathering, tears, confusion, and pride. We are grateful to each other for the learnings, gratitude, patience, and care. During this time each of us had the opportunity to grow as designers and together as a team.

Drawing by Darya Zlochevsky

Rooted Restaurants

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Restaurants

If it weren't for the participation and willingness of restaurants in the East Village, then this playbook wouldn't exist. With great admiration and respect we look up to our restaurant owners and continue to be thankful for the joy, vitality, and wellbeing that they contribute to their community. To our restaurant owners and workers- we admire you more than words can express, thank you for the joy, vitality, delicious food, and care that you readily supply.

Our beloved East Village Restaurants:

Khiladi
(646) 791-0351
175 Avenue B, New York, NY 10009

C&B Cafe
(212) 674-2985
178 E 7th St, New York, NY 10009

Jose Luis
(646) 707-0746
186 Avenue B, New York, NY 10009

Haile
(212) 673-8949
182 Avenue B, New York, NY 10009

Frangos
(917) 675-7897
182 Avenue B, New York, NY 10009

B Cup Cafe
(212) 228-4808
212 Avenue B, New York, NY 10009

Desi Gali
(212) 475-3374
172 Avenue B, New York, NY 10009

Sabor A Mexico Taqueria
(212) 533-4002
160 1st Avenue, New York, NY 10009

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(Sloan Leo, Kara Meyer, Sahar Geheri)

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keyword:

resilience
community
collective
food
restaurant
vivid
hopeful

*east village
inspirations:*

rebellious
punk
underground
diverse
historical
artistic
immigration

rooted restaurants identity

Our visual identity is directly inspired by the East Village's present and past culture and food scenes. It is a manifestation of resilience, hope, and robustness. The aim is to highlight the livelihood of the neighborhood as well as individual restaurants. The mood board on the right serves as the foundation of our visual identity. Later, we utilized graphical elements such as black and white photography, magazine cutout collage, and a paper ripping effect to accentuate the brand spirit. Besides visual inspirations, we have also saved a collection of quotes from literature that we used as inspiration in our weekly meetings. These are listed on the next page.

"Having an idea is not living the reality of anything" – *Rumi* "Adaptation is within you" – *Elizabeth Gilbert* "Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk; Soon you will be at home in a new rhythm" – *John O'Donohue* "Don't try to create and analyse at the same time. They're different processes." – *Corita Kent* "If you need to be right before you move, you will never win. Perfection is the enemy of the good when it comes to emergency management. Speed trumps perfection. And the problem we have in society is that everyone is afraid of making a mistake" – *Dr. Mike Ryan, WHO* "Search and you will find a diamond thought of light" – *John O'Donohue* "Life doesn't make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all." – *Erik Erikson* "After endless mountains and rivers that leave doubt whether there is a path out, suddenly one encounters the shade of a willow, bright flowers and a lovely village." – *Lu You* "We would organize with the perspective that there is wisdom and experience and amazing story in the communities we love, and instead of starting up new ideas/organizations all the time, we would want to listen, support, collaborate, merge, and grow through fusion, not competition" – *Adrienne Marie Brown, Emergent Strategy* "It is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism." – *Angela Y. Davis, Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* "The problem that human society has to solve is not how to balance the margins, but how we should deal with problems after changes have taken place." – *Friedrich Hayek* "Every time when change happens, there is always somebody that can sense it in a certain part. But knowledge of change can never be aggregated in one human's brain." – *Zhaofeng Xue* "Resilience: The ability to become strong, healthy or successful again after something bad happens. the ability of something to return to its original shape after it has been pulled, stretched, bent, etc. an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change" – *Merriam Webster* "I think it is healing behavior, to look at something so broken and see the possibility and wholeness in it." – *Adrienne Maree Brown, Emergent Strategy* "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." – *Mother Teresa* "In design anthropology, the notation of emergence has become increasingly central. It emphasizes that the present is always 'in a state of emergence' and suggests that design anthropological interventions might function to condense or accelerate time in order to explore and understand the emergent and the potential futures and imaginations it may hold, or in other words, to make virtual experiments on the emergent" – *Uncertainty & Possibility, new approaches to future making in design Anthropology by Akama, Pink, Sumartojo* "Celebrating innovation for its own sake is in bad taste. For technology truly to augment reality, its designers and engineers should get a better idea of the complex practices that our reality is composed of." – *Evgeny Morozov, To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism* "The challenge is about taking things that are infinitely complex and making them simpler and more understandable." – *Robert Greenberg* "Form follows function. If we design services in a way that shows their function it's easier for users to understand the purpose of the service at first glance in the way that they might understand the purpose of a building from the way it looks." – *Lou Downe, Good Services* "This is a radical idea. When you begin to see your work as a gift, it changes why you work, what you make, and even who you work for. When your work is a gift, your goal is no longer to satisfy a boss, a client, or even to earn a paycheck. You now work to make yourself happy and therefore speak directly to your audience. Because you now give them something of value: a piece of yourself." – *James Victore* "A firm is a team, and the team has such an obvious characteristic in which it brings more production than the sum of each individual's inputs together." – *Alchian and Demsetz: Production, information costs, and economic organization* "Each of us is an artist of our days; the greater our integrity and awareness, the more original and creative our time will become" – *John O'Donohue* "Make it simple, but significant" – *Don Draper, fictional character on Mad Men* "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I– I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference." – *Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken* "if you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don't bother trying to teach them. Instead. give them a tool, the use of which will lead to new ways of thinking." – *Buckminster Fuller* "Activism is making coffee, serving elders, cooking, getting to know each other in a very deep way, to develop that trust so that we can have joy." – *K'Asheecht-laa, Louise Brady*

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