



Integration Through
Democracy!

Project Report

Integration through Democracy

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Intercultural exchange and democracy

On 20th and 21st of July 2017, the group *Integration through democracy* organized a two-day workshop labelled *Intercultural exchange and democracy*. Ten students, most of them from the program *Buddies for Refugees*, participated in this event. The aim of the workshop: the intercultural enrichment of all participants, focusing on German culture and its democratic system.

But where does *Integration through democracy* come from? According to Mira, one of their members, it wasn't precisely a straight path. "We started off by the unification of two at first completely different groups at the TUM: Junge Akademie's kick-off weekend. While the first group wanted to focus on asylum policy, the second one had democracy as its central topic. We sat down, discussed the possibility of uniting both groups, and recognized very interesting interfaces of these two currently hot topics." And so, *Decision making processes in asylum policy and democracy* was born.

The group started analyzing the possible democratic structures of refugee camps, performing a series of interviews with refugees and helpers, and later on with members of TUM's *Buddies for Refugees* program. Finally, after more than one year of intense research, the



group came up with the concept of the said workshop, which combined exciting talks, different tasks and games and a guided tour through the Bavarian State Parliament.

The first day of the workshop was centered on intercultural exchange. The day started with two games to get to know each other, which created a relaxed environment, with lots of laughter and amusement. Then, the group started brainstorming about what German culture and stereotypes mean. After these interesting discussions, two teams were created: "Die Fleißigen" and "Die Genialen." Both teams had to compete against each other, solving riddles and answering questions which put their knowledge of German history, culture and society to the test. After proving their capacity for teamwork as well as their knowledge, the team "Die Genialen" won by just one point!

The cooking event put the icing on the first day's program. The menu: Bavarian "Rindergeschneitzeltes" with champignon sauce and "Spätzle!" Apart from the amusing cooking and lots of funny moments, a variety of exciting conversations took place, which had the culture of every participant as central topic. Afghanistan's university system, Spanish football teams, Syrian food, German humour... A sense of trust and fellowship arose from this first day and prepared the group for the intense program of the second day.

Despite being Friday morning, the group started the second day with energy. The program for this part was much more centered on the concept of democracy, its application in daily life decisions and its implementation in Germany. After an initial brainstorming and discussion about the meaning of the word "democracy" itself, different groups had to solve daily life decision-making problems – from which movie to watch, to which ingredients should come in a pizza, etc. – with the aid of democratic means. All participants agreed on the difficulty of solving such problems when, for example, the number of persons involved increased.

This was the perfect transition to the topic of democratic systems within countries. Prof. Dr. Stefan Wurster, from the Bavarian School of Public Policy, gave an interesting talk about the history and development of Germany's party system, underlining the most important aspects of historical development of parties, ideological spectra and the structure of elections. All attendees actively participated by giving their opinions, debating or asking questions.

This discussion led to the final program of the workshop: the guided tour through the Bavarian State Parliament with Angelika Schorer, Member of the Parliament. She guided the group through the most important rooms of the Maximilianeum, explaining its history and the artworks that hang on their walls. When reaching the room where the political debates take place, everybody could sit down and listen to her explanation about the configuration of the *Landtag* and its functioning. After the tour, the participants had the opportunity to sit all together with Angelika Schorer, have some snacks and ask her about the daily life of a parliament member.

After the completion of the workshop, the members of *Integration through democracy* received a lot of positive feedback from the participants. The interview we carried out with two of the participants is an example of this. The group is hoping that the concept of this workshop will continue throughout the next years. Artem, another member of the group, puts it like this: “Now that we’ve learned the positive impact of our workshop on our participants, we won’t stop here. We are considering different possibilities on how to maintain this workshop and make it last as part of the catalogue of events that the Technical University of Munich offers every semester.”

Interview

Our reporter spoke with Gregor (20 years old) and Shoaib (22 years old) during the two-day workshop. Both are computer science students and also tandem partners in the TUM’s *Buddies for refugees* program. In this program, students can become “Buddies” of young refugees and help them integrate in TUM’s university life. While Gregor was born and raised in Germany, Shoaib comes from Afghanistan and has been living in Germany for one-and-a-half years.

R: What motivated you to participate in the workshop *Intercultural exchange and democracy*?

S: As part of the Buddies for refugees program, we have a mailing list, where we receive invitations to different events. I received an invitation for this workshop and sent it to Gregor. I thought that maybe he would be interested.

G: Exactly. We sometimes participate in different events together and here we could also learn something about politics.

R: Did the workshop fulfill your expectations?

G: Absolutely.

S: Yes!

G: Especially as the workshop was structured in a very playful way.

S: Exactly, we liked that a lot!

R: Which part of the workshop made a lasting impression on you and why?

G: I found the guest lecture at the School of Public Policy very interesting, because he gave a good impression of how the election campaign topics are selected. This was interesting for me as someone who is familiar with the German political system.

S: The talk also made a lasting impression on me.

G: Ah, and of course the acting activity!

R: What did you like the least, what would you like to change? (long thinking...)

G: There’s nothing!

S: Right.

R: What was the funniest moment of both days?

S: That was yesterday [the first day]. The first round, when we played all together.

G: Exactly! When we encountered a new flatmate in our “house” and we had to imagine what he did for a living.

S: Yes, that was it!

R: If you could summarize the workshop in one sentence, what would it be?

G: Politics explained playfully.

S: How politics and political movements actually function.

R: Thank you very much for the interview and for these two exciting days!

Abstract

The integration of refugees into German society is not an easy task. For a successful integration process, the central values that define our society need to be presented and explained to refugees. We identified democracy as one of the most important of these values. Therefore, we first analyzed the democratic structures in refugee camps and the refugees' knowledge about democracy. Based on the results of the analysis, we designed a workshop about intercultural exchange and democracy. Its aim was to enhance interest and awareness about our culture and democratic system amongst young refugees.

Background

Migration is inherent to human being. From the beginning of the human era, migratory movements have sculpted our social landscapes to the shapes we know today. Migration can be voluntary or involuntary, and is strongly determined by factors associated with the area of origin – where, for example, war, political persecution or natural disasters may have occurred – and with the area of destination – where, for example, political freedom, economic welfare or security might be available.¹

In 2015, the number of refugees arriving in Europe increased rapidly. This refugee crisis turned out to be one of the biggest challenges ever faced by the European Union. People from different countries all over the world have been fleeing to Europe due to war or political instabilities in their home countries. In the year 2016, more than 1.25 million asylum seekers reached Europe.² Germany stands out as the country with the highest number of refugees accepted, having processed almost 750.000 asylum applications in 2016. From the numerous statistics provided by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), one recognizes a large variety of countries and cultures from which people have reached Germany in the past years. According to BAMF the nationality spectrum in 2016 was dominated by Syrian refugees (36,9%), followed by Afghanistan (17,6%) and Iraq (13,3%).³

One of the main tasks of a country after the reception of asylum seekers is their integration. For this purpose, Germany provides several integration courses, which aim to give basic knowledge about the country's language, history, culture and law.⁴ However,

the successful integration of asylum seekers is still an open problem, as refugees often differ in their language skills, educational level or willingness to learn. A comprehensive transmission of key European values continues to be a major challenge for countries like Germany seeking to establish a fruitful integration process.

As it is the basis of many of the living standards in Germany, democracy is an important aspect of this integration process. Democratic society is based on the fact that every citizen has the right to elect representatives and to be able to express his or her beliefs freely. A democratic system empowers the people to decide the course of their country's development. Many of the values and rights which define our society – such as freedom of the press, free speech, gender and race equality – emanate from democratic principles.

Although the way of life in a democracy may seem self-evident for people in Germany, it is completely new for many of those refugees who have spent their whole lives in non-democratic countries. A comprehensive familiarization with the functioning of democratic systems may help refugees to integrate more fully within a democratic society.

Goals and Methods

The main goal of our project is based on the statement at the end of the last section: We aim to help refugees enhance their knowledge about democracy in general and about the political system in Germany. By doing so, we are hoping to contribute to a smoother integration of refugees in our society.

The way to reach that goal is quite a long one. The two assumptions that (1) refugees are interested in democracy and that (2) democracy may help to integrate refugees, led to the following two hypotheses:

- 1) *Both refugees and organizations have an interest in establishing democratic social structures in refugee camps. Furthermore, these structures do not exist currently.*
- 2) *An enhanced understanding of the concept of democracy and its practical application in everyday life by refugees will contribute to their integration in Germany*

To evaluate the first hypothesis, we conducted around 20 qualitative interviews. For this purpose, we designed 17 different questions about the current situation, aimed at both refugees and heads of refugee camps, to find out about their interests and expectations in relation to social as well as democratic structures in refugee camps. After conducting the qualitative interviews in different refugee camps in the area around Munich, we were able to analyze and compare the findings of the interviews by assigning them to different clusters.

To evaluate the second hypothesis, we designed another qualitative questionnaire with semi-structured questions. We focused here

on refugees between the ages of 18 and 30 years. The main content of this questionnaire were questions on the respondents' understanding of and knowledge about democracy; on their sources of information about political topics in Germany; on their home countries; and on their levels of interest in daily political happenings.

Another important approach to test the second hypothesis was conducting a quantitative survey at the “Buddies For Refugees” (BfR) kick-off event at the beginning of the semester in April 2017. The BfR programme by the TUM: Junge Akademie, a guest auditor programme for young, academically interested refugees and their “Buddies” – regular students at TUM – perfectly displayed our tar-





get group of people aged between 18 and 30. The questionnaire was aimed at both guest auditors (refugees) and buddies (regular students). It consisted of four questions related to the differences and shared interests of each tandem group, the participants' associations with the concept of democracy, their proposals for activities besides studies, and the communication channels they use.

As a third means of evaluating the second hypothesis, we elaborated a workshop lasting two days for participants of the BfR programme. We derived two main goals for the workshop from our hypothesis (and from the results of the second survey as well):

- *To enlarge the participants' knowledge about intercultural diversity*
- *To enlarge the participants' knowledge about democracy and the political system in Germany*

To achieve these goals, we divided the workshop into two parts, each focusing on one of the two goals. Furthermore, we added a lecture with Prof. Dr. Stefan Wurster from the Bavarian School of Public Policy (Hochschule für Politik – HfP) as well as a visit to the government at the Bavarian State

Parliament to provide further insights into the German political system as well as into daily political happenings.

In order to review the concept of the workshop we designed an evaluation form. It asked the participants to feedback on the quality and the contents of the workshop. The results enabled us to verify the achievement of the two goals of the workshop. Specifically, we asked the participants if the workshop reached the following goals:

- 1) *The workshop should aid the participants in getting to know each other*
- 2) *The workshop should enable and promote intercultural discussions*
- 3) *The workshop should impart knowledge about democracy and the German political system*
- 4) *The workshop and trip should be entertaining and fun*

The survey was designed to evaluate our proposed goals and the hypothesis, and also to find out what motivated the students to participate in our workshop, which parts they liked particularly and what they thought could improve the workshop.

Outcomes & Discussion

During our work with the local refugee camps and through the interviews that we conducted and clustered we quickly found the first hypothesis to be only partly true: While democratic social structures in refugee camps can hardly be found, camp managers usually do not have ambitions to create such structures. The main argument mentioned by the refugee camp managers is that the implementation of a democratic system might result in the creation of a “parallel society” inside the refugee camp, which might have a negative impact on the further integration process.

Another interesting result of our study in the refugee camps is the following: Although people of many different origins live in the camps, refugees tend to group with refugees of the same origin (for example, Syrians group together with Syrians). This

can have multiple causes, such as language compatibility, similar heritages or religious reasons, to name but a few. While the cohesion between refugees of similar heritage is strong, the coupling between those of different groups is rather weak. Our interviews show that only few interactions of refugees with people outside their respective groups exist. One explanation for this could be language incompatibility, as well as religious and cultural differences.

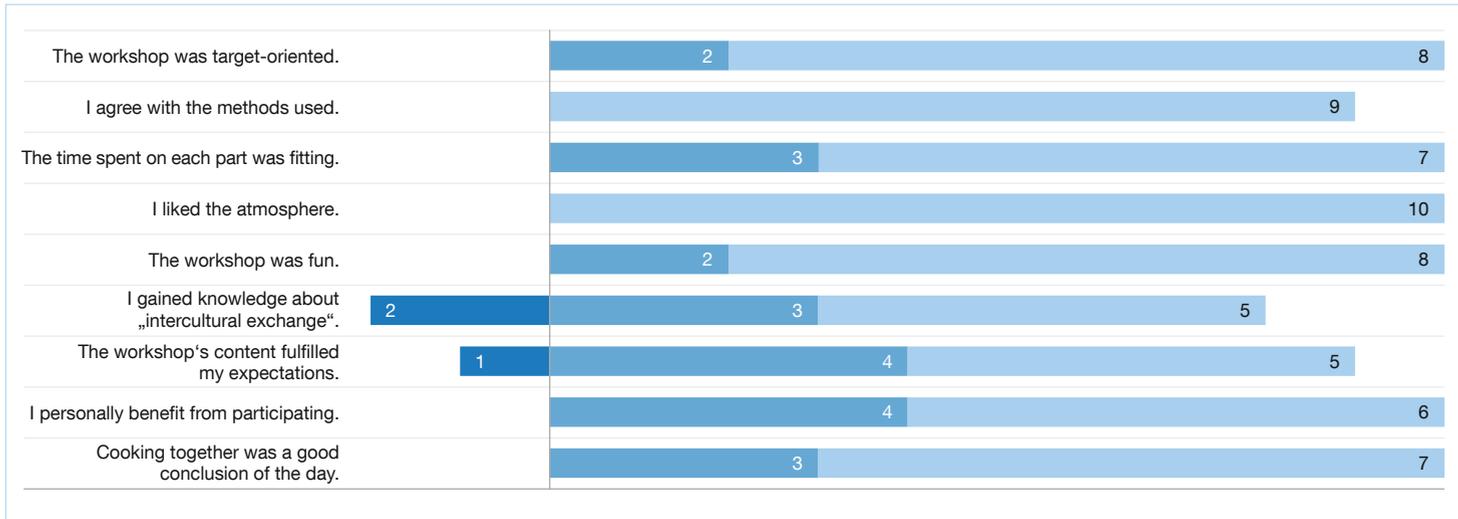
If one were to apply a democratic structure on top of such a heterogeneous community – with strong cohesion among refugees of the same heritage and weak coupling between the resulting groups of different sizes inside the refugee camps – the smaller groups could feel disadvantaged. The protection of these minorities inside the refugee camps might be a reason for the arguments against the introduction of democratic structures in the camps. Due to these results, the first hypothesis must be rejected.

The survey carried out at the “Buddies for refugees” kick-off session showed both the necessity for and an interest in an enhancement of understanding of democratic principles. Comparing the answers from refugees and their buddies, the refugees tended to connect democracy with more abstract concepts, such as “freedom” or “equality,” while the buddies tended to use more concrete terms such as “elections” or “right of participation.” Furthermore, both the buddies and the refugees strongly expressed their support for an event focused on intercultural exchange. Many refugees expressed their willingness to participate in such an event in order to better comprehend German culture.

Based on the results of this questionnaire, we agreed on trying to provide a small group of refugees with an enhanced understanding of the concept of democracy and its operation in everyday life. Therefore, we offered a workshop followed by a trip to the Bavarian State Parliament and including a discussion with a German politician.

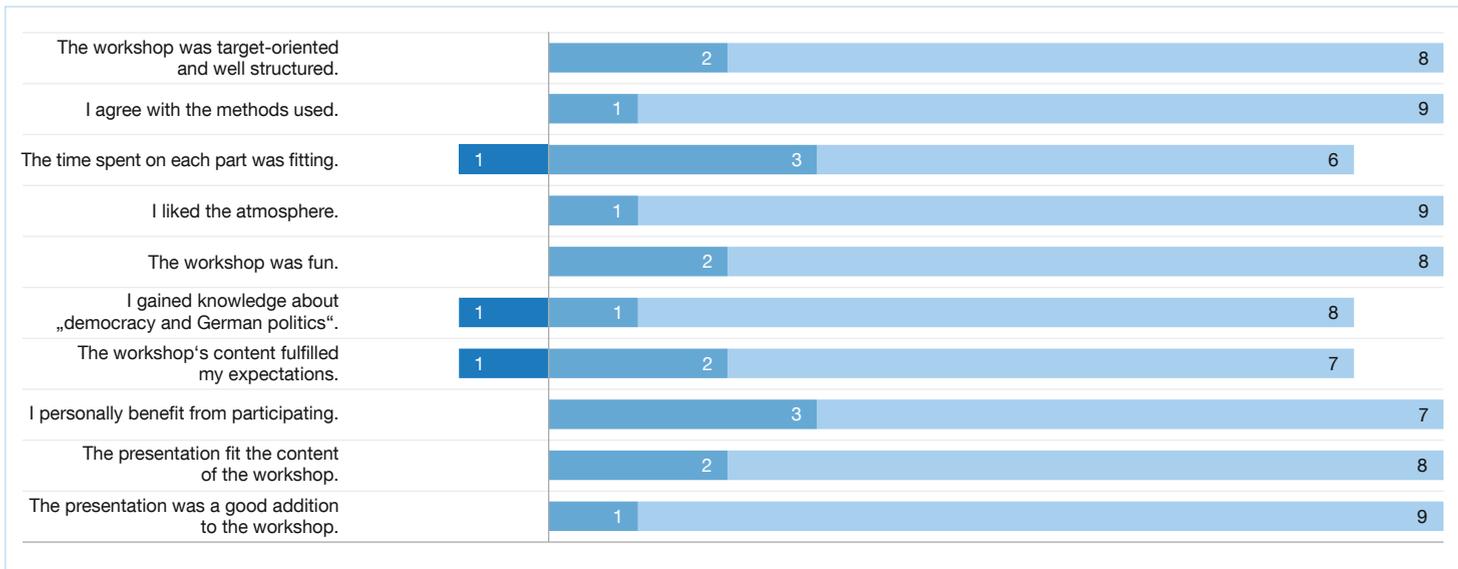
We were interested not only in testing our hypothesis, but also in evaluating the success of our proposed method. Figure 1 shows the results of the survey related to the workshop. The graphs show a very positive image. The participants perceived the workshop to be both an enjoyable experience and enriching for their knowledge about democracy and the German political system.

Day 1: Intercultural exchange



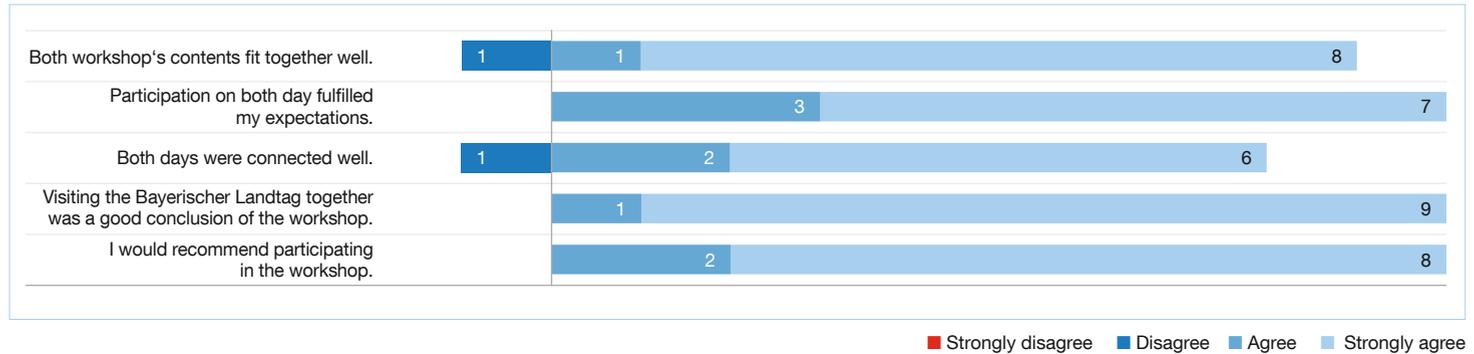
■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly agree

Day 2: Democracy & German politics



■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly agree

General & Excursion



The results of this evaluation show that the workshop enlarged the participants' knowledge about democracy. However, it is hard to measure the integration of refugees in German society. Thus scientifically proving or contradicting our second hypothesis, which states that the gained knowledge about democracy and politics aids in integrating refugees into Germany, is not yet possible. A reason for that might be that it is hard to measure to what extent people are integrated into society. In order to find out more about that, one would first need to establish a valid measure for integration. As integration might be related to many characteristics of both individuals and the society, this might offer a useful challenge for further projects.

Summary & future goals

We consider our project, including the results of our research and our workshop, as a success, even though we were not able to definitely prove (or disprove) our second hypothesis. We plan on continuing to offer the workshop in future semesters, even if we might not be able to conduct it ourselves anymore. One way of achieving this might be to make the workshop self-sustaining by encouraging past participants to organize and conduct the workshop in subsequent semesters. Another option might be to incorporate the workshop into the Carl von Linde-Akademie, which offers several different workshops and seminars.

References

- 1 – Everett S. Lee (1966). *A theory of migration*
- 2 – Eurostat (2016). *Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex*
- 3 – BAMF (2016). *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2016*
- 4 – BAMF (2017). <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/Integrationskurse/integrationskurse-node.html>

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TUM

Integration through democracy? Democracy through integration?

Every day, refugees are arriving in Germany searching for shelter. They often do not have the background of coming from democratic based countries – the countries they are running from are either suffering from dictators or are governed by a small privileged part of the society and do not enable all of their inhabitants to participate in fair, democratic elections. In Germany, political decisions are based on democratic structures.

But – how does democracy work?

Moreover, what defines democracy? How much knowledge about democracy do people seeking for asylum in Germany have?

Our vision is to improve and support democratic structures in refugee asylums. By helping refugees enhancing their knowledge about democracy and how to transfer it into everyday live, we are hoping to contribute to a smoother integration of refugees in our society.

MEMBERS Alex Bledener, Artem Bliznyuk, Pablo Cova Farfán, Christiane Frank, Matthias Neumayer, Maximilian Wittmann, Mira Zolberger
TUTORS Matthias Lehner, Julian Bierschens
MENTORS Prof. Dr. Peter Fierlinger, Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Wacker, Dr. Mourane Sayid



Poster 1: Annual Conference 2016

Asylum Policy / Democracy

TUM

...how does democracy work?

BACKGROUND

Every day, refugees are arriving in Germany searching for shelter. They often do not have the background of coming from democratic based countries – the countries they are running from are either suffering from dictators or are governed by a small privileged part of the society and do not enable all of their inhabitants to participate in fair, democratic elections. In Germany, political decisions are based on democratic structures.

But – how does democracy work? Moreover, what defines democracy? How much knowledge about democracy do people seeking for asylum in Germany have?

OUR HYPOTHESIS ARE:

1. Both refugees and organizations have an interest towards democratic structures, socially speaking, in refugee camps. Furthermore, these structures do not exist currently.
2. An enhanced understanding of the concept of democracy and its exertion in everyday life by refugees contributes to their integration in Germany.

GOALS AND METHODS

Our aim is to improve and support democratic structures in refugee camps. By helping refugees enhance their knowledge about democracy and how to transfer it into everyday live, we are hoping to contribute to a smoother integration of refugees in our society. Our first step towards reaching that goal is to gather as much information as we can about the current social structures in refugee shelters, as well as about the knowledge and understanding of democracy that refugees have.

In order to achieve that, we started interviewing refugees in selected refugee shelters, questioning them about their social surroundings, their knowledge and view on democracy, and their opinions on the matter. We used partly standardized interviews for the first phase of information gathering, but we plan to gain deeper knowledge about the social structures by using local group discussions.

OUTCOME AND DISCUSSIONS

So far, we carried out two different interview types: The first type consisted of a group discussion with some volunteers at the refugee camp in Garching. This conversation helped us get a better insight into the everyday life and the problems which refugees and helpers face. Furthermore, we identified some of the important aspects of the structure and functioning of a refugee camp, such as the absence of a dedicated camp management in many cases and the importance of security staff.

Shortly after Christmas, we conducted three additional interviews with different refugees in Garching. The preliminary analysis of the interviews shows some interesting facts about the social structures and the cohabitation within this camp. Here, people from the same origin or similar cultural background build up the different social groups, rather than mixing with others. Moreover, the contact persons for everyday problems and issues are sometimes not the social pedagogues working there, but rather the security staff.

SUMMARY AND FUTURE GOALS

In our project, unifying the concepts of “democracy” and “asylum policy”, we want to understand how the social and democratic structures in refugee camps are developed and function, and which forms of intercommunication, organization and hierarchy exist within these accommodations. Using different interview methods, we are getting in contact with asylum seekers to understand their everyday life and to prove whether or not they are interested in the democratic system in Germany.

For the continuation of our project, we plan to carry out more interviews at other refugee camps. Candidates for this task are refugee camps managed by the social service organization “Caritas” and the accommodations in the region of Oberbayern. These are more centralized and managed by an actual dedicated camp management, which is a more useful feature when it comes to analyzing the structure and communication at a refugee camp. When we obtain all the required information, we will be able to confirm or deny our hypothesis. We would also like to head towards a project that would aim to enhance democratic structures and knowledge within a camp, if we find an actual interest for democracy in the refugees. Therefore, we do not want to define the concrete form of this project before we draw our final conclusions.

JANUARY 2017

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Poster 2: Evaluation Day I

Integration through Democracy



ABSTRACT Our recent interviews with refugees showed a significant interest in intercultural exchange as well as democratic ideas. Based on these results we are currently developing a workshop for participants of the TUM 'Buddies for Refugees' program, focusing on these topics. By that we hope to contribute to integration through democracy.

Demokratie
Democracy

Asylpolitik
Asylum politics

Research

Interviews with refugees in asylum shelters and participants of the TUM's "Buddies for Refugees" program

- Gathering information on basic democratic knowledge
- Information transfer on daily political happenings
- What does democracy mean to you?
- Differences in society between Germany and your homecountry?
- What kind of news do you get, and where from?

Interview I



Agenda

- Deriving a project idea based on the ideas and expectations of the interviewed
- Centred around culture and democracy

Interview II



- Adapted second questionnaire for the Buddies for Refugees KickOffEvent addressing Buddies as well as Refugees
- Evaluation of cultural differences and similarities

Workshop

- Intercultural exchange
- Democracy and politics in Germany
- Excursion and social event

Evaluation I



- Clustering and analyzing of collected data
- Discussion with Mentors
- Further focus on participants of the Buddies for Refugees program

Evaluation II



Evaluation of Workshop

1. JUNE
Today

ZE II

JUNE 2017

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Integration through Democracy



ABSTRACT The integration of refugees in the German society is not an easy task. For a successful integration process, the very central values that define our society should be presented and explained to the refugees. We recognized democracy as one of these very relevant values. Therefore, we first analysed the democratic structures in refugee camps and the refugees' knowledge about democracy. Based on the results of the analysis, we designed a workshop about intercultural exchange and democracy. Its aim was to enhance the interest and the awareness about our culture and democratic system amongst young refugees.

GOALS
At the beginning of our project work, we discussed and analysed two topics: asylum politics and democracy. After this first approach, we developed the following

HYPOTHESIS:
An enhanced understanding of the concept of democracy and its exertion in everyday life by refugees contributes to their integration in Germany

To evaluate this assumption, we conducted different quantitative interviews with refugees of several refugee shelters and participants of the Buddies For Refugees programme. Furthermore, we elaborated a workshop lasting two days for participants of the BfR programme.

OUTCOME / WORKSHOP
We derived two main goals for the workshop from our hypothesis and from the results of the survey:

- To enlarge the participants' knowledge on intercultural diversity
- To enlarge the participants' knowledge on democracy and the political system in Germany

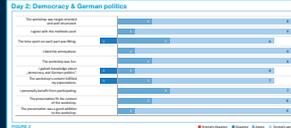
To achieve these goals, we divided the workshop into two parts, each focusing on one of the two goals. Furthermore, we added a lecture with Prof. Dr. Stefan Wurster from the Bavarian School of Public Policy as well as a visit to the Bavarian State Parliament to provide further insights into the German political system as well as daily political happenings.

In this first workshop we wanted to evaluate both the workshop's concept and the used methods. Figure 1 and Figure 2 are showing the results of the survey related to the workshop. The graphs show a very positive image. The participants perceived the workshop to be both a fun and enriching experience, which helped them enhance their knowledge about democracy and the German political system.

Day 1: Intercultural exchange



Day 2: Democracy & German politics






TEAM STRUCTURE AND PROCESS
The biggest challenge of our team appeared at the beginning of the project phase at the kick-off weekend. We started off by the unification of two at first completely different groups. While the first group wanted to focus on asylum policy, the second one had democracy as its central topic. After discussing the possibility of uniting both groups, we recognized very interesting interfaces of these two topics. That aroused our interest to develop a project and we started our teamwork with great motivation. A positive and balanced group dynamic arose at the first meetings, which maintained during the whole project work.

SUMMARY AND FUTURE GOALS
We consider our project, the results of our research and our workshop as a success, even though we could not definitely prove our hypothesis yet. In order to find out more about that, it is required to provide a valid measure for integration. As integration might be related to many characteristics of both individuals and the society, this might be a challenge for further projects. We plan on continuing the workshop in future semesters, even if we might not be able to conduct it ourselves anymore. One possibility to achieve that is to make the workshop self-sustaining by encouraging past participants to organize and conduct the workshop in the following semesters.

OCTOBER 2017

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Poster 3: Evaluation Day II

Poster 4: Annual Conference 2017