Make the World a Better Plate:
Program Evaluation for a Refugee-led Cooking Class

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Our team worked in Berlin, Germany with Über den Tellerrand, a non-profit organization working towards integrating refugees into German society. The need for this organization, amongst others, manifested due to the lack of a federal resettlement programs promoting integration as opposed to assimilation. We created a standardized evaluation tool for the organization to gauge the effectiveness of their “Cooking Class” program with regards to their program goals. To accomplish this, we first conducted interviews with other Berlin-based non-government organizations to gain insight on program evaluation. We then interviewed Über den Tellerrand board members, project managers, and key staff to understand what participant opinions they were focused on discovering using an evaluation tool. Using the data from these objectives and taking inspiration from Über den Tellerrand’s current exit survey, we developed the evaluation tool. After testing multiple iterations of the tool during several Cooking Classes, we collected the results, analyzed the data, and debriefed with our sponsor. Using the data we collected through the completion of our objectives, we were able to create our final deliverable, enabling Über den Tellerrand to continuously evaluate their program.
Introduction to Refugee Integration

The Arab Spring movement and harsh living conditions in war-torn Middle Eastern and African countries sparked a mass displacement of people in 2015. Some left detrimental living conditions and took refuge in their neighboring countries, while others migrated out of their regions, particularly to Europe. As a result, over three million refugees applied for asylum in member states of the European Union (EU) between 2014 and 2017. Most EU countries, however, pledged to grant asylum to only a small fraction of the total number of migrants entering Europe, leaving many unaccounted for. To mediate this, the German federal government pledged to review every asylum seeker within its border, accepting 800,000 refugees by the end of 2015, far more than any other European country, and over 1.4 million total by 2018.

For all refugees granted asylum, one of the German federal government’s primary commitments was to facilitate their integration into German society. Despite accepting the largest number of asylum seekers in the EU, the German federal government did not have the infrastructure to manage their responsibility of integration adequately by itself. This deficiency left German natives and refugees segregated in their communities and in society as a whole. Unable to formulate a unified perspective, both refugees and locals condemned the federal government’s decisions concerning the crisis and vilified each other leading to instances of civil unrest. Locals with far-right views swayed public opinion against refugees further separating both sides. Per the lack of administrative and political progress, it was up to the refugees and locals to understand and work through each other’s cultural and political differences to mold a community that understands the other side’s concerns and needs. To accomplish this, many non-government organizations (NGOs) throughout the country developed integration programs that created opportunities for interaction by bridging the two parties together.

One such NGO is Über den Tellerrand, an organization which took on the much needed role of facilitating integration by engaging refugees and local citizens in interactive programs such as Community Events and Cooking Classes. The organization is headquartered in Berlin, a city that accepted nearly 50,000 refugees in 2015. Über den Tellerrand creates an environment that brings German locals and refugees “eye-to-eye” in order to overcome any stereotypes that previously hindered their interaction.

No standardized evaluation exists for Über den Tellerrand to assess its Cooking Class program’s effectiveness due to its innovative approach to facilitating integration other than its own exit survey. Our project was to work with Über den Tellerrand to help them develop a tool in order to evaluate their collaborative Cooking Class and identify possible improvements in order to maximize the organization’s integration efforts. The four main objectives we had identified and completed in order to satisfy our goal are listed below.

1. LEARN: Assess current practices in outcome-based program evaluation among select NGOs in Berlin.
2. INQUIRE: Clarify the goals of Über den Tellerrand’s Cooking Class and the purpose, scope, and protocols for the proposed evaluation.
3. CREATE: Develop, test, and implement program evaluation protocols and instruments.
4. RECOMMEND: Develop the evaluation tool and protocols for future use by Über den Tellerrand.

We conducted interviews with board members, program managers, and other key staff of Über den Tellerrand to develop an evaluation tool. Using the aforementioned tool, we surveyed participants of the Cooking Classes. Based on our findings, we recommended ideas on how Über den Tellerrand might modify their Cooking Class and conduct program evaluations in the future. Our project helped Über den Tellerrand improve its integration efforts by understanding the participants’ perceptions following the completion of the program and it laid out steps for developing a tool that other NGOs could follow to improve their own integration efforts.
Importance of Integration-Related NGOs

During the 2015 European Refugee Crisis Germany accepted the largest number of asylum seekers in the European Union, but lack of action caused the matter to be mishandled internally. Its reluctance in addressing and implementing effective social integration policies and/or programs from the start of the crisis impeded interaction between locals and newcomers within their communities. The asylum seekers required a culturally sensitive system for them to adjust to their new environment, one which promotes integration with locals as opposed to assimilation. Assimilation is the process by which outsiders become culturally indistinguishable within the host country, while integration enhances society by contributing multicultural facets to the existing culture.

Integration encompasses a number of aims: social awareness, networking skills, housing options, and amplifying the voices of a marginalized group. It requires the locals and refugees to work together to overcome any and all prejudices in order to create a sound community. With many communities throughout Germany divided following the influx of refugees, problems such as crime and prejudice manifested within them, further disrupting integration. The integration of peoples was an issue that was left for the public to address despite the lack of the proper infrastructure to do so. Notwithstanding the government’s inaction, a variety of integration-oriented NGOs have redressed the issue of ineffective federal programs.

In the following sections, we outline the history of migration into Germany during the 20th and 21st centuries. Surprisingly, Germany’s federal government neglected to develop an effective integration program during two other instances of mass migration into the country. Migrants, as described in this section, can be further categorized into immigrants and refugees. Immigrants are those who choose to leave their home country whereas asylum seekers were forced to leave their home country due to extreme conditions. Asylum seekers who are approved for asylum are thereby known as refugees.

Immigration into Germany Post WWII

An economic boom in West Germany catalyzed the first major group of migrants in Germany following World War II. Germany signed agreements with countries including Italy, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, and Spain allowing their citizens to join West Germany’s labor market. After an economic crisis in 1967, the West German government ended foreign worker agreements with most of the aforementioned countries under the expectation that current guest workers would return to their home countries. Most of them not only stayed but used the right to family reunification to immigrate their families to Germany. The foreigner population remained stable with the exception of an increase in the Turkish population as a result of the family reunification as illustrated in Figure 1. This phenomenon was the first major instance following the aftermath of World War II where Germany managed a mass migration. Despite a substantial increase in foreigners, Germany did not implement any socio-political infrastructures to accommodate or integrate them.

Undergoing the process of reunification, the government of West Germany faced another mass inflow of migrants in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the wars in former Yugoslavia, and human rights crises in Turkey. Amidst the migration, Germany passed legislation barring asylum seekers who traveled to Germany through its neighboring states, indirectly shunning those coming by land. Those who did migrate into the country were not systematically integrated into society as the federal government once more disregarded developing any integration policies for newcomers.

In 2005, the federal government of Germany recognized its shortcomings and redefined itself as a “country of immigration.” Then, in 2006 Germany hosted a national Integration Summit and developed an integration plan that went into effect the following year. The federal government assigned itself the lawful duty of integration. Alongside these resolves, Germany defined legislation specific to newcomers and created the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees that handled integration. It defined integration narrowly however, more befitting assimilation, as the government simply offered German language and history courses for refugees to fulfill this duty. Those programs attempt to convert newcomers into German culture as opposed to allowing the newcomer to consolidate their culture within the dominant society.

![Figure 1. Populations of foreigners by year following the stop of the guest worker program](image)
European Refugee Crisis

The 2015 refugee crisis is the largest displacement of people in Europe since World War II. Millions of people escaping turmoil in Middle Eastern and African countries caused the crisis by fleeing to Europe. Between 2014 and 2017 more than 3 million people applied for asylum in the European Union. Another 2 million are estimated to be squatting in European countries illegally. 2015 was the peak of the migrant crisis with over 1 million asylum seekers applying for asylum in Europe. In contrast, only 76,000 migrants entered Europe in 2018.

Syria was the largest source of asylum seekers between 2015 and 2017. The Arab Spring movement ignited student protests against the Syrian administration. The country’s administration responded to these protests with crackdowns on the students that ultimately evolved into a civil war. Mass migrations out of Syria into neighboring countries and eventually Europe resulted from the dangerous situation. Nearly one million refugees who crossed into Europe from 2014 to 2017 were Syrian.

Afghanistan was the second largest source of asylum seekers between 2015 and 2017. There, tens of thousands of civilians left due to harsh living conditions stemming from violence. The country was overwhelmed with civil unrest as insurgent groups including the Taliban and ISIL (also known as ISIS) fought for control. In 2016 alone, 11,418 people in Afghanistan were injured or killed. Most asylum seekers leaving Afghanistan fled to Pakistan and Iran to escape the violence. However, many others sought better living conditions in Europe.

Germany’s federal government played a large role in managing the migrant crisis but inadvertently stimulated the crisis. Under the Dublin Treaty approved in 1990, the first EU country a migrant enters is responsible for reviewing his/her claim for asylum. With most nations choosing to only accept a tiny fraction of the total number of refugees entering the EU, the German government employed an “open-door” policy, allowing all asylum seekers who enter its borders to file a claim for asylum. The policy was initially enacted as a temporary measure for unaccounted refugees but resulted in Germany processing and accepting significantly more asylum seekers than any other EU country as shown in Figure 2. It was an ethically upright decision by giving asylum seekers a temporary home, but managing it has been complicated. EU countries criticized Germany’s Federal government for incentivizing more refugees to enter Europe. The policy overwhelmed many neighboring countries due to refugees causing major socio-economic stresses on them as they passed through on their way to Germany.

Germany’s Asylum System

The German government made progress in some areas of refugee resettlement by streamlining the process through the creation and remodeling of distinct federal institutions and legislation. Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is an agency created before the refugee crisis which teaches newcomers the German language and offers consultative services including education for immigrants regarding topics such as migration and German law. In tandem with government offices, legislation such as the Asylum Act and the Residence Act play a large part in the resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees throughout Germany. These acts created the basis for screening, admitting, and housing asylum seekers and refugees.

The federal government passed other laws to ensure the protection of refugees in Germany. The “Integration Law,” passed in May 2016, outlines the rights and responsibilities of the government, asylum seekers, and refugees in areas such as labor laws, work programs, and permanent residency. In addition, the Integration Law gives protections to asylum seekers undergoing training at a trade school from deportation. This creates an opportunity for them to remain in Germany so long as they are within the three year vocational grace period of professional development. Following their training period, asylum seekers who are granted asylum are capable of completing a crucial step of integration: entering the workforce. The Integration Law helps refugees in areas such as professional development but does not incorporate aspects of social integration such as mentoring programs and community events.

The Federal Government’s Mistakes

Struggling to accommodate the sheer number of refugees, some of Germany’s administrative actions were poorly conceived and/or executed. Controversies in the media highlighting poor government decisions during the crisis worried locals and depicted the situation as ungovernable.

The federal government’s mistakes during the processes of accepting and distributing asylum seekers mustered fear of refugees among locals. In 2016, Germany admitted to losing track of more than 130,000 asylum seekers who never arrived at their assigned accommodation centers. Additionally, documents emerged revealing that the government kept little information on migrants entering the country. The government neglected to record fingerprints and verify identification documents. Due to the negligent oversight, migrants and locals in one city were able to create multiple identities and commit welfare fraud. The incident cost German taxpayers between €3 to €5 million and caused outrage among them. However, refugees have been properly documented since 2016.

Figure 2. A bar graph showing the number of refugees accepted by various EU countries by the end of 2017.

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Some effects of the federal government’s decisions were not premeditated at the administrative level and impaired lower levels of government. At the height of the 2015 crisis, the Interior Ministers of the German federal states confessed they were at their limits. During one of their meeting, a participant who was disappointed with the federal government’s refugee policy said “Sie öffnen die Grenzen und lassen uns im Stich” [They open the borders and let us down]. The media’s framing of the incidents and its focus on them has contributed to “negative and sometimes hostile attitudes” towards refugees.

Negative Standpoints Against Refugees

Anti-immigration far-right views from locals in parallel to refugee and migrant crimes gave rise to prejudices in locals that further impeded integration. These factors fueled adversarial stances towards refugees that caused locals to have misgivings about interacting with their new neighbors. Integration is a “two-way street” requiring locals and refugees to interact in an inclusive environment to succeed. Action must be taken on both sides; locals must contribute to creating a tolerant atmosphere through active participation and refugees must reach out to make their voices heard. The disconnect between locals and refugees has proven to be detrimental. It is one of the causes of refugee and migrant crime that is fueling the far-right narrative. That in turn furthers the disconnect by promoting fear in locals. This cycle is one of the challenges NGOs address through their integration programs by giving refugees a platform through which they can voice themselves and challenge prejudices.

One of the main detractors against refugees have been far-right groups who are against the resettlement of foreigners within Germany. These groups provoked fear of migrants among locals and encouraged prejudices causing refugees to be shunned within their communities, creating another hurdle for their integration. Anti-refugee demonstrations and violence against refugees transpired shortly after the introduction of the “open-door” policy, most within the eastern states of Germany. In 2015 there were instances of protesters against refugees clashing with police outside of refugee shelters in Saxony and protests with tens of thousands of participants against refugees in Dresden. More than 3,500 separate attacks on refugees occurred the following year throughout Germany.

Some demonstrations also emerged following news of major crimes committed by migrants. For instance, on New Year’s Eve in 2015 more than 500 women were sexually assaulted throughout Germany. Most victims accused immigrant men for the attacks. Riots broke out and there were over 800 attacks on refugee shelters in the following nine months. Figure 3 highlights these incidents in comparison to the increased number of anti-refugee posts on Facebook pages belonging to a right-wing political group, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD).

Overall crime in Germany had been on the decline since the 1990’s. Following the influx of migrants, however, the rate of violent crime flared up by 10% in 2015 and 2016. Of the 10% increase, 90% of the cases involved young male migrant suspects. Migrants were also suspects in 35% of all pickpocketing cases and 15% of incidents of serious bodily harm in 2016. Overall, migrants made up less than 2% of the total German population but were suspected of committing 8% of all crimes.

An analysis of crime statistics from 2015 to 2017 revealed that more than half of all politically motivated crimes were attributed to the far-right. Another study in 2017 revealed that migrants from non-crisis countries, like those coming from North Africa, were more likely to have been involved in violent crimes. By grouping refugees and migrants together, these statistics depict refugees erroneously and instigate prejudices. Despite crime rates falling, locals feel less secure because of the cynical depiction of refugees in media by the AfD.

Of the crimes committed by refugees, criminologists have investigated the motives and causes. Dr. Dominic Kulacek from the Criminological Research Unit of Lower Saxony stated “refugees have social deprivation, they are alone and they spend most of their time with other people suffering from these risk factors - the accommodation of the majority of asylum seekers is like refugee camps with little privacy, which again can add to the likelihood of committing crimes.” A partial cause of the crimes is the separationist environment the far-right is promoting. This environment is the issue integration NGOs are working to alter.
Refugee Integration & Cooking Programs

The German government’s integration programs promote assimilation as opposed to integration. The programs employed by the government drill refugees on the German language and history, pressuring the German culture upon them.

Refugees wishing to conserve traditions in order to retain their cultural identity have struggled in Germany’s federal integration programs. In her article regarding Syrian refugees, Lily Hindy states there is a portion of the refugee population who feel that the German government pressures refugees to assimilate. In an interview, one refugee called the process a “one-way conversation.” Refugees also cited their frustration with the patronizing attitudes of German citizens, claiming some Germans are unwilling to learn from them.

Many integration-oriented NGOs give refugees the opportunity to explore German culture and share their own through recreational activities including sports, dancing, tours, and gardening amongst others. To combat the image of refugees portrayed by the media, these organizations attempt to give a voice to refugees to show who they are. These NGOs operate under the premise that exposing refugees and German citizens to each other and by increasing the number of interactions between the two groups fosters integration within communities.

Globally, NGOs including Emma’s Torch, Sanctuary Kitchen, and Culinary Tales use cooking as a tool to create a common ground between refugees and locals (program descriptions in Appendix A). Cooking is an exemplar activity for promoting integration by blending two cultures. Similar to language, cooking is an important mode of cultural expression and identity. Language, however, is not immediately viable as an avenue of fraternizing between foreigners and locals. Refugees are generally granted asylum for a limited duration of time, during which they may not learn the language of their host countries. That barrier can be overcome with cooking. Any number of foreigners can cook together and thus strengthen intercultural connections. Through these cooking programs, refugees are given the opportunity to share their cultures with locals, despite not speaking the same tongue.

Other NGOs take a different approach than cooking to assist in the integration of refugees. In Germany, Refugees Welcome and Start with a Friend are two such examples. To combat the marginalization of refugees within current housing facilities, Refugees Welcome provides refugees with a flat share program. This program promotes integration by relocating refugees out of housing camps and into flats in German neighborhoods. Start with a Friend works towards giving community members the opportunity to contribute to society. The organization allows people to utilize their talents and skills by creating a framework through which incoming refugees receive guidance concerning their difficulties. NGOs working in the field of integration prioritize bringing people together without pressuring individuals to conform to German cultural norms.

Über Den Tellerrand

Über den Tellerrand is a non-profit organization founded in 2013 assisting in the integration of refugees into German society. It acts as a resource for locals who wish to strengthen intercultural communities within Germany and aids in the transition to a new society for those involved. The organization is based on the belief that people are all equal and share common ground despite coming from different backgrounds and having diverse experiences.

The history of Über den Tellerrand began in 2013 following a spate of public protests by asylum applicants at Oranienplatz, a public park in the heart of Berlin. A group of students began cooking with the asylum seekers at Oranienplatz as a way of meeting and welcoming them into the community. Inspired by those cooking sessions, the students developed a cookbook that included both personal stories and recipes from the refugees.

Due to the success of the cookbook, Über den Tellerrand created a program in the Spring of 2014 where refugees hosted cooking lessons for German citizens.
Today, the structure of the Cooking Class remains simple and professional as it has from the start. The refugee chefs, who speak German, guide locals through the process of cooking an ethnic meal. During the class, the refugee chefs give presentations about their home countries as well as the mission of Über den Tellerrand. Through cooking, the locals can learn about the diverse cultures refugees bring to their host countries.

The organization is led by a group of managing directors and part-time staff in the Berlin office. Funding for Über den Tellerrand comes from donations, sponsorships, and various services and programs the organization provides. Über den Tellerrand currently operates satellite locations in 30 different cities around Europe, as shown in Figure 5. In 2017, the Berlin hub hosted 48 intercultural Cooking Classes which attracted more than 950 people from multiple cultures.

Program Evaluation

Within NGOs, it is valuable and necessary to measure the impacts of their programming in order to assess effectiveness and identify improvements. The terms “program evaluation” and “performance measurement” are both used to describe the assessment of a program. The process can be a difficult task to complete because definitions of goals and outcomes are fluid and difficult to measure. There are numerous types of program evaluations used to assess the effectiveness of a program; examples include implementation, impact, and outcome-based evaluations. Implementation evaluations are used to measure whether program activities were implemented as planned, while impact evaluations measure the ultimate goals of an entirely organization. Outcome-based evaluations are used to assess changes in participant knowledge, behavior, attitudes, values and life situations (e.g., employment status). In determining the effect of Über den Tellerrand’s Cooking Classes on participants, we will use an outcome-based evaluation with elements of impact evaluation as this mixture fit our goal most precisely.

The principal reason for conducting an outcome-based evaluation is to measure the Cooking Class’ effects on the participants based on the goals of the program and organization. There are many key elements of an outcome-based evaluation that vary from program to program. These elements include inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, as shown and explained in Figure 6:

1. Inputs – the resources or materials provided by the program to administer services (e.g., volunteers, funds)
2. Activities – services or events that are provided by a non-profit organization
3. Outcomes – consequences of the program on the client specifically (e.g., knowledge, behaviors, and values)
4. Outputs – units or quantity of service provided (e.g., number of cooking classes conducted, number of cookbooks published)

It is vital that all components are clearly defined and conveyed before an outcome-based evaluation can be conducted properly. There are no straightforward directions for performing an outcome-based evaluation. However, it is important to create a plan of action, based on five predefined steps. The first step is to define all goals and outcomes that the program hopes to achieve including short, intermediate, and long-term ones. After defining the goals, indicators of a successful outcome must be identified. The third step is designing methods to collect data for every outcome-indicator pair that was identified. The fourth step is performing the designed tests specific to each type of outcome that was analyzed. Tests range from quality-assessment surveys to trained observer surveys. Lastly, the data should be analyzed and reported, keeping the audience in mind (e.g. stakeholders, executives, volunteers).

Figure 5. The locations of Über den Tellerrand satellite hubs in and around Germany.

Figure 6. Explanation of the key elements within outcome based evaluation.
Approach to Evaluation Tool

Our goal was to evaluate Über den Tellerrand’s Cooking Class program and propose improvements for it in order to maximize its effectiveness. We identified four main objectives that, together, fulfilled that goal. Those objectives are as follows:

1. LEARN: Assess current practices in outcome-based program evaluation among select NGOs in Berlin.
2. INQUIRE: Clarify the goals of Über den Tellerrand’s collaborative Cooking Program and the purpose, scope, and protocols for the proposed evaluation.
3. CREATE: Develop, test, and implement program evaluation protocols and instruments.
4. RECOMMEND: Develop the evaluation tool and protocols for future use by Über den Tellerrand.

As shown in the flowchart depicted in Figure 7 we completed our objectives by executing a series of tasks associated with the broader objectives. To accomplish these objectives, we utilized data collection methods including in-person interviews and online surveys with Über den Tellerrand staff and participants of their Cooking Class.

**Objective 1: LEARN**

Our first task was learning about the methods other non-profit organizations used to evaluate their integration programs. We identified four nonprofit organizations including Refugees Welcome, Start With a Friend which offered support to refugees in Berlin. Our primary focus was to interview organizations specifically in and around the city of Berlin.

These NGOs faced similar constraints and challenges as Über den Tellerrand because they worked with a similar demographic of refugees. Additionally, these organizations’ program evaluations elucidated concerns and impacts that we may have overlooked but are applicable to Über den Tellerrand’s Cooking Class.

We used semi-structured interviews in order to inquire about the outcome and process-based evaluations each organization used (refer to Appendix B for the interview script). One interview was conducted face-to-face and three by phone.

We analyzed the responses to find evaluation protocols and instruments used in the organizations’ program evaluations that could either be modified and adopted by Über den Tellerrand. We used a narrative analysis technique to evaluate the interviews. This entails gathering indicators from each interview, completing a comparison of the insights using inductive reasoning, and assessing all of the information in a cohesive manner. Indicators including the organization’s definition of integration, their processes for changing the public’s opinion on refugees, and their evaluation tools are used to determine how relevant the interview information is to our project. The information inquired was used to derive the initial survey in conjunction with information that was collected in the following objective.

Figure 7. Methodology Flowchart
**Objective 2: INQUIRE**

We collected data on the goals of Über den Tellerrand and clarified the purpose, scope, and preferred protocols for the initial evaluation tool. The first task of this objective was to interview staff in order to collect the goals of the organization and the goals specific to the Cooking Classes. These goals would later be grouped based on their themes and ranked by the staff based on importance. The second task of this objective was to identify the Cooking Class’ program manager’s preferences regarding the scope, content, and protocols of the evaluation tool.

**Clarify Goals**

In order to assess impacts Über den Tellerrand has on its participants, it is necessary to understand what impacts the organization aspires to make. We interviewed the organization’s board members and program managers working in the Berlin hub, the head office of the organization, about the goals of the organization. Following the collection of these goals, we asked all of the personnel to rank the goals in order to develop a unified list that we could consult when developing an evaluation tool.

The goals we collected were divided into two separate categories. The first set of goals are those pertaining to the Cooking Class. They can be gauged by participants and therefore used to conduct a program evaluation to assess that program’s effectiveness. The second set of goals are the organization’s institutional goals. These goals helped us understand the direction Über den Tellerrand is headed and generate recommendations to help them reach their goals.

The Cooking Class program is unlike any of the other programs offered by Über den Tellerrand as it serves a paying demographic. Because of the funding it provides, the class has more stringent goals and achieving them is integral to the prosperity of other programs. Collecting and understanding the goals of the class allowed us to develop an evaluation tool to determine how well each one is achieved and henceforth areas of improvement, if necessary.

We conducted nine in-person, qualitative interviews with Über den Tellerrand staff at its Berlin hub, both those working directly on Cooking Classes and those involved in other programs. Because our focus was centered on multiple open-ended questions as listed in Appendix C, we believe an interview allowed us to collect data most effectively given time constraints and the ability to clarify the questions. This task was conducted in the Über den Tellerrand office early on in our projects lifetime, allowing us to achieve two accomplishments. Firstly, we created an evaluation tool as quickly as possible thereby maximizing the refinement period. Secondly, it allowed our group to meet staff members formally and introduce ourselves. The interviews involved one staff member and two members of our group, one leading the interview and the other taking notes or recording, if appropriate.

Following the interview, we reviewed and analyzed the results to review answers within the pool of responses. We classified the data as qualitative details and used content analysis as our means to examine the interviews. Content analysis is a means of deciphering and therefore understanding the overarching themes that emerge in the pool of answers. Indicators we used to evaluate the responses from the staff include reviewing how relevant goals are to Cooking Classes, how specific the goals are, and whether or not they can be grouped into a general theme.

Once we completed the data analysis, we compiled both categories of goals into a Google Form. We sent the form to staff members and asked them to rate the importance of each goal within its category on a scale of 1-5, keeping responses anonymous. After aggregating response data, we had a list of goals for the program and organization, each with a rating from 1 to 5. We focused on the highest rating goals in order to devise questions for an evaluation tool. We then consulted the Cooking Class’ program manager to review these questions to see which would appropriately answer to the effectiveness of critical program goals. The institutional goals, on the other hand, were used by us to formulate possible recommendations with our deliverables.

**Specifying Purpose, Scope, and Preferred Protocols for Evaluation**

Before we began designing our evaluation tool, it was necessary to clarify some variables. We wanted to avoid recreating content that is not viable for the tool by interviewing the program manager. There may have been formats, methods, and topics regarding an evaluation tool that the program manager or other staff may have already been considered and/or used but were unmerited for the organization. On the other hand, there may have been variables that the organization has been planning to use or was interested in that they would like utilized. Topics we reviewed included the language(s), format, delivery method(s), time of delivery (i.e., pre- and/or post-program delivery), duration of data collection pre-analysis, frequency of delivery, completion time, and most importantly content, as shown in Figure 8.

We interviewed the Cooking Course Project Manager, Lotta Häfele, during our second week working with Über den Tellerrand. The interview involved Lotta and two members from our team, one member leading the interview and the other collecting data. The interview script we used can be found in Appendix D. This information we received through this interview laid the foundation over which we began designing the first iteration of the evaluation tool.

![Figure 8. Sample options related to the characteristics of our evaluation](image-url)
Objective 3: CREATE

Our evaluation aimed to gather feedback from the participants of Über den Tellerrand’s Cooking Class. After we used our findings from other NGOs (Objective 1) and the data collected from the staff interviews (Objective 2), we developed our preliminary evaluation instrument. We pretested it and revised the tool and our analysis methods using feedback from Lotta Häfele and first round of data analysis. We then administered the refined survey to participants of Cooking Classes and analyzed our results to possibly refine the evaluation tool one last time and add to our results.

Developing Initial Evaluation Tool

Through an interview with the Cooking Class’ project manager and our research, our team developed a standardized tool that required considerations from different stakeholders to evaluate the success of Über den Tellerrand’s Cooking program.

Über den Tellerrand had the largest impact on the initial evaluation tool’s evolution. We learned about an exit survey that was being used to collect comments regarding outreach and logistics from class participants (a full translation can be found in Appendix E). Our initial evaluation tool, however, focused on post-program takeaways so it had the option of either being a separate entity with a distinct focus or simply a combination of the two tools.

Our main goal was to develop meaningful questions and intuitive response methods fitting to Lotta’s constraints. We used the goals we collected from the interviews with key staff members (Objective 2.1) and our background research on effective evaluation tools to design the question-answer pairs that would be featured on the survey.

To assess the initial survey, we had to test it and analyze the results to understand how effective it is. We participated in a Cooking Class to both help the Über den Tellerrand staff and make observations. We administering a paper and electronic survey during the last 20 minutes of each class. After collecting responses from both the initial and refined surveys, we analyzed the data to compose the Cooking Class program evaluation (Figure 9). This required analyzing both open and closed-ended questions. This in part was done through mutually construing participant observations with regard to the responses. We decided to utilize Google Sheets in order to better visualize and interpret the results.

Refining Evaluation Tool

In light of the answers our questions elicited, we analyzed the survey to identify whether changes should be made. The main indicator we looked for during our analysis was whether participants were able to interpret and answer the question the way we intended. This was necessary for understanding whether we needed to add, remove and/or modify content within the initial tool. During the event we performed participant observations to identify segments during which attentiveness fluctuated. These observations would assist us in identifying rationale behind participant answers. Our team then presented these findings to Ms. Häfele to gather feedback regarding how to move forward. With the guidance of our sponsor in conjunction to the feedback from the pretest, we made adjustments to the initial evaluation tool to make it more applicable to the vision and liking of Über den Tellerrand.

Implement Questionnaire

Once the tool was refined, we administered it once again to Cooking Class participants. We participated in two more Cooking Classes and made participant observations during each. At the end of both classes we administered paper and electronic surveys. A public class was on April 14th, 2019 and a private Cooking Class was April 23rd, 2019. As with the initial survey, we distributed the refined survey during the last 20 minutes of each class.

Analyzing Data

After collecting responses from both the initial and refined surveys, we analyzed the data to compose the Cooking Class program evaluation (Figure 9). This required analyzing both open and closed-ended questions. This in part was done through mutually construing participant observations with regard to the responses. We decided to utilize Google Sheets in order to better visualize and interpret the results.

We believed analyzing open-ended questions using a thematic analysis would be the most effective way of drawing relevant information from responses. This entailed analyzing the responses to find themes by using deductive reasoning to test or confirm a hypothesis, which in our case was whether a program goal was being met. The first step in this process was to translate answers to English so our team could understand responses. We then identified themes for each question to generalize the data. The responses themselves could not be quantified, so our team will review the number of times a theme is brought up to quantify it within the response pool.

Closed-ended questions were analyzed statistically. These responses were quantified because participants simply chose a number response from 1 to 5. This data can be quickly analyzed, but the results may not be meaningful alone. To better understand why participants chose a low-rated answer, a joint statistical and thematic analysis was necessary to draw deductions.

The visualizations of the data through summary charts displayed common trends in the results and compared against the staff’s expectations of the program’s goals. From this analysis, we formulated some of our final recommendations to our sponsor.

Figure 9. Team Evaluating Survey Data
Objective 4: RECOMMEND

One of the major outcomes for our project was to design a standardized program evaluation tool that Über den Tellerrand could use in the future. Our recommendations are a cumulation of information we gathered through completing Objectives 1, 2, and 3.

Through the completion of Objective 1, we were able to determine whether Über den Tellerrand is following an integration model and identified improvements to the evaluation tool by learning about other organizations’ tools.

Objective 2 provided us with Über den Tellerrand’s institutional and program goals. We used the institutional goals to formulate recommendations on how to better reach them. Secondly we were able to measure the impact of the organization’s program goals specific to the Cooking Class through our evaluation tool. This helped us assess whether they were being met or if changes had to be made to the program to better achieve them.

Lastly, through the formulation and refinement of the evaluation tool and the analysis of responses in Objective 3, we finalized our survey and were ready to analyze the data we collected. Once this was completed we formulated several different recommendations and deliverables, each devised from information we gathered from other NGOs, the rankings of institutional goals we collected, and participant observations in conjunction to the analysis of responses to the evaluation tool.

In addition to the recommendations, we provided Über den Tellerrand with a predetermined set of deliverables including: a revised program evaluation instrument, a routine for data entry and data coding that automated and simplified the analysis process, and a pamphlet that describes protocols for conducting future evaluations.

Objective Outcomes

We gathered results from Objective 1, 2 and 3 to create an evaluation tool and make recommendations to Über den Tellerrand. For each objective we used specific indicators to help us with data analysis. Objectives 1 and 2 were completed in tandem. Our team learned about integration and evaluation tools from other NGOs working with refugees and we learned about the most important goals for participants of the Cooking Classes from Über den Tellerrand staff, respectively. Based on the results of those sections we moved into Objective 3, the creation and refinement of the evaluation tool. Finally we devise deliverables and recommendations that we believed would help Über den Tellerrand future efforts by analyzing the responses we gathered through our evaluation tool and staff ranked institutional goals.

Objective 1: NGO Interviews

Integration is a multifaceted concept based on inclusivity. Through interviews with four NGOs we collected their definitions of integration and assessed how well their programs aligned with Über den Tellerrand’s integration model. It was important to confirm that these organizations reflected Über den Tellerrand’s integration model to gauge if their evaluation tool was applicable to the Cooking Class program evaluation. We assessed the other NGOs evaluation tools and decided which aspects of their tools and practices could benefit Über den Tellerrand’s Cooking Class program by analyzing key themes as shown in Figure 10 that we found to overlap with Über den Tellerrand’s definition.

Dustin from Media Residents defined integration as “people having a good time, work getting done, having a good life, whatever that means to you, and feeling accepted and welcomed.” Media Residents acts as a middle man between refugees and locals; they produce and publish content made by refugees for locals. Its program provides: a co-working space refugees can use to develop their stories, workshops to learn video production techniques, a platform on which refugees can publish their work, and the opportunity for refugees to pitch ideas for projects they want to undertake.

Media Residents’ evaluation tool is an exit survey that gauges whether the workshops and production tools are beneficial to the refugees. Despite sharing a similar stance towards integration as Über den Tellerrand, we were not able to take inspiration from their evaluation tool because it focused entirely on refugees whereas Über den Tellerrand’s Cooking Class focuses on the locals.

DEFINING SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION

Inclusion is equal conversation between locals and refugees.

...successful integration is socializing with one another and everyone taking part in society.

Having a good life, whatever that is to the individual while being accepted and welcomed.

Empowerment. Finding successful footing in terms of economics.

Figure 10. Successful integration definitions
Salma Arzouni from Refugees Welcome stated that integration is “an equal conversation between locals and refugees.” The Refugees Welcome program offers a flat share for refugees in an effort to get them out of resettlement camps and into diverse communities. They offer locals the opportunity to get to know refugees in order to challenge refugee portrayal on the news. Since both groups are paired to live together, an opportunity to exchange experiences on a deeper level is fostered.

Their program evaluation is conducted through phone calls. A member of the organization calls both the locals and refugees to check up on both parties. Similar to Media Residents, elements of this program are similar to Über den Tellerrand, however the evaluation tool is not entirely applicable as calling each participant of the Cooking Class is not feasible for our sponsor.

Edric Huang from Emma’s Torch explained integration as a combination of concepts. Firstly, he mentioned empowerment for refugees which he explained as supporting themselves, their families, and moving out of a shelter system. The second component they espouse regarding integration is blending refugee culture with the culture of the host country while maintaining an understanding of how the cultures contrast and interact. Lastly, becoming a part of a large community is a vital facet of integration. Emma’s Torch creates an apprenticeship program which focuses on cooking and gives refugees the opportunity to learn everyday skills. It creates a pipeline between students and graduates that helps them transition into the workforce. This in turn helps the refugees support themselves and feel like they are a part of something larger than just themselves.

This organization has a layered definition of integration. Many dimensions of this multifaceted definition are shared by Über den Tellerrand. The evaluation tools for this program include an entrance survey, phone call, and exit survey. After reviewing their evaluation tool, our team determined that many of the avenues they use in their evaluation would not be applicable to Über den Tellerrand for the same reasons we mentioned regarding the NGOs above. One component of their evaluation tool we framed into a recommendation for our sponsor was the use of an entrance survey. We believed this would help our sponsor collect more data from participants.

Franziska Birnbach from Start with a Friend defined integration as “mingling and everyone actively bringing their own experiences to society.” This organization focuses on making refugees feel included within their community through interactions with locals. Their organization pairs refugees and locals up thereby building a social network. The refugees learn how to do everyday things in their new community including learning how to use the train, how to get a job, and how to find an apartment, among other tasks.

This NGO uses a combination of surveys and phone calls to assess the status of both the refugees and locals. These evaluations are conducted after registration and periodically thereafter. The organization also uses an outcome-based survey to evaluate the success of their program and aim to see what both sides are getting out of the program. After analyzing their evaluation tool, we found it to not be feasible for Über den Tellerrand. The format of their evaluation tool used coding and a chain of impact system designed to detect and mediate issues in the tandem itself rather than identify program takeaways.

We identified these NGOs reflected Über den Tellerrand’s integration model however our takeaways were limited. These four organizations focused on the topic of shared spaces: Media Residents provides a coworking space for refugees to work, Refugee Welcome provides a flat share, Start With A Friend provides opportunities for refugees and locals to share a space and interact with one another, and Emma’s Torch much like Über den Tellerrand creates a space for interactions and cooking. During our interview with Über den Tellerrand staff, six of the nine participants mentioned encounter spaces. The evaluation tools these organizations use focused more on refugees than locals or split the attention between the two and use formats we found unsuitable for Über den Tellerrand. On the other hand, our sponsor’s Cooking Class evaluation tool will focus on impacts the class had on locals and work to quantify their experience and takeaways.

**Objective 2: Ranking of Goals**

By knowing the goals (or takeaways) the staff expected for the participants, we were able to design the evaluation tool to measure the extent to which those goals have been reached. We analyzed the staff responses to two questions about goals, one regarding institutional goals and the other regarding program goals.

We aggregated all of the program goals gathered from staff interviews and applied our analysis indicators to them to create a list of themes Über den Tellerrand found important for participants. These indicators included: how relevant the answers are to the response, what theme the goal falls under, and how often a specific theme was mentioned. Some of the responses were too specific and were categorized within a general theme. For example, one response noted that a program goal of the Cooking Classes is to “create safe spaces” without mentioning for whom and how such a space is defined. This response was grouped within the theme of creating encounter spaces. After reviewing each goal, we categorized them into seven themes that appeared and measured how many responses aligned with the goal, as shown in Figure 11:

![Figure 11. Major themes grouped by how often they were mentioned](image)
We decided to add goals specific to an ordinary Cooking Class to the ranking survey we eventually sent Über den Tellerrand staff. This was done because the focus of the program goals mentioned by the staff members were nearly entirely on integration. The staff members did not mention possible goals of a traditional Cooking Class. Our team assessed whether the staff overlooked them or if they were not a major intent of the class intentionally. The goals our team added included:

1. Learning how to cook an ethnic meal
2. Learning new cooking techniques
3. Preparing a good tasting meal

From the results of the ranking survey, we concluded that the evaluation tool should focus on the integration aspect of the class. The survey had 10 responses, shown in Figure 12. The goals with the highest average ranking questions were “Creating meeting spaces where locals and refugees are able to interact without the fear of labels” (avg 4.1) and “Creating the opportunity for locals to learn about refugees and their culture through cooking” (avg 4.7). These two goals were the only ones to receive a ranking above a 3.0/5.0. The key goals had to do with inclusivity, just as the majority of the themes of responses from the staff interviews. Despite the added questions about cooking, staff nonetheless placed more weight on the goals relating to integration. The impact of the class on participants relating to these ranked goals would ultimately be used in Objective 3 when designing the initial evaluation tool.

**Objective 2: Survey Formatting**

The second task for our objective was completed with Ms. Häfele. Originally she suggested continuing to use a paper format as the delivery method but expressed problems with it. Currently all historic surveys are stored away in the Über den Tellerrand office. Due to the quantity of them, it is difficult for staff to reference and analyze all of the data they have collected. Ms. Häfele also wanted to minimize paper consumption and therefore wanted to move away from administering paper surveys to participants. Our team proposed to move to an electronic platform to which she agreed as this platform solved the problems she expressed. The rest of her preferences regarding the survey are highlighted in Figure 13.

**Objective 3: Survey Implementation**

**Creating our Evaluation Tool**

Ms. Häfele confirmed that she would like our evaluation tool to be a modification of her current exit survey. Our first step in modifying the survey was to delete questions we believed were answered sufficiently and would not continue to be useful to Ms. Häfele. Those questions included the following:

1. Prior to the cooking class, did you receive all information relevant to you?
2. What would you have liked to know more about?
3. What did you miss?

An additional question that we removed was “How did you like the food?” The participants are helping make food that is from a foreign culture, and it is expected that some of the participants might not have a palate for it, but that is one of the experiences of the Class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION ELEMENTS</th>
<th>PROGRAM MANAGER’S RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LANGUAGE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELIVERY METHOD</td>
<td>QR Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME OF DELIVERY</td>
<td>End of Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURVEY DURATION</td>
<td>2-4 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVALUATION METHOD</td>
<td>Questionnaire/Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 12. The ranking of program goals of the Cooking Classes by Über den Tellerrand staff.**

**Figure 13. Evaluation tool preferences**
We designed an evaluation tool that focused on assisting the fulfillment of our sponsor’s mission (Objective 1) and measuring goals staff members valued the most (Objective 2).

Per Objective 1, our team established that one of Über den Tellerrand’s principal missions is creating an encounter space for locals and refugees. This mission requires them to be able to identify future participants by understanding the goals, values, and experiences of current program participants. Additionally these questions aligned with good practices in program evaluations as we learned through interviews with NGOs and research. This led us to add two new questions focusing on demographics to the evaluation tool that would help us understand current participants in order to better identify future participants. These two questions included:

Q1: Have you participated in any other integration programs?
Q2: How important are the following aspects of the class to you on a scale of 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Very Important)
- Learning to cook an ethnic meal
- Interested in multiculturalism
- Helping with refugee integration
- Enjoying an interactive event with friends/family

Per Objective 2, we focused on adding questions to the tool that assess the two highest ranking staff goals. This would allow the staff to measure whether or not these goals were experienced by participants and, therefore, if changes to the program should be made. The first of these goals was “Creating the opportunity for locals to learn about refugees and their culture through cooking.” To assess whether this goal was being met in the classes, we added question Q1 below. The second highest ranking goal was “Creating meeting spaces where locals and refugees are able to interact without the fear of labels.” To analyze this question, we added questions Q2 and Q3 below.

Q1: What, if anything, did you learn besides cooking?
Q2: How well do you believe this class helps in achieving an open and tolerant society?
Q3: How do you think that a cooking class can counteract prejudices against refugees?

Part 2: Modifying the tool

We used two sets of indicators while reviewing data from our pre-tests, one for tool analysis and the other for data analysis. The indicators used for tool analysis included both checking how well the responses answered the questions and participant observations we noticed during our pre-testing of the evaluation tool. There were three changes made after our pretest using these indicators. Firstly, we modified all the questions answered with a rating from 1-5 to a 1-7 scale in order to get more diversified responses to questions. Analyzing the responses elicited using a 1-5 scale was difficult. Our team was not able to identify definitive differences between closely grouped averages. Secondly, we completely changed the answer pool/selection to some questions. This was done because we found some formats, such as ratings or checkboxes, did not elicit meaningful enough responses to certain questions as we had originally anticipated. Lastly, we removed all text boxes within the survey except for the final text box. We noticed that many participants did not use additional text boxes within the evaluation tool asking for explanations to certain ratings and instead answered the cumulation of those questions in the final text box.

The next indicator we used for the tool modification was participant observations. One major observation we noticed was participants scanning the QR code to access and answer the survey online but not completing it. Although there could have been multiple causes for participants not answering the survey after opening it, we hypothesized that it may have been because the tool was hosted by Google Forms. This platform may have prompted concerns about data privacy or deterred participants from answering because of its interface. This led us to explore other formats through which to administer the survey.

Our team ultimately created our own webpage with the survey and we hosted it online as shown in Figure 14. To access the site, we created a QR code incorporating the company’s logo for the participants to scan. The QR code redirects the participants to the survey so they don’t have to struggle typing out the website URL. We found this format to be beneficial for three reasons. Firstly, the webpage makes filling out the survey more intuitive for participants. Secondly, it helps with visualizing and interpreting the data effortlessly. Using the evaluation tool we created, participant responses are directed into a Google Sheet where the data is automatically analyzed and visuals are updated to represent new submissions. We believe the spreadsheet will assist staff in addressing recommendations and critiques from participants of future classes.

This tool was tested to make sure it works the way we intended during a private Cooking Class on April 24, 2019. After the event, we made our final modifications to the tool and made it ready for Ms. Häfele.
Part 3: Analysis and Findings

We used another set of indicators for the analysis of data we collected. These included looking through responses for ones with low ratings to complete a joint analysis between the ratings and written answers. We also reviewed the specificity of each response, whether it can be generalized into a new theme or a previously mentioned one for that specific question, and lastly the number of responses pertaining to the devised themes. Themes that appeared most often were given more priority in being addressed over lower rankings ones.

Per Objective 1, we added questions to the evaluation tool to help Über den Tellerrand better identify possible participants for the Cooking Class. We learned that 31 of the 34 respondents had never participated in an integration project before attending that day’s Cooking Class (Figure 15). Twenty-one of the participants noted they would be interested in participating in other Über den Tellerrand events.

Despite originally intending to use the joint analysis to understand the data, we also used it to identify a change in the tool. We found four instances of ratings being lower than 3 on a 1-5 scale to the question asking participants to rank several different components of the class. We used joint-analysis to understand the reasoning for the low ratings. We concluded this was caused due to a misunderstanding in the rating scale. This was uncovered through an analysis of the open-ended question asking for improvements where participants did not explain their reasoning for the low rankings. This prompted us to change ratings from a number scale to a star scale.

After our analysis, our team concluded that Über den Tellerrand is achieving the goals it sets for participants of the Cooking Class program. Despite ratings of goals being skewed, the ratings we collected echoed the goals of Über den Tellerrand staff from Objective 2. The highest ranking goal for participants at 3.60/5.0 was “getting an insight into a new culture,” which was also the highest rated goal for staff members. The second highest rated goal for participants was “contributing to integration” which ranked 3.6/5.0. The second highest ranking goal for staff was creating a space where refugees and locals can interact, a key process in integration.

The responses to the final question on the evaluation form asking for recommendations provided us with input we were able to present to Ms. Häfele. The theme that came up the most dealt with lowering the ratio of participants to refugee chefs. In 5 of 10 responses, participants requested more refugees to participate in the class. In 3 of 10 responses, participants requested smaller classes in general.

Another theme dealt with the cooking portion of the class. Two respondents noted that they felt as though they were not as involved in the cooking as they had hoped and instead only contributed to the preparation of the food. These themes and suggestions were presented to Ms. Häfele for her to discuss with her team and potentially make changes to the program.

Following the analysis and revision of the tool, we devised recommendations for Über den Tellerrand.

Objective 4: Future Evaluation Tools

In conjunction with the analysis of participant opinions and an updated evaluation tool, we created an instructional pamphlet as shown in Figure 16. We also devised additional suggestions for the organization. These recommendations are suggestions we believe are feasible to implement and are capable of improving the Cooking Class, thereby boosting Über den Tellerrand’s integration efforts.
Recommendation 1 -
Disclaimer:

Many participants wanted to hear more personal stories from the refugees. In the current design of the Cooking program, the refugee chefs give a presentation about their home countries, their culture, and their life currently, but they do not talk about their journey to Germany. That information is personal and can be traumatic for some of them. Many participants are not knowledgeable of this and express interest in learning about the rigorous journey asylum seekers faced on their way to Europe. To counteract this problem we would like to include a disclaimer prior to the presentation stating that the presentation is supposed to be based on the culture of the refugees and not their individual stories regarding trauma. This invokes a need for cultural sensitivity on behalf of the participants and ensures chefs that they won’t have to relive a deeply challenging time.

Recommendation 2 -
Entrance Activity:

In our initial survey we had a question “How well did the cooking class meet your expectation?”, and we noted that we did not know what the participants expected from the class. To combat this issue, we propose an entrance activity which would take place at the beginning of class. This activity would include a question asking, “what do you hope to learn in this class” or “what is your expectation from this class”. Then everyone can go around in the group and verbalize their answer. This will help the staff to see what people want to learn in the class or what they expect to get out of the class. This information will help them make changes to their class in the future. They could also ask participants to write their responses on the blackboards in the Kitchen Hub. This format would provide the staff with a written record of responses on the blackboards in the Kitchen Hub. This would allow participants to get more information out of the presentations and to feel more involved.

Recommendation 3 -
Interactive Activity:

We recommend that staff incorporate an interactive activity for participants during presentations given in the Cooking Classes. After reviewing survey responses and debriefing our team’s participant observations, we found that participants were not entirely engaged in the presentations. We concluded that an interactive element within the presentation would help relieve this concern. Programs like Poll Everywhere or Kahoot allow presenters to pose questions to attendees who would then text their answers to the question to a provided phone number. Their responses would automatically be displayed on the beamer, showing the consensus in the room. Possible questions that could be posed by presenters include “How many satellite locations are established around the world?” or “What ingredients do you think are in the dish?” These thought-provoking questions would allow participants to get more information out of the presentations and to feel more involved.

Conclusion:

We worked with Über den Tellerrand, an NGO working in the field of integration. The programs the organization hosts revolve around cooking. This medium allows for self-expression despite cultural barriers. Through its Cooking Classes, refugees are able to share their cultures and interact with locals, which in turn fosters a spirit of integration among those involved. Previously, the organization lacked a tool through which to evaluate the impact of the Cooking Class program on the participants.

Our project started with us researching Über den Tellerrand and creating a series of objectives to tackle our project. Firstly, by communicating with other NGOs working in the field of refugee integration and speaking with staff members at Über den Tellerrand, we were able to get insight into the various definitions and interpretations of integration, learn about program evaluation procedures, and learn about the goals of Über den Tellerrand. With these insights we were able to create a survey to better gauge how much of an impact it is having on participants. We were able to test it during two of the organization’s classes and collect data we presented to our sponsor. We presented our ideas and results during our last week in Berlin. There were certain limitations to our project that we realized up to that point in our project. Firstly, our results were based on data we collected from two classes and are by no means a conclusive representation of the organization and its Cooking Class program. Additionally, throughout our project we recognized many other recommendations that we proposed to our sponsor but they were not able to be implemented, like increasing the number of refugee chiefs. We learned that many of them were not feasible due to finances. NGOs including Über den Tellerrand have a strict budget that limits their undertakings. Lastly, the language barrier between us and our multiple interviewees limited, and sometimes restricted, the phrasing of our questions, thereby distorting the meaning of the questions and responses. This restriction may have resulted in subjective interpretations of responses that unintentionally do not align with the intended meanings.

During our 7 weeks working with our sponsor in Berlin we gained a wealth of knowledge about the challenges that refugees face, especially with regards to housing and the limitations of ‘minijobs’. Through our participation in our sponsor’s Cooking Classes and Community Events, we witnessed the positive impact Über den Tellerrand has on both refugees and locals. Even though our project was to help the organization, it helped us learn just how much of a positive impact individuals can have within their communities. True to Über den Tellerrand’s definition, we were exposed to numerous cultures (including Syrian, Afghani, Iraqi, Russian, Turkish, Chinese, and Swiss) and customs from the chefs and participants that strengthened our view of the world and its people. We were able to form personal connections with the refugees and even attended one of their birthday celebrations. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with such an incredible organization and we hope our work will help them amplify their efforts in the future.
REFERENCES


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