

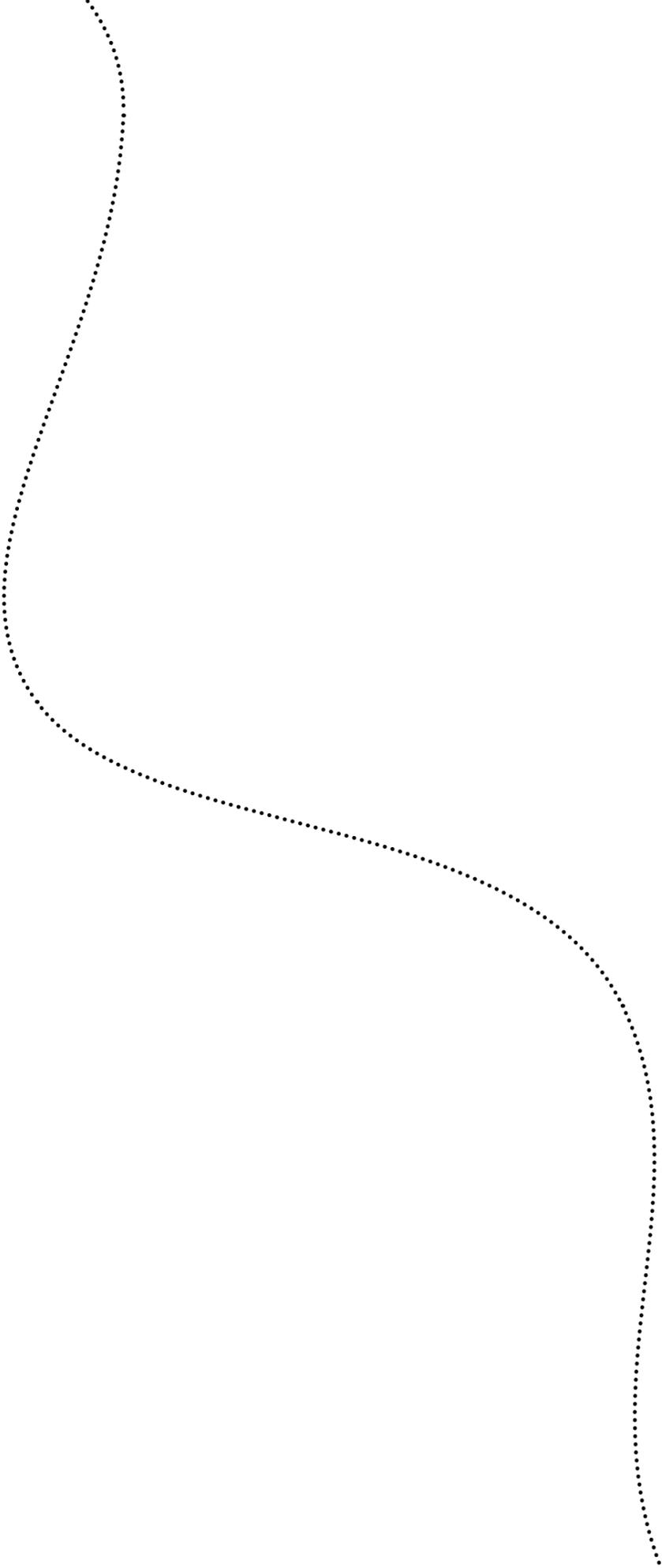


- Finding new ways to communicate with and relate to each other in multicultural contexts -



migrationlab  
opens up your mind

**MIGRATIONLAB  
SOCIAL IMPACT  
REPORT 2016**



## **Migrationlab**

### **Social Impact Report 2016**

This report was possible thanks to the European Cultural Foundation  
Idea Camp Research and Development Grant 2015

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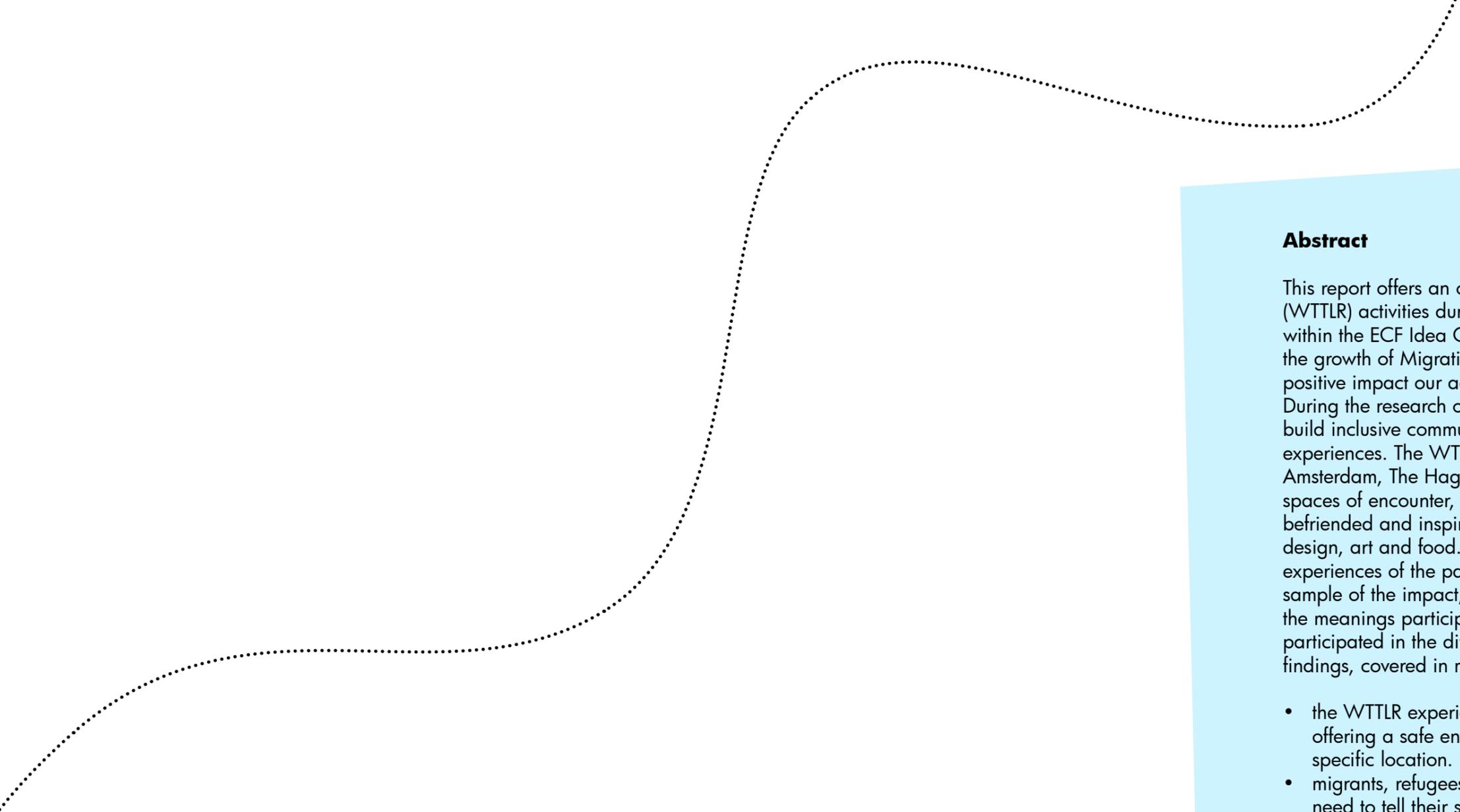
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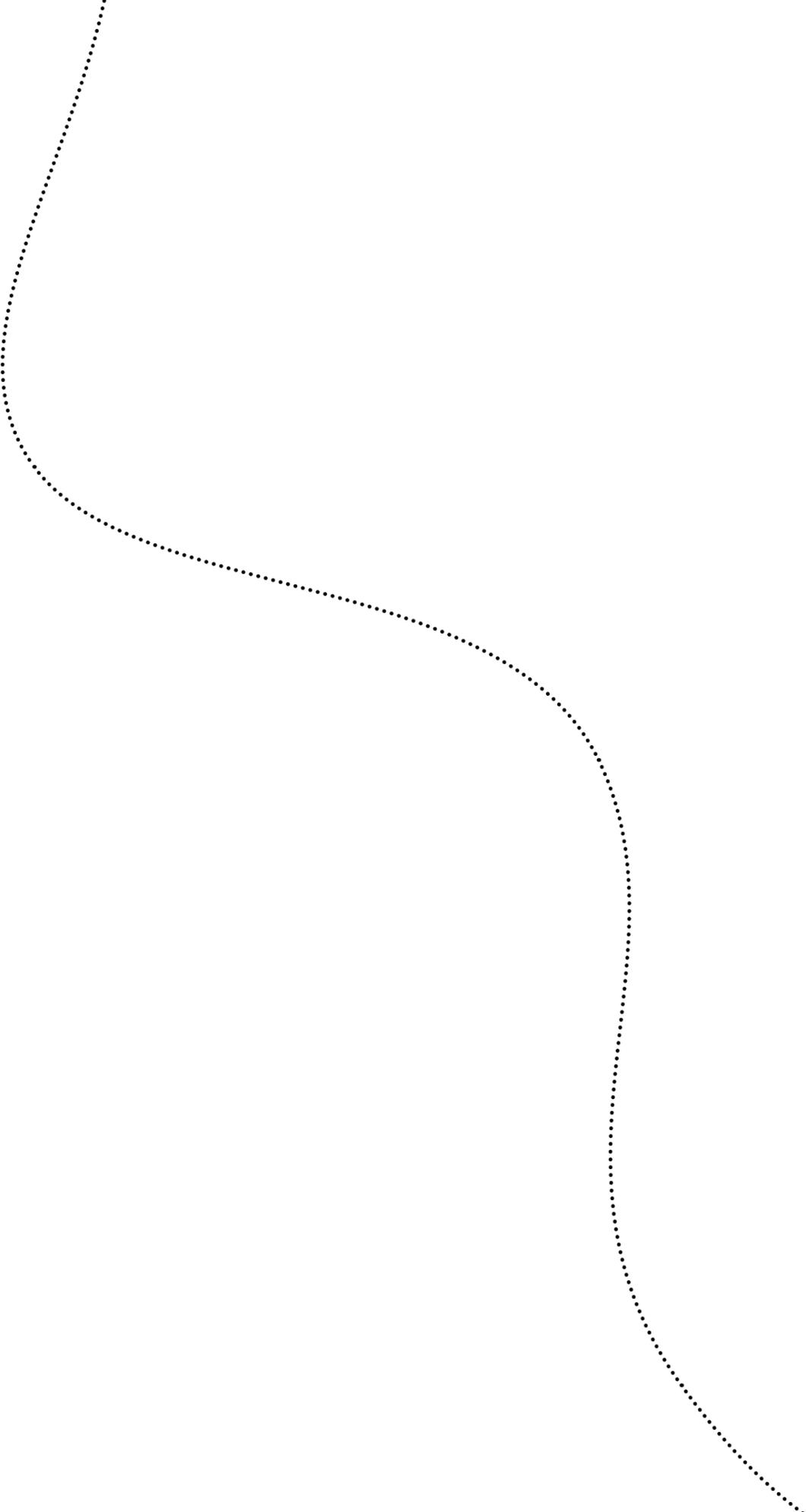
Isabelle Ohlson



## **Abstract**

This report offers an overview on the Welcome to the Living Room (WTTLR) activities during the research and development year within the ECF Idea Camp R&D Grant 2016. The results reveal the growth of Migrationlab as an organization as well as the positive impact our activities have for those joining these events. During the research our aim was to rethink public space and build inclusive communities through the organization of WTTLR experiences. The WTTLRs described in this report took place in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. They were co-created spaces of encounter, where migrants, refugees and locals met, befriended and inspired each other through storytelling, social design, art and food. This report does not aim to quantify the experiences of the participants, nor to produce a representative sample of the impact; rather, we sought to explore and unpack the meanings participants gave to their experiences when they participated in the different Migrationlab activities. Our main findings, covered in more depth in this report, are threefold:

- the WTTLR experiences are a way to produce public spaces, offering a safe environment by creatively transforming each specific location.
- migrants, refugees and locals are willing, eager and have the need to tell their stories and be heard in a safe environment.
- the WTTLR experiences offer these communities the possibility to together build a new language and concepts of how we could look at the world and each other.



## **List of acronyms used in the report**

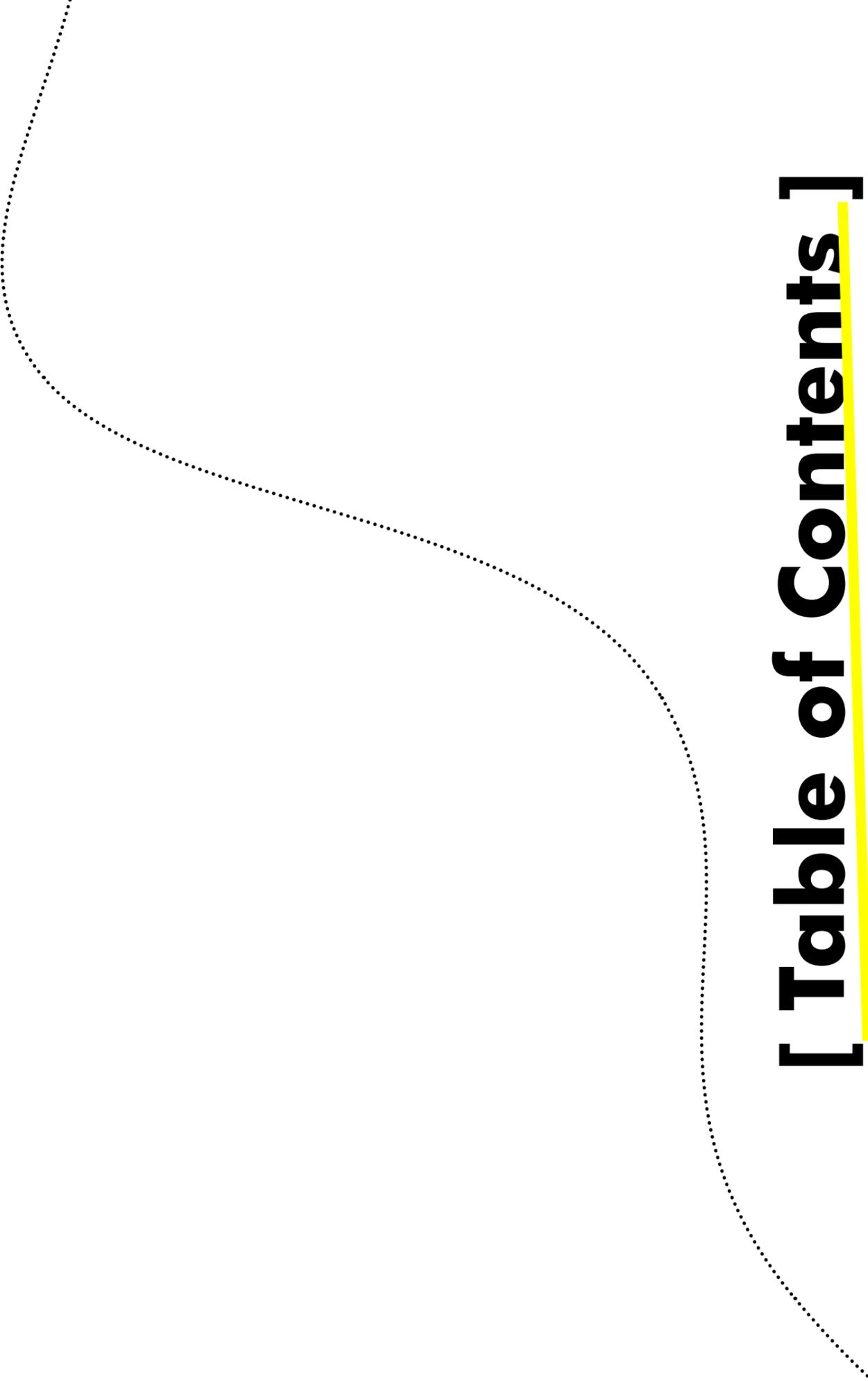
**WTTLR:** Welcome to the Living Room

**ECF:** European Cultural Foundation

**ECF:** Idea Camp R&D Grant: European  
Cultural Foundation Research and  
Development Idea Camp Grant

**LUC:** Leiden University College

**EU:** European Union



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# Introduction



For two years now, Migrationlab has been bringing together migrants, refugees and locals in different cities across Europe to meet, interact and inspire each other. In Migrationlab's Living Rooms we learn how to create safe spaces of encounter together, and how to acknowledge each other. Our goal is to improve the social relationships between these communities and re-imagine the way we communicate with and relate to each other in multicultural contexts.

Migrationlab began as a blog with the same name in September 2014. Following my own experiences as a Romanian migrant woman in Europe for seven years, I wanted to start authentic conversations about migration with locals, refugees and migrants, having my own migration stories as a starting point. As others joined the conversation, I felt the need for physical spaces where these conversations could take place. I had no idea that this

personal goal would grow into such an important initiative. In March 2015, I launched the WTTLR in Vienna, Austria. After a successful pilot phase in Austria and The Netherlands the same year, in February 2016 Migrationlab became a non-profit organization, registered in The Hague, The Netherlands. In 2016, we also celebrated our 10th WTTLR event in our fourth European city! This is an incredible achievement, considering the very limited financial and human resources we had.

Drawing on our previous work in 2015, where we already saw significant social impact, and which included among others participation at the Idea Camp organized by European Cultural Foundation, our goal in 2016 centered on involving more migrants, refugees and locals in our activities, uncovering how the co-creation of our Living Rooms affects the lives of the participants. In other words:

# What does it mean and why is it important to co-create spaces of encounter, such as Migrationlab Living Rooms, where migrants, refugees and locals meet, befriend one another and inspire each other through storytelling, social design, art and food?

The research and development of Migrationlab and WTTLR were made possible in The Netherlands in 2016 thanks to the ECF Idea Camp R&D Grant.

Our research here at Migrationlab aimed to rethink public space and build inclusive communities through the organization of WTTLR activities. The research was initially focused on The Hague and Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Additionally, a series of four WTTLR events on a former refugee boat in Amsterdam was included. To conduct this research, I invited three more professionals in The Netherlands to join the Migrationlab's research team: Daniela Vicherat Mattar, co-writer of this report and assistant professor at Leiden University College, The Hague, focusing on diversity, citizenship and urban culture; Gabriela Bustamante, designer and senior instructor at The Hague University of Applied Sciences; and Dana C. Popa, trans-cultural systemic therapist. Others joined in different phases of the project throughout the year.

As a result of our activities this year, we steadily grew as an organization and we discovered three key findings of the research, which are covered more in depth this report. These findings are:

- The WTTLR experiences are a way to produce public spaces, offering a safe environment by creatively transforming each specific location.
- Migrants, refugees and locals are willing, eager and need to tell their stories and be heard in a safe environment. There's a need and will to build together, a need and will to stay connected, and a need and will to build a community around the WTTLR experiences.
- The WTTLR experiences offer these communities the possibility to together construct a new language and concepts of how we can look at the world and each other.

Our work in 2016 is presented over five chapters in this report. Chapter 1 highlights Migrationlab—what it is and does— and the WTTLR activities we held this year. Chapter 2 focuses on the methodology we used for our research, while Chapter 3 presents the impact on Migrationlab as an organization and the impact and evaluation of our activities. Along the way we encountered a few important challenges that we cover in Chapter 4. Our learnings and conclusions are captured in Chapter 5.

All this work wouldn't have been possible without the contribution of our participants, storytellers, volunteers, interns, collaborators, partners, and our friends and families. These people believe that our work brings about a change in society and dedicate their time, skills and knowledge to making that change happen. A big-hearted thank you to all of you who have been supporting the Migrationlab family over the past two years!

This report represents not only Migrationlab's growth, but the growth of the communities who participated in our activities and ultimately society itself.

*"To say Hello rightly is to see the other person, to be aware of him as a phenomenon, to happen to him and to be ready for him to happen to you."*

**Eric Berne**

This is our attempt to say hello rightly.

Laura M. Pana  
Founder & Director Migrationlab

# Chapter 1

## About Migrationlab and WTTLR

### Activities during the Research and Development Year in The Netherlands

#### About Migrationlab

Migrationlab co-creates opportunities with and for refugees, migrants and locals to meet, interact and inspire each other in cities across Europe. We combine culture, storytelling, social design and non-formal education to improve the communication and social relationships between these communities.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Migrationlab debuted as a **blog** in September 2014 featuring Laura M. Pana's experiences over the past seven years as a female, Romanian migrant in Europe. The name Migrationlab refers to a multilingual, open workspace that is both virtual and physical, which explores migration matters and documents intercultural communication with the direct participation of migrants, refugees and local communities.

In 2016, Migrationlab became a non-profit organization, Stichting Migrationlab (Foundation Migrationlab), registered at the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in The Hague, Netherlands. The following events during the 2015 pilot phase and activities within the ECF Idea Camp R&D Grant made this milestone possible: the launch of Migrationlab and WTTLR in Vienna, Austria (March); concept development during the Idea Camp in Sweden, organized by the European Cultural Foundation (September); and in October, participation at Vienna Design Week, Austria, and Spotlight: Romania A Film and Photography Festival in The Hague.

## About Welcome to the Living Room

WTTLR is Migrationlab's social design and culture program. Here, we transform urban spaces into public living rooms together with migrants, refugees and locals in cities across Europe. In our living rooms, these communities come together to get to know each other, befriend one another, and find new ways to communicate with each other and live together by sharing stories, reflections, art, food and music.

A usual Migrationlab Living Room hosts up to 50 people in order to maintain a degree of intimacy that allows conversations and connection to happen more easily and profoundly. The duration of a WTTLR experience is up to 5 hours and it can be organized in different times of the day or the week. The Migrationlab Living Room concept can be adapted to any space, urban or rural, and its mobility character allows us to explore the city in various ways, migrating from one neighborhood to another, and thus reach more and diverse communities.

After carrying out several activities within the ECF Idea Camp R&D Grant in the Netherlands, we fine-tuned the concept of the WTTLR, expanding on its initial social design and cultural pillars with:

- Co-creation of the Migrationlab Living Room through co-design workshops together with local communities (migrants, refugees, locals).

- Design and implementation of the Migrationlab Living Room according to the findings of the workshop.
- Revamped WTTLR cultural events.

Since March 2015, we have transformed artistic spaces, art galleries, a room in a former bread factory, the attic of a museum and a former refugee boat we sailed with on Amsterdam's waters. The Migrationlab Living Room took place in two European countries (Austria and The Netherlands), four European cities (Vienna, The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam), and different neighborhoods within the same city (Vienna).

As part of the ECF Idea Camp R&D Grant in The Netherlands in 2016, we organized two preparatory co-design workshops, in March & September, and two respective WTTLR events each in The Hague (July) and Rotterdam respectively (October). Additionally, we organized a series of four WTTLR events, two Living Rooms each on April 30 and May 7, on a former refugee boat we sailed with on the IJ River in Amsterdam (see activities below), following a partnership with Rederij Lampedusa.

We closed the year by celebrating the Migrationlab's 10th WTTLR event, in Rotterdam, our fourth European city, on October 26, 2016!



# Meet the Migrationlab Team

1. Laura M. Pana - Founder and Director Migrationlab (center)



2. Daniela Vicherat Mattar - Assistant Professor at Leiden University College The Hague with focus on diversity, citizenship and urban culture (center)



3. Gabriela Bustamante - Designer and Senior Instructor at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (center)



4. Dana C. Popa - Trans-cultural Systemic Therapist (left)



5. Isabelle Ohlson - Graphic Design Internship (left)



6. Farhad Vilki - Filmmaker, Cinema Production Designer, Video Artist



7. Musab Al-Ahdab - Organization



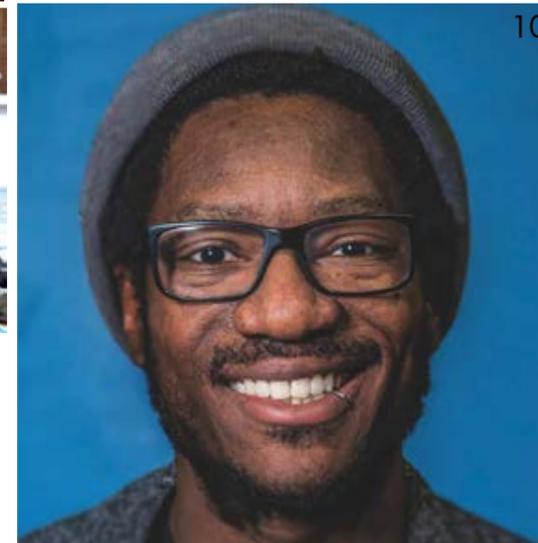
8. Razan Damlakhi - Organization (right)



9. Lisa Rebert - Founder of Word Alchemists, content creators & social media strategy (right)



10. Elliot Lyons - Editor



11. Günther Balatka - Photographer



## Activities during the Research and Development Year in The Netherlands



## Welcome to the Living Room in Amsterdam

April 30 & May 7, 2016

We started the year with a special series of four Migrationlab Living Rooms organized in collaboration with Rederij Lampedusa, which runs Lampedusa Cruises. Lampedusa Cruises takes those interested out on tours of the Netherlands' waterways using two boats given to them by the Italian authorities that were formerly used to transport refugees. Our collaboration was the result of our participation at the "Experts Meeting Migration Matters" organized by Stichting DOEN and Boijmans Museum in Rotterdam, December 2015, after we applied for the ECF Idea Camp R&D Grant. This collaboration was funded by Stichting DOEN through BankGiro Loterij.

Our Living Rooms took place on an Egyptian fishing boat, called Mr. Friday, that transported 282 refugees—mainly Eritreans—from Egypt to Lampedusa, Italy in 2013. The maximum number of people allowed on a boat of this size in The Netherlands is only 14, including the crew. Dutch locals, refugees, migrants and tourists came together on two consecutive Saturdays, morning and afternoon rides, on April 30 and May 7 in Amsterdam to get to know each other, share stories, smiles, hugs, thoughts, good food and break down misconceptions. The majority of the refugee participants traveled to Europe on boats similar to Mr. Friday and most of their journeys were very difficult.

Following three visits over the span of two weeks to a refugee center in Amsterdam located in a former prison, which hosted 300 male refugees, six refugees showed interest in participating in different Migrationlab Living Rooms on the Mr. Friday boat. Due to the instability of their situation while waiting for asylum in The Netherlands, such as transfer to other centers in other cities in The Netherlands, or unexpected events like hunger strikes, only one of them was able to participate. He traveled from

Doetinchem, a city in the east of The Netherlands, which is two hours from Amsterdam. (see also Chapter 4 Challenges, page 46) The refugees who participated in our Living Rooms in Amsterdam had already received asylum in The Netherlands, and traveled from different cities such as Groningen, Leiden and The Hague.

Participation in these Living Rooms was open to everyone. Together with our partner Rederij Lampedusa we invited locals, both

Dutch and migrants, to contribute to the events by purchasing a double ticket for themselves and a refugee.

The duo ticket included a two-hour boat trip for two people, a delicious meal prepared by World Kitchen, soft drinks, inspiring discussions moderated by the Migrationlab Team and a post boat-ride gathering. All travel costs for the refugees were also covered.



### - Participants -

- 7 Syrian refugees: 6 men; 1 woman
- 4 migrants: 2 women and 2 men representing Belgium, Turkey, Great Britain, USA
- 4 Dutch: 2 women; 1 man; 1 toddler

Discover more pictures [here](#)

# WTTLR May 7, 2016



- Participants -  
9 Syrian Refugees: 5 men; 4 women  
3 migrants: 3 women representing France, Hungary, Italy  
2 Dutch (couple)  
2 tourists: 1 woman; 1 man  
Discover more pictures [here](#)

# Co-design Workshop at Leiden University College in The Hague

March 30, 2016



For our first co-design workshop, we invited 14 people through the Migrationlab and the university's network. Of those, 11 refugees, migrants, expats, students, artists, and locals with diverse cultural and professional backgrounds representing 14 nationalities took part. Some of the participants traveled from other cities: three from Leiden, and three from Amsterdam.

The goal of the workshop was to allow local communities to co-create the Migrationlab Living Room in The Hague, which took place at Humanity House on July 2, 2016.

Through creative activities moderated by our Research Team, the group focused on four main topics: location; design; content; and connection. (see Chapter 3, page 37 and 38)



Discover more pictures [here](#)



## Welcome to the Living Room at Humanity House in The Hague

July 2, 2016

Our second Living Room in The Hague was hosted by **Humanity House**. On this occasion it was on a Saturday afternoon, from 12:00 to 17:00 on July 2.

We initially planned for this WTTLR event to take place at Haagse Bos forest, a public place, which was in accordance with the co-design workshop's findings (see Chapter 4, page 46). Out of 46 people who registered for our event, 31 took part.

It is worth noting that this Living Room took place after Brexit, which allowed participants to touch on this matter as well and exchange thoughts with the British people present in the room. The Migrationlab Living Room in July was characterized by moving stories, laughs, music, dance, sadness, shame, resilience, befriending, wisdom, inspiration,

belonging and ultimately the formation of a new family: "family," said one migrant, is bigger than the few of us. (see Chapter 3, page 37 and 38)

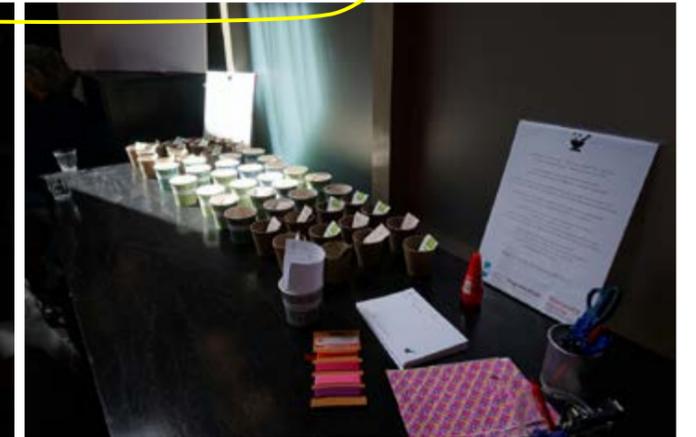
The production of this Living Room followed the findings of the co-design workshop and we used elements provided by our partner, Humanity House. Further in accordance with the conclusions from the co-design workshop, we also introduced a series of activities, which made this Living Room dynamic.

The participants also had the chance to visit the Asylum Search Engine exhibition, which introduced the world of asylum in The Netherlands via 41 visual artists and photographers. The exhibition was offered by our partner for the event, Humanity House.

We invited participants to bring food representing their culture and share it while our stories were being told.



Moreover, participants could also exchange food recipes through a creative activity called "Culture seeds. Exchange food recipes!" We provided attendees pots, soil and herbs from different cultures. They exchanged a recipe based on the herb they chose and were able to take home the pots of their choosing and a new food recipe.



Our guests participated in a jam session with the young, Dutch, female trio, called **Caffeine**



More pictures are available [here](#).

# [Storytellers and topics]

Lia (11 years old): On how she experiences migration.

Canan Marasligil - Freelance writer, literary translator, editor and curator. Canan shared how translation and languages shape the way she experiences cities and how it affects her emotionally and creatively. Find out more [here](#).

Musab Al-Ahdab: On his journey from Syria to Europe and his dreams and hopes for a new life in The Netherlands.

Alain Mutombo Canonne: Hailing from Kinshasa via Paris, with stories about the quest for an identity that he would finally find after migrating from Europe to Africa. Unfortunately, Alain was not able to participate, due to unexpected health problems, which prevented him from traveling from Paris to The Hague.

Els Nachtegaal: A Dutch citizen from The Hague concerned with polarization and trying to make connections within Dutch society. Els initiated the Cultuurmaatje / Cultural Buddies project, which connects Dutch volunteers with refugees to undertake cultural activities together.

The Living Room also hosted a special performance by Dutch band Caffeine, which included songs about how refugees are welcomed in Europe.

The event was open to everyone, no entrance fees.

Els Nachtegaal



Canan Marasligil



Musab Al-Ahdab



Alain Mutombo Canonne

Caffeine



# Co-design Workshop at NIFFO Galerie / Recycle Studio

Sunday, September 18, 2016, Rotterdam



For our second co-design workshop, Migrationlab and NIFFO Galerie launched an open-call on all our online and offline networks to reach local communities in Rotterdam, and specifically the Afrikaanderwijk neighborhood. Our goal was to host 20 participants, excluding Migrationlab's team.

Out of 21 registered participants, 17 refugees, migrants, expats, students, artists, and locals with diverse cultural and professional backgrounds representing ten nationalities took part.

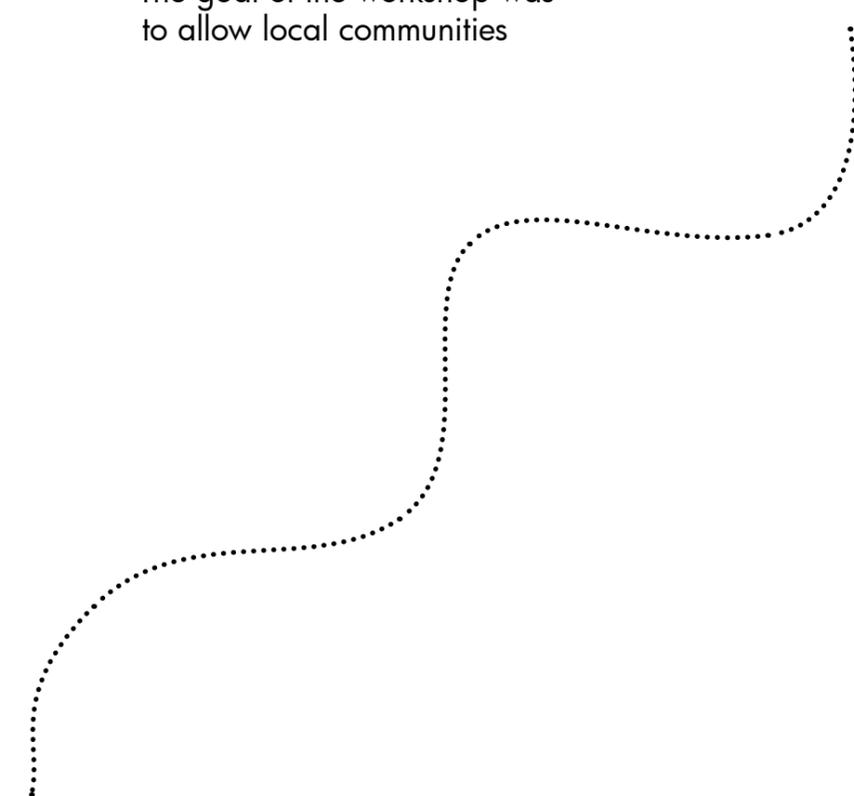
The participants came from different neighborhoods in Rotterdam, including three from Afrikaanderwijk, with three traveling from Amsterdam and one from The Hague.

The goal of the workshop was to allow local communities

of migrants, refugees and Dutch locals in Rotterdam and Afrikaanderwijk to co-create the Migrationlab Living Room in Afrikaanderwijk, which took place at the same location, NIFFO Galerie, on October 26, 2016.

**NIFFO** is a vibrant and art-only gallery and community center situated in Afrikaanderwijk, Rotterdam South, long-time home to Dutch migrant populations.

Through creative activities moderated by our research team, the group focused on four main topics: location; design; storytelling; and the importance of creating such a space of encounter. (see Chapter 3, Assessing the co-design workshops experiences, page 39)





More pictures are available [\*\*here\*\*](#)

# Welcome to the Living Room at NIFFO Galerie / Recycle Studio

Wednesday, October 26, 2016, Rotterdam



Our last activity this year within the ECF Grant closed with the celebration of our 10th WTTLR! We had a great turnout. Out of 60 people registered, 44 were present, representing a diverse group of people who traveled from different parts of Rotterdam and other cities, such as Utrecht, Leiden, The Hague and Amsterdam.

The production of this Living Room followed the findings of the co-design workshop in September, and was based on local elements and collaborations with different shops from the neighborhood—an African shop, second hand furniture stores—thanks to our partner for the event, NIFFO

Galerie. The food Migrationlab provided for the event was from a local Moroccan shop also situated in the Afrikaanderwijk neighborhood.

We worked very closely with our partner's network to make this Living Room more visible and inviting for those who may have just been passing by, in line with the inputs from the co-design workshop. The contributors were artist Hüma Birgül, volunteers and the interns at NIFFO Galerie.

"vliegend tapijt"  
flying carpet for  
people who don't  
have borders in  
their minds...

Hüma Birgül



During the event, the participants had also the possibility to explore the storytelling exhibition **"The Lona and the Short of It"**, offered by our partner NIFFO Galerie and featuring artists Ralf Kokke (Netherlands) and Karolina Greczyk (Poland).

For more details see Chapter 3, page 39.

# [Storytellers and topics]

Wendy Teixeira: A Rotterdam native with Cape Verdean roots, is a singer/songwriter who provided the soundtrack to our 10th WTTLR.

Mohammed Khrata: Nowadays he's a Syrian refugee living in Rotterdam. In the past he studied English literature and was a former Lieutenant in the Syrian army before he deserted his post. He talked about what it means to be a refugee, and shared how it feels.

Roos Muis: A Dutch comparative literature student interested in the ways in which our lives are intertwined through narrative. She also likes to explore life through tactile and visceral forms of creation in today's media saturated world. Roos allowed words and sounds to collide, creating a layered experience of connection and togetherness.

Mohamed Sulaiman: Originally from Aleppo, Syria he presented his life experiences and reflections on Syria before and during the war.

Gohar Shachbazov: She is a young art teacher who presented a graphic novel that explores the themes of foreignness, loneliness, race and intercultural and intergenerational encounters, specifically focused on the cultural diversity in South Rotterdam and Afrikaanderplein. The novel was the result of her final project at the Willem de Kooning Academie.

Adam Dupaski: He was born in Ohio, but spent half his life living and working outside the United States. Before moving to Rotterdam, he lived in Krakow for 11 years. Adam is a technical writer, a published poet and essayist and an active musician. Based on these experiences, he shared his perspectives on memory and identity.

Joran Koster: Joran is a Dutch artist who lives on the Afrikaanderplein, and explained the comedy and confusion that can arise from cultural exchange. "Without all kinds of people trying to live together, The Netherlands would be boring," he is fond of saying.



Wendy Teixeira



Gohar Shachbazov

Mohammed Khrata



Mohamed Sulaiman



Roos Muis



Adam Dupaski



Joran Koster

The event was open to everyone, no entrance fee.

# [Dissemination]



We communicated about all our activities using the Migrationlab's already existing offline and online channels. Online channels included our **website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube**, emails, and newsletters.

Offline communications were carried out through physical meetings, events where our founder Laura M. Pana was invited as a guest speaker, networking events, and word-of-mouth.

Online and printed posters, banners and WTLR programs during the cultural events were also used in informing people about our activities. The footage from all our WTLR events in 2016 will be available in 2017.

Lisa Rebert, founder and content creator at Word Alchemists, played an important role in our dissemination efforts during the last period of our activities. She volunteered to cover all communication on Migrationlab's social media accounts before, during and after the co-design workshop and the WTLR event in Rotterdam, between September and November 2016.

Our communication was partially supported as well by our partners with whom we collaborated for all our co-design workshops and events this year.



# Chapter 2

## Methodology

### Methodology

The methodology used in our research was fundamentally qualitative. The aim was to reflect and document the impact of the co-design workshops and WTTLR experiences in terms of the meaning they had in the lives of their participants. We did not endeavor to quantify the experiences of the participants, nor produce a representative sample of responses; rather, we sought to explore and unpack the meanings participants gave to their experiences when they participated in the different Migrationlab activities.

In order to track and establish patterns regarding these shared meanings, the following qualitative methods were used: participant observation; photo, audio and video documentation; debriefing and feedback directly after the events; and open-ended surveys distributed after participation in the WTTLR. Regarding the open-ended survey, we had a high

response rate despite the deliberate delay in the distribution of the surveys. We chose to delay the distribution because we wanted to see how people remembered the events after they had time to reflect on them. For the event in Amsterdam, the surveys were issued four months after the initial event, and for The Hague, two months. Out of a total of 50 participants in these events, we received 25 responses. In the case of Rotterdam, the survey was sent the day following the event, and out of 44 participants we received 26 feedback forms. Thus, we had a high response rates, which helped in reconstructing participants' memories and experiences of the Migrationlab Living Rooms.

# Chapter 3

## Impact and Evaluation: Findings

### Impact and Evaluation at Organizational Level

### Impact and Evaluation: Co-Design Workshops and Migrationlab Living Rooms

#### **Impact and Evaluation: Findings**

The evaluation and impact assessment of the activities in The Netherlands in 2016 funded with the ECF Idea Camp R&D Grant are organized in two levels. First, we present how these activities have influenced Migrationlab as an organization, and then we demonstrate how the activities affected those who participated in them, both in terms of the preparatory co-design workshops and the actual Migrationlab Living Rooms experiences.

## Impact and Evaluation at the Organizational Level

Due to the numerous, varied activities we undertook in 2016, and following our previous work in 2015 in The Netherlands and Austria, Migrationlab made large strides in a short period, particularly considering its very limited financial and human resources. Here is our development as organization in 2016:

**Formalization:** Migrating from a blog to a non-profit organization. Started in September 2014 by our founder, the Migrationlab blog transitioned to a project in March 2015, when we launched our **website** and the first WTTLR event in **Vienna, Austria**. Following a very successful event in Vienna and all the subsequent activities during the pilot phase— **ECF Idea Camp** in Sweden, **Vienna Design Week 2015** and **Spotlight:** Romania A Film and Photography Festival, The Hague —as well as the dramatic social changes on European and international levels—refugee influxes, a rise in hate speech, xenophobia and fear—in February 2016 Migrationlab became registered as a non-profit organization, Stichting Migrationlab (Foundation Migrationlab), with the Dutch Chamber of Commerce.

### Requests for Collaborations

Several different actors in The Netherlands and other European countries expressed an increased interest in different types of collaboration with Migrationlab to co-create inclusive spaces of encounter in their cities throughout 2016:

- Organizations and citizen initiatives in Greece, Belgium, Austria, Sweden, Ireland, Romania and Poland;
- Multicultural companies in Austria;

- Architect and designer communities in The Netherlands, Cyprus and Hungary;
- Artists in The Netherlands, Austria and UK;
- Universities in The Netherlands.

### Additional Migrationlab Living Rooms in 2016

Following our participation in the “Expert Meeting Migration Matters” by Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam on December 11, 2015, we partnered with **Rederij Lampedusa** and organized a series of four Migrationlab Living Rooms on board of Mr. Friday, a former refugee boat (see Chapter 1, pages 11-13).

### 10th Welcome to the Living Room - A More Consolidated Concept

In 2016, the research and activities we undertook as part of the ECF Idea Camp Grant—including new activities such as the preparatory co-design workshops prior to each Living Room, and creative activities during the Living Room events—further honed our concept. An important part of this consolidation is represented by the voices of all those who participated and gave their feedback, expressing their wishes, ideas and needs about how this space of encounter should take form in their cities and neighborhoods. Additionally, this year we celebrated our 10th Migrationlab Living Room, which took place in Rotterdam on October 26, 2016 (more on this even Chapter, pages 43-44).

### Financial Sustainability and Scaling

Business in Residence, **Klump Subtopia** Following Laura M. Pana’s work during the **Business in Residence** at Klump Subtopia in Botkyrka, Sweden in June 2016, Migrationlab has been offered further coaching to scale its business and develop the WTTLR project. The residency was part of the ECF Idea Camp 2015 and

its Connected Action for the Commons program. Laura shared this residency together with Idea Maker fellow Ana Gonçalves, creator of The Ageless City. Read Laura’s full report on her participation at the Business in Residence **here**.

### Welcoming Volunteers

Since its beginning, our organization has relied on volunteers who dedicate their free time to our organization in order to improve social relationships between migrants, refugees and locals. This year, ten volunteers became involved in our activities in The Netherlands in different phases of the Living Room project. Following their first Living Rooms in Amsterdam, two Syrian refugees became volunteers and participated in the organization of the Living Room in The Hague in July. Additionally, one of them was also a storyteller at this Living Room event. Dutch locals as well as migrants joined them throughout the year and encouraged their friends and families to attend Migrationlab Living Rooms in different cities around The Netherlands.

### Welcoming Interns

Students and recent university graduates from across different European countries and even outside of the EU—for example, from India—expressed desire to intern at our organization. As a result, we brought on a graphic design intern, who is based in London, for a period of three months. Other requests are being processed at the moment of writing this report.

### Young Designers Network

Following our co-design workshops and Living Rooms in the three cities in The Netherlands in 2016, several young designers expressed their desire to explore future collaboration possibilities or conduct internships within our organization.

### Refugees, Migrants and Locals Network

As a result of our activities this year in The Netherlands, an important network consisting of migrants, refugees and Dutch locals was created around Migrationlab and the WTTLR project. These individuals are in contact with us as well as each other. (see point below)

### Migrationlab Consolidated Online Network

Due to our communications efforts we managed to establish a consolidated online network. Here, people can stay in touch with us and with each other, find out about our activities and learn how they can get involved and join us through our website, newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, emails, Whatsapp, Skype and phone calls.

### Inspiration for Other ECF Idea Camp applicants

A refugee participant in and volunteer for several Migrationlab Living Rooms got inspired to create his own project to help refugees and Dutch locals connect. He further applied to the ECF Idea Camp 2017 in order to develop his concept. Other participants in co-design workshops and Living Rooms throughout the year became curious about the program, with some of them expressing interest in applying for future editions.

## Collaborations with Other Idea Makers 2015

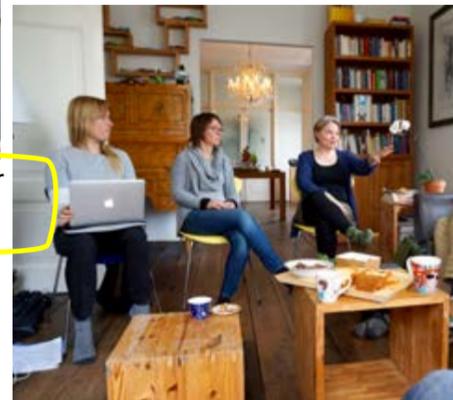
- **Workshop with the Story Caravan, Finland**

Early in 2016, we were happy to welcome Idea Maker Ylva Rancken-Lutz, creator of the **Ekenäs Story Caravan** to The Hague. Ylva was joined by her collaborators **Åsa Lönnqvist**, AIR leader/program coordinator at Pro Artibus Foundation and photographer **Annabelle Antas**. More participants with whom we believe we could collaborate in the future joined us in the afternoon of our working day, such as Marijke Annema and Jonas Lutz, who are Rotterdam-based designers. Utrecht-based artist Iris Honderdos, who has been active in community art projects for many years and is an artist in residence at Pro Artibus in Ekenäs, Finland, was also present.

The goal of the workshop was to exchange storytelling methods, practices, and challenges for our projects and the research we had ahead.



- Discover more about our working session [here](#) -



- **Visiting Das Packhaus in Vienna, Austria**

In November 2016, we visited ECF Idea Maker Margot Deernberg in Vienna, Austria. This was part of a more elaborate visit that focused on exploring possibilities for collaboration with old and new partners for 2017. Margo Deernberg and Veronika Kovacsova run **Das Packhaus** together, which is a successful example of how to reuse an empty building and open it up for entrepreneurs and artists.

**Day 1:** We focused on learning more about this space and the initiatives it hosts, and also on the possibilities for organizing a Migrationlab co-design workshop and Living Room at Das Packhaus in 2017.

**Day 2:** At the “Arriving to the Cooperative City: The Vienna Refugee Coalition” event organized by Eutopian and Wonderland Architecture, we joined in on the discussions about the challenges facing Vienna’s integrated public-private approach to the influx of refugees. We also joined the participants of the Metropolitan Field Trip Vienna and Bratislava, organized by **New Europe - Cities in Transition**.



- **Migrationlab at Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies, Portugal Via Ana Gonçalves, The Ageless City**

On October 19 and 20, 2016, fellow ECF Idea Maker, ECF business in residence colleague and lecturer Ana Gonçalves, presented our WTTLR project to 36 third-year students in leisure management and tourism entertainment that were focusing on cultural management. She evaluated the project as being an example of how to accommodate cultural diversity and integration of different target audiences and groups in indoor as well as outdoor environments. Attention was also drawn to Migrationlab’s co-design workshops in order to reinforce the need to have cultural practices where target groups are the producers and consumers of their own cultural experiences, from a grassroots rather than top-down approach.



**Research Visit to Migrationlab Partners in Vienna, Austria**

From November 16-23, 2016, our founder Laura M. Pana traveled to Vienna, Austria, the city where Migrationlab and WTTLR were launched. The goal of this visit, as part of the activities within the ECF Grant, was to meet and discuss with ECF Idea Makers (see Collaborations with Other Idea Makers 2015 above) and our current partners about continuing our collaboration in Vienna and other cities in Austria in 2017.

- **Migrationlab and Verein08**

Laura met Dominik Nostitz, founder and director of Verein08, our main partner in Austria, and discussed new possibilities to collaborate and explored potential financial support for our activities. Our collaboration history includes Migrationlab and the **WTTLR launch in Verein08, March 2015**, and partnership at Vienna Design Week 2015.

- **Migrationlab and UrbanNomadMixes**

During our research visit to Vienna November 16-23, 2016, Laura also met Camilo C. Antonio—poet, facilitator and initiator of UrbanNomadMixes, a group of multicultural poets, musicians, dancers and video-artists. Laura and Camilo discussed the possibility of collaborating in 2017 and organizing a Migrationlab Living Room about reflecting on diasporic consciousness.

Migrationlab’s collaboration with UrbanNomadMixes started in 2015, when we invited the group to perform in our Living Room at **Vienna Design Week**. Camilo was also a storyteller in one of the Living Rooms during Vienna Design Week. Additionally, Laura was invited to join UrbanNomadMixes and perform together with the group during the launch of Camilo’s book, “The Many Phases and Sights of Race,” at Vienna Poetry School, on November 24, 2015



**Participants Wrote and Disseminated their Articles Online about how they experienced the Migrationlab Living Room Events in The Netherlands throughout the year. Enjoy!**

**Tears in the Rain  
Sailing with Refugees in the heart of  
Amsterdam by Canan Marasligil**

**To set sail together by Lisa Rebert**

**Mr. Friday by Gabriela  
Bustamante**

**Welcome to the Living  
Room by Piyali Sircar**

Dr. Daniela Vicherat Mattar

Assistant Professor at Leiden University College  
The Hague with focus on diversity, citizenship and  
urban culture.

When I was approached by Laura at the beginning to 2016 to join her adventure in the implementation and assessment of the Migrationlab Living Rooms, I had an immediate impulse and will to take part. My drives were professional and personal, at the same time. Professionally, the approach of Migrationlab to intervene and explore public spaces through the Living Room experience was very close to my own research agenda. Having been studying the connection between public spaces and democracy for several years, and now focusing on diversity and citizenship, the Living Rooms seemed to condense both interests.

I think the Migrationlab Living Rooms are a very powerful way to frame something that tends to happen in the ideal version of a public space: they offer a space where different people meet and exchange their ideas, their views, and their expectations. In fact, the Living Rooms in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam did exactly that because they were geared to facilitate and foster the encounter among refugees, local Dutch people and migrants of different backgrounds.

These are people who normally do not come across each other in their daily routines. In this sense, in spite of their location —no Living Room happened in an actual public space— they were a way to produce public spaces. Not only and merely to intervene them, but to produce them. By this I mean the Living Room experiences were a public space in as much as they were co-created, accessible and interactive:

- They occurred as the result of co-creation activities, the participatory co-design workshops and the active involvement of various voluntary people who participated and helped in their production.

- They were open and accessible in terms of not requiring a formal status to be part of it. People were registered for organizational purposes, but the spirit of the group that was being formed was always, “the more the merrier.”
- A number of creative activities took place during the Living Rooms. These activities fostered the interaction and the connection between different people, building a community —virtual and real— among those who joined the events.

All the Living Rooms I joined in 2016 can be described as public spaces, following the above criteria. Their aim, and result, was to provide a space for the encounter among different peoples, with different life trajectories and life expectations. The space opened by them was set in a creative and intimate style that propitiated feelings of safety among the participants, to share their stories and intimate thoughts. This was very important, given the focus of the stories and conversation that took place, and it also connects with the personal motivation I had to join this project.

The thematic focus of the Living Rooms is on the experience of migration: the processes and challenges leading to one’s own uprooting and those leading to the challenge of re-rooting elsewhere. Being a migrant myself I can recognize this peril, even if I have had the luck and luxury to be categorized as an expat. Class and education have saved me from the negative ways in which migration is today perceived; however, they have not saved me from the longing to belong and be recognized as an equal member of the several communities I’ve joined during my migrant years.

Thus, spaces like the Living Rooms open the possibility to recognize oneself in the radically different life

trajectory of others. That connection is fundamental in a world increasingly interdependent, but reluctant to the experience of people’s movement.

At the end of the day, we all long to belong and fear being exposed in our vulnerability. To address this vulnerability, we need to be in contact and trust others. Collaboration has historically been the way to adapt and to survive change, to overcome vulnerability. In the dialogue between us, we might find new ways to live together, not in spite of our differences, but together with them. The Living Rooms are a little, but important step in that direction.

## My contribution to making people feel welcome

Gabriela Bustamante

Designer and Senior Instructor at The Hague University of Applied Sciences

### The Start

My participation in Migrationlab was born from a warm conversation with Laura about life experiences and how it is to be someone who has been moving to different cities and countries. I am always inspired by initiatives that start from the ground-up and are built with dedication. Our first conversation was like a mirror in which I could see enthusiasm and strong belief behind the goals of her organization. A couple of weeks later, I was sitting with the rest of the Migrationlab team working on shaping the co-design workshops.

### My role

My role was to support the team with giving shape to what became the preparatory co-design workshops in The Hague and Rotterdam, moderate the “design” table during the workshop, and the set-up of the respective WTTLR events.

Both co-design workshops were designed to stimulate participants to contribute their ideas and thoughts to the design and content of the WTTLR. In these sessions, each participant visited four different “creation” tables in which they engaged in creative activities and dialogue about the location, design, content and importance of the WTTLR. Together with the Migrationlab research team, we created tools and gathered materials to moderate each table and enable participants to express themselves and share their ideas.

### Co-create: Welcome to the Living Room Co-Design Workshop

One would think that after organizing many co-design workshops, doing another one would be easy. These sessions can be very intimidating for some people, especially for those who have never been asked or allowed to express their ideas. My role as a moderator at the

“design” table was to make people feel at ease and to lead their conversations towards the creative process from which many ideas and thoughts on the topics were generated. Asked about what was the most surprising about the co-design workshop, a participant in the session in Rotterdam said: “how people who didn’t know each other were engaged in interesting tasks and could really co-design the living room, speak about their own visions and needs openly, sharing experience.”

Each co-design workshop may be influenced by the location and its atmosphere, the network of the organizers, season of the year or time of the day when it is organized, but most of all by the participants. Thus, both sessions were very different in terms of input. Through the process I could see that most of the participants were aligned with Migrationlab’s goal: they were in search of a physical space that enables them to meet and share their identity as immigrants, refugees and locals. What makes this process very rich is to experience the diversity in expressing these identities during each co-design workshop, as expressed by a Dutch student participant:

The Migrationlab co-design workshop embodies what it means to really, truly share in a world that is increasingly defined by borders. Conversation is the aspirational element for me: every story, perspective and experience is worthy and creating human connection is the goal. By involving a very diverse group of people in the creation process, Migrationlab is aware of the ethics of letting voices be heard: “nothing about us, without us.”

During the co-design workshop in The Hague on March 30, 2016, the input from participants was very different. If migrants and Dutch locals were working more on an abstract level on how the Living Room should look like, the refugees were very practical, as they seemed to still be in “survival mode.” They selected or created many images

related to water, lifesavers, disinfectant and expressions of distance, which contrasted with feelings of being able to plan a future.

The participants of the co-design workshop in Rotterdam, on September 18, 2016 were mainly young professionals (some of them in search for new opportunities), students and locals from the Afrikaanderwijk neighborhood. Their input was more content-driven and ignited very interesting discussions: “as an urban designer, migration is so important that we need to include them [migrants] as part of the daily users of cities ... What does a ‘living room’ do for migrants in cities and what do they want in this living room? I take this as an inspiration to reflect on public space in cities.” (migrant professional)  
One of their main suggestions was to design the WTTLR in open spaces within the city, to awake the curiosity of the passersby.

Participants of both co-design workshops were enthusiastic about the rotating activities and the different resources we provided for them to express their thoughts and ideas about co-creating a space of encounter, migration, change and choices. One migrant professional expressed: “The ‘switching tables’ thing is a really nice method to stimulate people’s ideas. We were not only talking, but also making and designing in short time. It is great to see how efficient a workshop can be!” Another migrant participant added: “Yes, the idea with limited time and changing tables was cool! Also because after a while you have a little ‘history’ with many different people.”

### **From the Co-Design Workshop to the actual Welcome to the Living Room**

From my perspective, the co-design sessions generated enough ideas to prepare at least 10 more WTTLR events. There were many good ideas to create the living room, and there were some elements that were similarly expressed in both co-design workshops. Many participants were focused on nature as a 'binding' aspect between people. They expected to find it in the Migrationlab Living Room in the form of plants or flowers; the element of water; wind and fire through banners and candles. Everyone present expressed the idea that they wanted to bring back the feeling of home and coziness. Food should also be there, as it has always been one of the most recognized and accepted expressions of culture. The Migrationlab team worked in close collaboration with the local partners to find and arrange these elements in two different locations—Humanity House in The Hague and NIFFO Galerie in Rotterdam—in order to provide a space of comfort and safety where the participants could exchange their life-changing migration stories: "What I really liked about the Migrationlab Living Room was the setting which was not a presentation setting, but a space where everyone is equal, due to the use of furniture, pillows, and formation of a circle." (Dutch professional, WTTLR Rotterdam)

From a social designer's perspective, the WTTLR concept provides interesting content and abundant material to work with. It has been a thought-provoking journey to work together with the Migrationlab team to design the activities that helped us guide each participant to capture the essence of the WTTLR.

### **Recommendations**

I think that adding a couple of co-design workshops with the purpose of finding the resources for the continuation of

the project would be very inspiring for the organization. It is becoming important for citizens that WTTLR becomes a sustainable project, with enough resources to set up more Living Rooms both in closed and open public space.

### **The Impact**

"Impact" has become a trendy word, so to make myself clear, out of the five definitions in the dictionary for this word, I choose this one:

*Impact: the force exerted by a new idea, concept, technology, or ideology*

To migrate, co-create, dialogue, invite and welcome, are everyday activities, but they exert a new force when initiatives like Migrationlab provide a platform where people share their migration stories and dialogue about them. A public living room where we talk about staying, leaving and through each conversation we reframe ourselves with the hope to recall what may essentially make us kinder citizens.

I became a social designer because of the interaction I've had with people throughout the execution of every project. As a designer, Migrationlab is an open platform where I can find the audience I need to exchange and mirror my design projects. I am interested in exploring the intricacies of the subject of diversity and migration and trying to materialize them into daily objects that remind people of the beauty in diversity. For me, Migrationlab is a space to exercise openness.

## Why do we need Migrationlab Living Rooms?

Dana C. Popa

Trans-cultural Systemic Therapist

*It is only by meeting the other that new questions are raised (questions addressed to the other but also questions addressed to myself) and that an enriching dialogue can develop.*

Peter Rober and Lucia De Haene, 2013

Whether or not we are in favor of migration, or we feel the need to express our opinions on the topic, we live in a world where migration is expanding, and thus the need for looking at the subject becomes ever more present. Not only do locals and politicians want to be partners in the conversation, but also migrants in all their variety—expats, refugees, immigrants. This is the context in which the Migrationlab's Welcome to the Living Room (WTTLR) project takes place.

As a transcultural systemic therapist and migrant myself, I am interested in why people want to have their stories told, who will listen to their stories, and the impact on the storyteller, audience and society. In this regard, I joined the Migrationlab research team to observe and monitor the preparatory co-design workshops and the WTTLR events. My role in the co-design workshops was to guide participants into thinking critically about the importance of WTTLR as a co-created space, and why we would want to introduce it into society. During the WTTLR events themselves, I observed the communication between participants and what happens when there are so many perspectives in one room.

Working together with diverse people from different parts of the world at the "word constellation" table in the preparatory co-design workshops was challenging and exciting. The people were full of stories and thoughts, and they wanted to be heard and to hear others. People also wanted to co-construct new language and concepts of how we could look at the world and each other.

The groups I worked with came to the conclusion that they want to be part of this creating process; to co-create new images and concepts of how to be equal participants in society. Curiosity and openness must be the fuel of policy makers, they said. Freedom to change depends on the freedom you have in society, and the voice you have.

There is this desire to bring new perspectives and have a voice, to relate and connect with a stranger (locals and migrants can be both strangers to each other), and to make oneself known in a safe environment. By the sharing of stories a stranger has a name and a history. They become a person and not a label. Exchanging thoughts and perspectives can help us become empowered through moments of self-reflection.

A migrant deals with a lot of confusion, not understanding the spoken and unspoken values and rules of the new country. Making friends with the locals is not always easy because the locals have already friends. One needs to work hard on fitting in and being present. Migrants, though, are also curious and would like to hear what the locals think about being a local; what would migrants need to do or to understand in order to find their place much more easily in society? Empathy was the word coming back again and again: we need empathy and there is never too much. And we need to stop with labeling. At the end of the day we are all humans. It is the humanity, which connects us, but the differences can be acknowledged.

At WTTLR in The Hague in July, one of the storytellers was a young girl who highlighted the position of a child brought up in a variety of cultures and countries. Such a story leads to the following question: can we call someone who is the child of parents from two different cultural backgrounds, born in a third country

and living in a variety of societies, a migrant, or a local, or do we need a new word or concept to describe their identity?

The participants are not only creating new concepts but also a new language. By communicating their intentions and meaning with others, people try to understand, to change or to adapt. In Migrationlab's Living Rooms, people are looking to new ways of communication because they have to look at so many perspectives. Concepts like labeling someone or something, binary thinking, "we" and "they," were challenged. The participants were reflecting on the construction of new language, which words we would need, how we can express some particular or new phenomena like a child being brought up in many cultures.

What I observed at the preparatory co-design workshops and during the WTTLR events is that while migrants have the need of being heard and understood because of the pressure and will to fit in in society, the locals aren't under the same burden. The reason is that the locals are already at home—they don't have to build and find out anything. They do not have to leave something behind and move towards integrating quickly. The pressure locals may experience is that they have to make space for new people, habits and ways of life brought by the new comers. There, however, were not enough locals to see a consistent reaction on the matter. The ones who were in the room were open to listen to the stories and willing to tell theirs as well. The group was like-minded, despite being in different stages of life and varying in age.

Intergenerational exchange was present in all of the co-design workshops and WTTLR events. "The atmosphere was friendly and kind, although I felt a little uncomfortable thinking I was the oldest in

the room. That feeling disappeared when I saw the diversity of all the people in the room" (Dutch professional). Reflections such as, "how do we grow old in a foreign country?" (migrant) bring a new dynamic into the room and invite us to look at the impact of migration on aging and intergenerational support, as well as what older generations can pass to younger ones. Nevertheless, the questions arose: what would happen in the room if there are locals or migrants who feel differently? How can more locals be reached? The thought that by knowing each other we are less afraid of one another and open to embrace the novelty was present in the events. The power of WTTLR events is that the people are challenged to think and share about new ways of life and being, and to be encouraged to bring these moments to a higher level in their encounters with others.

It is very important to point out the carefully chosen spaces and the atmosphere created in order to facilitate the WTTLR experiences. Safety, openness and warmth were the words most used by the participants. In fact, participants also said spaces with no prejudice were preferred. Although I do agree on this point, I also know that we all have prejudices—they're unavoidable—and we use them to understand the world around us. Hence, we need to have spaces where we can acknowledge and be aware of them; to talk about how they affect us, using this understanding to combat prejudice. Having said that, we can only open up and listen when we know we are welcome, and are in a place where everyone has room to talk or listen, to create or observe.

This is what WTTLR helps make happen, and why there is a real need for it not only today, but in the future.

## **Guest Speaker**

In 2016, our founder Laura M. Pana was invited to join numerous international debates, conferences and symposia in The Netherlands on the topics of migration, culture, education and social design.



- **Migrationlab at Designgeschiedenis Nederland (Dutch Design History Society) FROM DE STIJL TO DUTCH DESIGN: CANONISING DESIGN, Centraal Museum Utrecht, December 9, 2016**

The one-day international symposium, organized by the Dutch Design History Society, explored the workings and implications of design promotion and the design canonization processes. Laura presented her work on Migrationlab and how different forms of design support or lack thereof has shaped her practice and contributed to the development of the organization and the Living Room project.

- **Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, November 9, 2016**

Laura spoke at the entrepreneurship behavior course of assistant professor Neil Thompson. Laura shared her process of transitioning from a personal goal to an organization and exchanged ideas with third-year bachelor's students.



- **Conversa #72, Rotterdam at Gallery Joe Ramone, October 5, 2016**

Laura presented Migrationlab, WTTLR and exchanged ideas with the audience about how we communicate with and relate to each other in multicultural contexts.



- **New Europe City Makers Pre-Summit, Amsterdam, at Pakhuis de Zwijger, February 4-5, 2016**

Laura introduced Migrationlab and WTTLR on day one. We discussed the EU Urban Agenda and focused on methods to reduce the gap between bottom-up initiatives and municipalities. Link to the discussion [here](#) -



- **VPRO Tegenlicht Meetup: In Search for Europe, Amsterdam at Pakhuis de Zwijger, March 10, 2016**

Laura joined the discussion on how the future of our European societies can be shaped from the perspective of the individual visionaries and/or the collective, institutionalized approach. You can watch the discussion [here](#)



## Media Visibility

Following generous media coverage in 2015—including by The Guardian, Realitatea TV (Romania), FM4 (Austria), Nordens Tidning (Scandinavia) to name a few—in 2016 Migrationlab continued to be visible in different media around Europe and was also present for the first time in United States media:

- **Alice Rawsthorn**, renowned design critic and New York Times contributor, featured posts about Migrationlab on her **Twitter** and **Instagram** accounts.
- **What Design Can Do** wrote an article in relation to Alice Rawsthorn's mention **here**.

- Dutch and Romanian media featured Migrationlab as well:

**Angajatorul meu**, a Romanian online business magazine, profiled Laura and Migrationlab **here**

**Radio Romania** reported on WTTLR from Rotterdam **here**

Netherlands-based online magazine **New Europe - Cities in Transition** interviewed Laura about Migrationlab **here**

- Seattle-based design magazine **ARCADE** published an article written by founder Laura M. Pana in its fall 2016 issue **here**



## Impact and Evaluation: Co-design Workshops and Migrationlab Living Rooms

The 2016 WTTLR experiences discussed below took place in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. There were four events in Amsterdam on a fishing boat formerly used to rescue refugees, and The Hague and Rotterdam each had one preparatory co-design workshop and one Living Room experience. As it has been stated above (see Chapter 1, pages 8-21), the aim of the WTTLR activity is to facilitate and promote the interaction and communication between local Dutch individuals, migrants and refugees.

The premise is that through changes in the way we communicate with each other in public spaces, we can achieve further levels of social inclusion and positive connection between people with different backgrounds, life experiences and expectations. The findings are the result of direct observations and feedback of those who participated in the above events. There was a high turn-out of participants in all these activities.

Interestingly, people also followed the different Living Room events throughout the year: several participants from the Amsterdam events in April and May joined those in The Hague in July and Rotterdam in October. Of these people, three have become close collaborators with the Migrationlab team, and were key collaborators in our last Living Room experience in Rotterdam.

Connecting with the initial aim of this project, one of its goals was to rethink public space. As a consequence of all these experiences, we can argue

that one key finding is that, in fact, the Living Room experiences are a way of producing public spaces. In spite of the specific property and/or character of the location, the Living Room experiences offer a safe environment by creatively intervening each specific location, turning them into public spaces. The location is key for the implementation of the Migrationlab Living Room.

Although there are several challenges in this regard (see Chapter 4, page 46), the Migrationlab Living Rooms in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam achieved in actualizing public space, whether it was on a boat in Amsterdam, in a museum in the center of The Hague, or in an art gallery in a marginalized neighborhood in Rotterdam.

In general terms, a second key finding of these activities is that people are willing, eager and have the need to tell their stories and be heard in a safe environment. As it was expressed in the interim report delivered to ECF in July 2016, this key finding can be unpacked in terms of the following:

- a need/will to build together;
- a need/will to stay connected;
- a need/will to build a community around the WTTLR experiences.

In the three cities where WTTLR took place, participants entered a safe environment where they shared stories related to the experience of migration, either as a forced experience, as is the case of refugees, or as a voluntary one, as is the case with the various

immigrants and expats who attended the Living Rooms. It was also visible how migration affects host communities. Dutch locals illustrated how for them it is crucial to know and learn about the new and rapid dynamics and peoples that are reshaping their communities, as well as speak out and express their own experiences in that regard. The Migrationlab Living Room events in the three cities offered a safe environment for these dialogues to happen, where trust among the different participants flourished and communication was nurtured.

Finally, the third key finding refers to the fact that the Migrationlab Living Rooms allow the creation of new ways to communicate in public spaces. Participants are not only creating new concepts, but also a new language. By communicating their intentions and meaning with others, people try to understand, to change or to adapt. In Migrationlab's Living Rooms, people are looking at new ways of communication because they have to look at so many perspectives. Concepts like labeling someone or something, binary thinking, "we" and "they," were challenged.

The participants were reflecting on the construction of new language, which words we would need, how we can express some particular or new phenomena like a child being brought up in many cultures, or with multiple identities, or within different nations and borders. (see Dana C. Popa personal reflection page 32)

The preliminary co-design workshops took place in order to give the communities the opportunity to become co-creators of their own Migrationlab Living Room in their city and/or neighborhood. These workshops took place in The Hague and Rotterdam before the actual Living Room events. Gabriela Bustamante, a creative designer, a Trans-cultural Systemic Therapist, Dana C. Popa, and sociologist Daniela Vicherat-Mattar joined the research team of Migrationlab and were involved in the preparation of both co-design workshops and the Migrationlab Living Rooms. The co-design workshops were organized according to four key themes that aimed to trigger the discussion and contribution of the participants:

**The design question: How does the WTTLR need to look and feel?**



**The connecting question: What are the constellations of relations, feelings and emotions that gather momentum and are connected through the WTTLR experience?**



**The content question: What kind of experiences and stories ought to be shared in the WTTLR, why and who should do it?**



**The location question: Where is it important to have a WTTLR event, and why?**



Discussion tables were organized on these four topics and each participant rotated, on a random basis, from one table to the next until they had passed through all of them, sharing their thoughts and views with different people at each table. These themes proved to be extraordinarily informative in setting the right tone for the activities and conversations that took place in the Migrationlab Living Room events.

**The Hague – Leiden University  
College  
March 30, 2016**

The co-design workshop in The Hague took place at the LUC. It was mostly attended by invitation though Migrationlab and our partner's network. Half of the attendants were students, joined by professionals and artists, all having migrant and local backgrounds. The 11 participants were kept informed about the developments of the Migrationlab Living Room organization through a dedicated Facebook group. From the total number of participants in the workshop, only two people attended the WTTLR at Humanity House in July. More participants expressed their desire to attend but they were not in town due to the holiday season. None got involved in the organization.



Regarding the location question, in this workshop various ideas were put forward. Some suggested the Living Room should take place in classic open-air public spaces like De Haagse Bos or Zuidenpark; others suggestions were buildings with public functions, like the atrium of the municipality building, De Nuitshuis, or the Humanity House. WTTLR in July took place in the latter, in one of the common rooms on the roof of the museum, although initially we took actions to organize it in a public space, the De Haagse Bos. (see Chapter 4, page 46)

Regarding the design of the Living Room, participants in the workshop stressed the need of natural elements, soft or no music, no chairs with only carpets and cushions, and plants. The general feeling was that a space of encounter such as the Migrationlab Living Room should be sensed as a safe place, one with neither boundaries nor walls. Key words and terms to describe it were "visibility" and "openness to the unexpected." In order to enable dialogue, the design of the Living Room was expected to reflect differences, embody respect and foster exchange. One idea to be pursued in the Living Room experience was to exchange food recipes, which was done during the WTTLR at the Humanity House (see Chapter 1, page 15)

Concerning the content and connection questions, in this workshop participants were saliently concerned with the kind of stories that are shared in a space like the Migrationlab Living Room. In fact, participants stressed that, "stories of color and religion are the most contentious stories" (local professional). However, several people argued about the need to stress commonalities among

people, rather than their ethnic, national or religious differences: "civilians are human beings, they don't have nations," said one refugee. This necessarily implies learning to "appreciate complexity" (student) and, "not judge a book by its cover" (local professional). In general, there was a positive feeling regarding the Migrationlab Living Room as an event that would make it easier to meet strangers: "The chance to meet strangers. We are always a stranger to one person or another... We always are the stranger and familiar person at the same time," said a local student with international background. This, in the case of refugees, must also be put into context, "people must know that it's not our choice. That we are here. It is destiny" (refugee participant).

When confronted with the question regarding the importance of stories of belonging, two contending needs expressed were: on the one hand, the need to find a place rather than being constantly out of place, as expressed by one refugee: "We want to call a place home." On the other hand, there was the need to place univocal belonging narratives under question, particularly because they, "depend on the story you heard all your life" (international student). In the words of a local student with an international background:

"When you are unrooted it's very hard to say where your home is. I was born here, my parents are Surinamese. I feel like I belong here, but a lot of people don't think that. What you feel like is very different from what other people allow you to feel." In sum, it was clear that for the participants "belonging" is not a given, it is not attached to a specific place necessarily, but it is rather the

result of the different elements composing our respective identities and the way they interact with each other.

Thus, the stories shared in the Migrationlab Living Room should be, "stories about how people have overcome difficulties" (local professional). In this line of argument the Migrationlab Living Room is perceived as, "a space that understands that difference is not a threat, is not dangerous" (refugee). In fact, as it was expressed by another refugee: "People have to deal with each other and continue life together. We want to live and bring life further."

Thus, one reason to promote spaces of encounter like the Migrationlab Living Room is the need to find mechanisms that bridge differences: "Because we need to find new solutions... The gap between new solutions and decision making is huge" (local professional). Solutions to bridge our differences then are perceived as the result of the encounter—they result from curiosity, openness and the capacity to move beyond comfort zones. However, there is need to reach decision-makers, to, "invite policy-makers, who take decisions affecting people's life and the shape of the city, with them you can co-create new solutions and communicate how and why we need to change attitude" (local professional).

Suggestions for storytelling in the Migrationlab Living Room were: refugees who recently arrived; refugees who had integrated; migrants born in The Netherlands; migrants born outside The Netherlands; locals who lived in other countries; locals who had never moved; and policy-makers.

## Rotterdam – NIFFO Galerie/ Recycle Studio, September 18, 2016

The co-design workshop in Rotterdam took place at NIFFO Galerie, in the Afrikaanderwijk neighborhood, a traditionally migrant working-class area with high levels of stigmatization. Open calls from Migrationlab and NIFFO Galerie invited people to participate in the workshop. There were 17 participants in total. From them, nine people became further involved in the organization of the WTTLR and attended the event in Rotterdam. Importantly, five out of the six storytellers in the Living Room were participants in the workshop, as well as the social media coordinator of the event.



NIFFO Galerie hosted both the co-design workshop and the WTTLR. During the workshop, the discussion at the “location” table was focused on what constitutes a public space, and whether or not NIFFO Galerie was public space in the context of the Afrikaanderwijk neighborhood and organizing a Migrationlab Living Room within that space. Participants agreed that public spaces need to have open access. However, people also need to feel attracted to the place, “through playful, creative ways, [you need to] make people curious about this space, make people ask ‘hey, what are you doing here? What’s going on?, etc..’”

The participants also tended to agree that NIFFO was not a public space: it was easily perceived as a community center. In order to make it “public” and draw the attention of passersby, several suggested placing something on the sidewalk in front of the gallery: “Some sign outside or collaborating with the café outside, uniting the sidewalk spaces and having tables to make it like a block party” (refugee), or “making something with the façade that can attract the attention so people know they can enter” (migrant). In that sense, making evident the openness of the gallery was perceived as a first step.

This was a recommendation taken up during the Living Room (see Chapter 1, pages 19-20). Equally important was the possibility to offer coffee or food, since, “food is what really connects” (migrant). In the radical words of a local neighbor: “demolish the door and free coffee” would make NIFFO an evidently open public space.

It is worth noting that the accountability

of a public space does not rest only in its location. As mentioned by a refugee, one’s own openness is crucial to defining the publicness of any space: “For me Rotterdam is a public space, as a city: you barely find anymore who is Dutch-Dutch. It is more mixed, and all these people are living together and nobody belongs really to it. I have to be open, just like a public space, to live here”.

In that sense, what was happening in NIFFO was as important as the location in defining it as a public space. In order to be an inviting public space people, “need[s] to have a reason to come here and to come back...” (local neighbor). Regarding how to intervene in the space of the gallery to create the necessary atmosphere for the Living Room evening, the workshop participants stressed again the importance of bringing the Living Room out into the public, by signs being visible on the street and area outside NIFFO. They also reiterated the role of food in creating feelings of belonging and community across different traditions and backgrounds.

This provides the participants with something easy to share, as they do in a normal living room. The participants also suggested a mix of cushions and chairs, since a living room is different in each culture. The important issue was to create a feeling of coziness, a feeling of being at home. A number of conversations revolved around the role of media—radio and TV—as key elements to trigger conversation in a space like the Migrationlab Living Room.

Music and the presence of musical

instruments was also highlighted, as well as the need for it to be a natural place, not decorated with artificial plastic elements, but natural elements, like plants: “[the] senses are very important, we need to connect to each other to become familiar with each other, so we are not afraid” (migrant).

At the table discussing content and connecting stories, participants in the workshop highlighted the importance of making the stories they shared visible. This could be done through audio-visual representations of these narratives. The participants made reference to the stories of traveling and arrival in the Netherlands, stories about what make us happy, memories and mistaken identities and how to grow old in a foreign country.

Opposite to this, Syrian refugees stressed the importance of knowing about the conflict, about Syria before the war and the reasons the war started. Furthermore, while migrants or refugees give relevance to stories about resilience and how to make oneself feel at home when being away from one’s own land, local Dutch participants referred to stories about welcoming each other’s differences. This is not an easy task: “It takes a lot of effort in having interest in somebody else. You might need to be educated and traveled to be able to be interested in somebody else. I don’t think you can expect that from an average Dutch person” (local neighbor).

The Migrationlab Living Room events in The Hague and Rotterdam were designed, planned and implemented following the findings of the co-design workshops. As is mentioned above, in both cases the locations were not classic open access public spaces: they were both art platforms. The challenge for Migrationlab was to make public Living Rooms out of these places during the duration of the event. In order to do this, the findings of the workshops were crucial. The information and contacts gathered during the Migrationlab Living Rooms on the Mr. Friday boat in Amsterdam, which took place on April 30 and May 7, were also very useful.

Ten participants with Dutch, migrant, and refugee backgrounds who attended these boat events also followed Migrationlab Living Rooms in The Hague and Rotterdam. The Living Rooms on Mr. Friday— a former fishing boat used to transport refugees— were experiences of sharing food and life experiences about migration while navigating the IJ River in Amsterdam (see Chapter 1, pages 11 - 13).

Considering the information gathered during the Migrationlab Living Rooms on

board of Mr. Friday, as well as the co-design workshops, the Living Room events in The Hague and Rotterdam shared these key common elements in their design: the presence of ethnic and Eastern food; tea and coffee; decoration with cushions, carpets and natural plants; the presence of five or six storytellers; and live music to animate the intermissions.

The following are general findings considering the Migrationlab Living Room experiences in all three cities and locations:

- The power of the Migrationlab Living Room experience in Amsterdam was determined by the location, the former refugee boat. The Living Rooms on board of Mr. Friday were inspirational and powerful settings to establish conversations about home and migration.
- The conversation and dialogue during the WTTLR events were shaped by the storytellers and their stories, which were perceived mostly as “eye-opening” and “inspiring.” The discussions revolved around the stories we heard. During the co-design workshops, the conversations were more spontaneous: while performing creative activities at different tables, participants shared their own stories and experiences, composing a collage, as if “creating a little history with many different people.”
- People befriended one another and stayed connected. These events gave locals, refugees and migrants the possibility to break out of their usual comfort zones into other newly found and more diverse ones. Allowing a space of hope to grow from these connections: while dialogue can happen, it is clear that the feeling of safe-closeness requires opening up to others, becoming connectors and multipliers of this will to know the unknown.
- Although location is crucial, experiences like the Migrationlab Living Rooms are intrinsically networking experiences that are transmitted to the location in which each Migrationlab Living Room takes place.

# Participant Feedback

## WTTLR Amsterdam, April 30 and May 7, 2016 and WTTLR The Hague, July 2, 2016

As mentioned above, while the Migrationlab Living Room events in Amsterdam took place on Mr. Friday (see Chapter 1, pages 11-13), the Living Room in The Hague took place at Humanity House. A key characteristic of this later event was the role of cross-generational conversation. Among the storytellers was an 11-year-old migrant child, an adult migrant professional, one refugee and a local Dutch individual. In addition, during the WTTLR teenage band played live, singing their own lyrics about migration. At this event, the participation of families with small children was also salient.

People joined the Living Room bringing food from their own cultures. Unfortunately, the event was scheduled during Ramadan. Hence, although Muslim participants did contribute and brought food from their country, they did not participate in sharing it. These acts illustrated something they stressed as a corollary of the stories they told: the taste of food and the sharing of



life stories is a human experience, transcending labels that aim to differentiate us as refugees, locals and migrants.

Obviously, the Migrationlab Living Rooms in Amsterdam and The Hague were very different. In the words of a participant in both events:

Both were very different, of course. The boat carries extra emotional weight. One of the refugees who joined on the boat was telling me about her journey and she started crying. Being on a boat was extremely emotional for her, of course. But it was also hopeful to see all these people together. Despite all the horrors they have seen, they can still come on a boat with us and share part of their life story. That's very powerful. (migrant professional)



Nevertheless, there are significant commonalities regarding how the impact of having participated in these events has affected the daily life of those who joined. Here, we can identify three main aspects:

- The Migrationlab Living Room helped humanize the stories we heard about migration and the fear of migration. In this sense, while for locals and migrant professionals/expats the Migrationlab Living Room, "gave a face to the refugees" (Dutch participant in The Hague), it also helped them put these stories in context:

It certainly affected the perception about migration and in particular about refugees. One knows that they are people just like us, but sharing a room and stories with them, makes it almost real and raw. Having lived my whole life thus far in peace, hearing stories about war, bombs, is shocking. But seeing the human spirit thrive above it all is beautiful. You cannot participate in the Migrationlab Living Room without leaving with a replenished will to live and make the best of your life; because we can't take anything for granted." (migrant participant, The Hague)

Giving a face to refugees and context are two crucial elements that trigger in the participants "having the guts to talk to strangers" (refugee participant in Amsterdam). It has also helped participants who live in The Netherlands, as well as those who've moved abroad, take action, as is illustrated by the feedback from a professional who participated in the boat events: "I'm now volunteering with an organization called The Welcoming in Edinburgh, where I've just moved."

For refugees, the Migrationlab Living Room was also an experience to give context and a face to their own anxieties. One refugee participant in Amsterdam said it helped him, "reduce the disappointment that I had before. As I met amazing people have the sense of humanity in a high level. They proved the value of the human being away from the color or the race." Fear was also reduced, as one refugee participating in an Amsterdam event stated: "Not everybody is afraid of me, there are people who invited and loved me!"

# Participant Feedback

- The Migrationlab Living Room activated a network of contacts among the participants, for Dutch, migrants and refugees alike: "I've kept in touch with two persons and one of them is now one of my best friends, and the reason is because I think we had some same ideas and kind of same goals" (refugee participant in The Hague and Rotterdam). The WTTLR experiences also reinforced the role of Migrationlab as online network and platform, since even those who do not establish personal contacts have the possibility to be connected: "[Have you kept contact with other participants?] Not individuals, but I am following the Facebook/email group, so hopefully I have another chance to join again" (migrant participant in The Hague).

- Participating in Migrationlab Living Rooms also encouraged some to be more involved in their respective local realities: "I keep in touch with some of the Syrian people from the Living Room on Mr. Friday boat, and I more actively look for ways to connect and help refugees locally in Amsterdam" (migrant professional who participated in Amsterdam); "it gave me the courage to express my self. I

have now met local people and it's easier to communicate with them and other new comers." (refugee WTTLR Amsterdam) ; "I visited a refugee center in the city I live, Amsterdam" (migrant professional WTTLR The Hague); "actually, it motivated me to integrate as soon as possible within the community" (refugee WTTLR Amsterdam); " the Living Room on the boat was a plus factor to search deeper and now am participating in a program with Dutch Red Cross to help and support new comers in The Hague" (refugee WTTLR Amsterdam); "the inclusive character of the living rooms (everyone is welcome) made me more conscious to involve all kinds of different people in the things I do [...] it has become easier, more natural, to talk to people I do not know." (Dutch student WTTLR Amsterdam and The Hague)

As a general feeling, most of participants have illustrated how positively the Migrationlab Living Room experience impacted their lives, and are open and would welcome the opportunity to participate again and bring those close to them to another event. Participants also agree about the utility of events like this, as stressed by a Dutch participant in The

Hague, who stated that the Migrationlab Living Rooms are important, "to stimulate bottom- up empathy in society. But I think it will only have impact if you will scale it and will reach people who are NOT the obvious audience."

## WTTLR Rotterdam, October 26, 2016

As has been mentioned, the Living Room in Rotterdam experience took place at NIFFO Galerie/Recycle Studio. As opposed to The Hague, where the majority of participants at the co-design workshop couldn't join the respective Living Room experience due to holiday season, in Rotterdam a large proportion of those who participated in the co-design workshop joined the actual WTTLR event. In fact, 9-out-of-17 individuals present collaborated in the preparatory work to implement the Living Room at NIFFO, helping with the organization, as storytellers and in social media communication. In this sense, the co-creation process increased the potential of the encounter that took place during the Living Room. Co-creation is important, in the words of a participant, "because we people cannot see further than [with] our own eyes, so for me as a Dutch person it's difficult to think like a migrant, and otherwise. You need different perspectives to make this a successful crossover event" (Dutch storyteller in Rotterdam).

The Migrationlab experience in Rotterdam was also more explicitly connected to the findings and recommendations made during the preparatory workshop. Participants in the Living Room highlighted the importance of the co-design character of the event, since it is, "very important, this makes you feel welcome and it absolutely adds to the warm and open atmosphere. It also gives you the possibility to think about your own role and opinions: being an active co-creator works [for me] as a support structure for reflecting upon these themes of migration" (Dutch participant in Rotterdam).

The Living Room in Rotterdam coincided with the 10th Living Room organized by Migrationlab. This special occasion can be summarized in the words of a migrant participant who said the Living Room event felt like, "a global living room almost." This event was also larger than the previous ones, with over 45 participants, six storytellers and one singer with a migrant background, but who was brought up as Dutch. The overall experience was assessed as positive, powerful and inspiring, by those who shared their stories as storytellers:

The space was set up nicely and was welcoming. I enjoyed being a storyteller and appreciated the opportunity. It was a great chance to share some stories and some ideas about migration experiences, identity, and memory... By speaking on memory and forgetting, I wanted to present some ideas I feel are useful but perhaps a little provocative. I am not totally sure how that all came across, and that's okay. At the same time, sharing the stories was a pretty tiring and rather vulnerable experience. (migrant storyteller)

A similar feeling was expressed by the regular participants:

I found Migrationlab Living Room a very intimate space where people with different backgrounds could at first question their own tolerance, openness and stereotypical judgement before discussing ways to promote interculturalism among their family and friends and in the public sphere. The storytelling is a great technique to make the audience engage closely with the subject because it encourages reflection and honesty, rather than official discourse and political correctness." (Dutch participant)

In a similar light, a migrant expressed:

Some of my 'aha' moments came from key words, sentences, and soundbites from the storytellers—little gems of inspiration. For example, one said, 'I left pieces of myself everywhere I lived,' while another said their experience was 'rootless.' Still, some used terms like 'selective forgetting' and 'collective memories.' Hearing about 'D-Learning' and 'micro-interactions,' someone mentioning 'the privilege of having several passports to choose from', while some body else saying 'The Netherlands would be boring without migrants really got me thinking differently!

For all, migrants, refugees and locals, the Migrationlab Living Room provided an open space to share similar experiences of movement, uprooting and re-rooting in a different setting, as well as the challenges and difficulties embedded in being open to the unknown. WTTLR offered a safe but open environment to that unknown triggered by the experience of migration.



A coinciding perception of this Living Room is the clear evidence about migration being a key experience of our time: "Migration is an issue impossible to avoid nowadays, both on a personal level and a political level. It is everywhere, and it is all over the media. I want to keep involved with it mostly on social and artistic levels—participate in and attend events where migration plays a role, even if it is not explicit" (migrant participant).

Given this fact, spaces of encounters and events like Migrationlab Living Rooms are essential: "What I really liked about the Living Room was the open and welcoming atmosphere. This is so important when discussing these sometimes difficult and challenging subjects. I didn't know anyone when I came, however, I felt it was very easy to connect to other people, knowing that they all came with an open mind and a willingness to 'meet'" (Dutch participant).

Following from this, one of the most powerful outcomes of the WTTLR in Rotterdam was the focused dialogue on migration as experience, which was triggered by the storytellers, but also relied heavily upon the active interaction among the participants. All were eager to learn from each other, tell and share their own stories. In this sense, the Migrationlab Living Room offered a space to make visible these different, yet common experiences.

# Chapter 4

## Challenges

The past year has been a time of growth for us. But as is the case with any period of progress, challenges have arisen. Over the course of the year, we have faced challenges as an organization, reflected internally on the utility of our projects and received lots of relevant, engaged feedback from those who participated in our WTTLR events. Below is a summary of the most prominent of these points of improvement, with an eye on the future.

### Organizational Challenges

Managing increased demand for our services. This year we experienced a growing demand from other organizations in other European countries to organize WTTLR events in their communities. Due to a lack of sufficient financial and human resources, we were not able to respond to all of these requests. Since June 2016, we have been working at the scaling aspect of our organization in parallel with the social impact research under the coaching of Anders Lindgren from Swedish social and cultural incubator **KLUMP Subtopia** (see Chapter 3, page 25)

### Internal Reflections on Project Challenges

**Reaching out and involving communities and groups unaware/less open/undecided about migration issues.** WTTLR is an experience open to everybody regardless of age, education, gender, skin color, nationality etc... Despite its openness, there has been a constant challenge to involve people with less open attitudes towards migration matters.

**Social changes** on the international level in 2016 such as Brexit, terrorist attacks in France and Belgium, elections in the US, **Black Pete** in The Netherlands as well as the misrepresentation of refugees in the media contribute to a more polarized, fearful and less open population.

**Involve more locals.** The Migrationlab Living Rooms this year have welcomed and involved Dutch locals, but their participation was lower compared to migrants and refugees. The majority of the locals who attended our activities were open-minded, educated people. In some cases, we noticed that the perception of Dutch locals is

that racism and discrimination don't exist in their country. Some young Dutch students shared this same view, as we noticed in our encounters with students at universities in The Netherlands. In their opinion this project is needed more in other, less open-minded regions such as Eastern Europe.

### **Involve more residents from marginalized neighborhoods.**

Despite both Migrationlab's and NIFFO's joint efforts to have more residents of the Afrikaanderwijk neighborhood present in the Migrationlab Living Room on October 26, the turnout was very low: two residents were storytellers (one of them participated in the preparatory co-design workshop as well), and two others volunteered for the logistics during the event. Prior the event our founder Laura M. Pana presented the WTTLR project, exchanged views with and invited NIFFO's 15-year-old interns to the WTTLR event. None of the young interns participated, although during the discussions they showed interest by sharing stories and identifying their tough realities—discrimination, racism, non-inclusiveness—with the topics discussed in the Migrationlab Living Rooms.

**Location** is one of the key elements of the WTTLR experience. There are a few challenges attached to it, such as its constant mobility from one space to another, or even between countries, cities and neighborhoods. Additionally, there are the issues regarding the type of spaces used, for example, indoors vs outdoors and public space vs urban space, and

visibility. Intimacy when in public space was a particular concern, especially from refugees. Certain locations are not open to these kinds of events, for example, the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague.

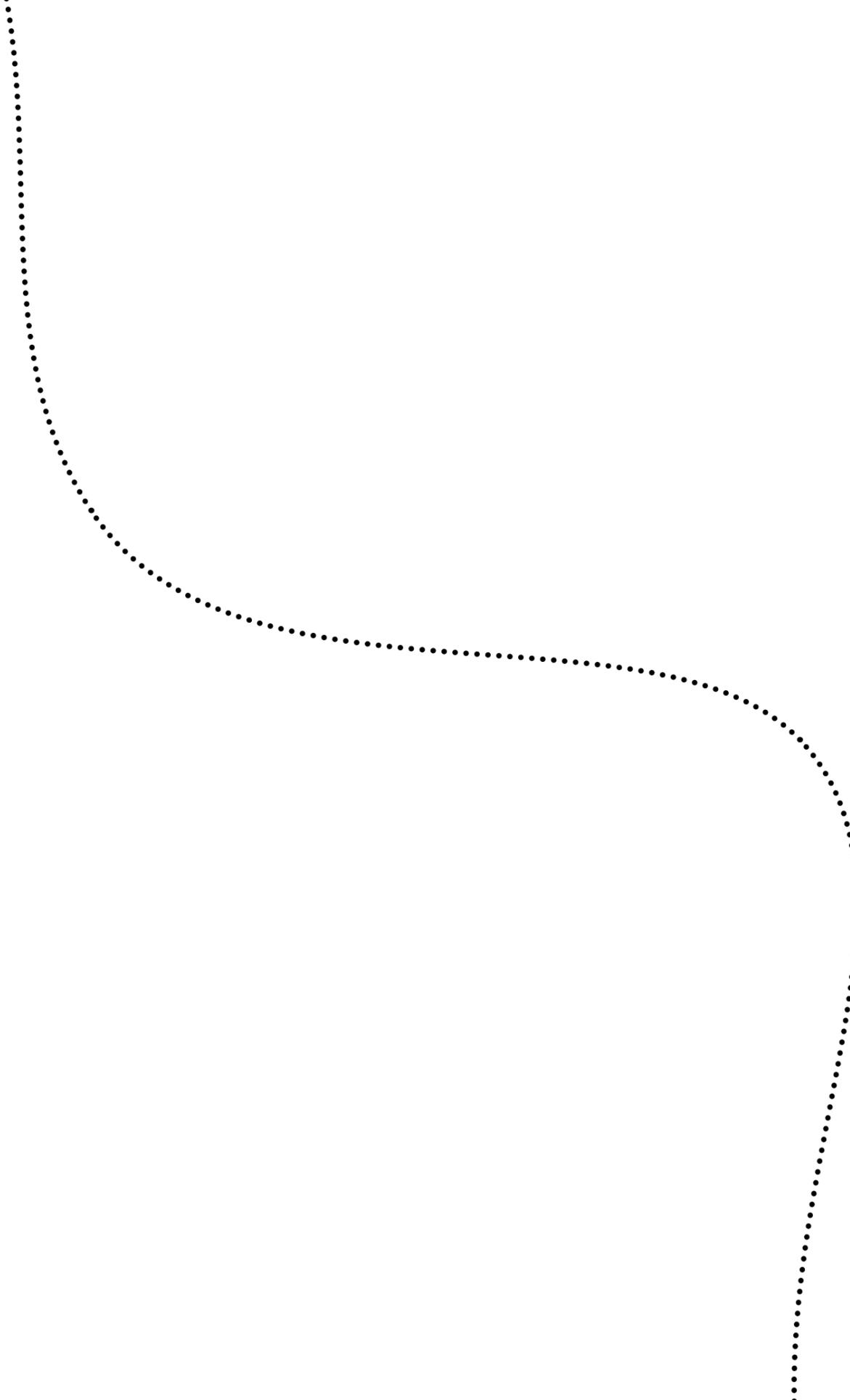
**Bureaucracy and Municipalities.** One of our goals this year was to organize at least one WTTLR event in a public space. Completing this goal has been challenging, due to the long wait-time it can take to get a response from the municipality; it can take up to two months in **The Hague**. Our application to organize the WTTLR event in De Haagse Bos park in The Hague in July was processed within 1 month and we received a positive answer, but it still came too late— just one week before the official date of our event. This put more strain on our organizing efforts. In a very short amount of time we had to find another location. For our next event in Rotterdam we faced the same problem: short time-period between the co-design workshop and the WTTLR event (four weeks). In this time, we had to assess the workshop's findings, find a public space location, apply to the municipality, have the application processed by the municipality, get a response and finally organize the event accordingly. Therefore, this time we didn't apply for a permit but we tried to make this WTTLR more public: we created an artistic intervention in the public space in front of the location, NIFFO Galerie (see Chapter 1, pages 19-20).

**Language(s) in the Migrationlab Living Rooms.** English has always been the main language spoken so far, but it can be limiting in terms of reaching audiences who speak only the local language. Depending on the country we're in, we also use the local language and translations. The audience is usually mixed language-wise as well; although the majority tends to speak English, not everybody speaks/ understands Dutch/ English (WTTLR in The Netherlands) or German/English (WTTLR in Austria).

**Involve refugees in refugee centers.** This is particularly challenging due to the instability of their situation while waiting for asylum in The Netherlands, which can include transferring to other centers in other cities in The Netherlands within short notice, and unexpected events such as hunger strikes (e.g. one week before our WTTLR in Amsterdam kicked off).

**Periods of depression and isolation prevent refugees,** especially those in centers, from participating in WTTLR. This is due not only to their unstable situation, as mentioned above, but also to upsetting news they receive from their families in Syria (part of their family being killed in the conflict) or difficulties their families encounter while trying to make it to Europe.

**Travel costs** sometimes prevent refugees from participating in Migrationlab activities.



### **Participants' Reflections on Future Project Challenges**

#### **Using the power of Internet more to reach more locals, migrants and refugees, without decreasing intimacy.**

One of the key elements of Migrationlab's Living Rooms is that it manages to create a level of intimacy that allows participants to be open and honest with each other and hence bond more easily and profoundly. Increased exposure on the Internet, though, has the drawback of decreasing this intimacy while at the same time allowing us to reach more people. Trying to find ways to mediate the negative effects of increased exposure remains a challenge.

**Scaling the WTTLR** in terms of increasing the number of participants in order to reach more people, particularly Dutch locals. A normal WTTLR event hosts maximum 50 people, in order to keep the kind of intimacy we mentioned above.

**The moderator's role** during the discussions in the WTTLR. The following reflection came from a Dutch local: "How present the facilitator wants to be? How much space do people want or need?"

**Duration of the WTTLR event.** We received mixed feedback from locals and migrants on the subject of how long a WTTLR event should be. The usual four or five hours is too long for some and too short for others. Still, some even proposed a one-day event.

**Reaching policy makers** to co-create new solutions and to communicate how and why Migrationlab can change attitudes about migrants.

# Chapter 5

## Learnings and Conclusions

Drawing on a very successful pilot phase in Austria and The Netherlands in 2015—where we already noticed that the WTTLR concept positively impacted our participants—for 2016 our goal was to further research and develop the WTTLR experiences. The activities in The Netherlands in 2016 were made possible thanks to the ECF and the ECF Idea Camp R&D Grant.

This year, our research aimed to rethink public space and build inclusive communities through the organization of WTTLR experiences. Our goal was to find out what it means and why it is important to co-create spaces of encounter, such as Migrationlab Living Rooms, where migrants, refugees and locals meet, befriend and inspire each other through storytelling, social design, art and food. Our activities took place in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam, and they revealed three key findings:

- The WTTLR experiences are a way to produce public spaces, offering a safe environment by creatively intervening each specific location.
- Migrants, refugees and locals are willing, eager and have the need to tell their stories and be heard in a safe environment. There's a need and will to build together, a need and will to stay connected, and a need and will to build a community around the WTTLR experiences.
- The WTTLR experiences offer these communities the possibility to together build a new language and concepts of how we could look at the world and each other.

In 2016, Migrationlab also managed to create a network of locals, refugees and migrants who stay connected in The Netherlands. Additionally, a community was formed around the WTTLR experiences. As a general note, the majority of our participants has expressed how positively the WTTLR events impacted their lives and are open to participate again and bring along friends and family.

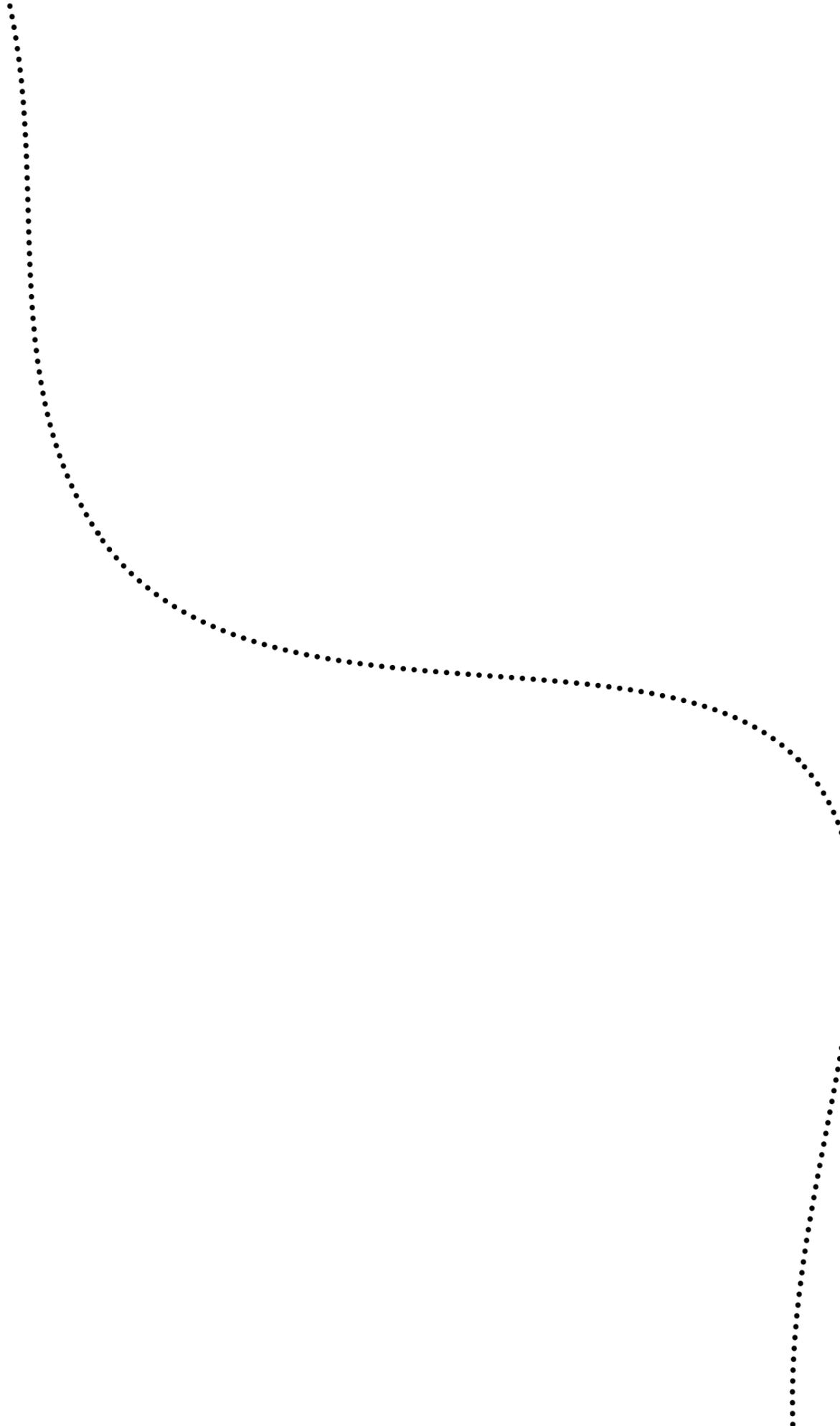
One of the most important lessons this year was that allowing migrants, refugees and Dutch locals

to get involved in different phases of the project and give us their honest feedback was very powerful. This allowed us to better understand their needs about how to communicate with each other and establish Migrationlab Living Room's role in facilitating the conversations. Another lesson was that organizing the WTTLR in different contexts, cities and neighborhoods allowed us to have a clearer vision about: the concept; what works and what doesn't; what content and elements we can keep from the Living Room in one city and apply it in another city; and whether there's a common thread between Migrationlab Living Rooms in different cities.

Other learnings are related to things we need to improve and challenges ahead. They are the result of our own reflections as an organization and the feedback we received from our participants during this year's research (see Chapter 4, pages 45-47).

After this year's activities and active feedback from our participants, we believe that Migrationlab continues to grow as an organization and that the WTTLR concept is developing even more. In the immediate future, we will take the time to reflect on all the learnings and challenges ahead in order to be able to move forward and achieve Migrationlab's main goal: improving the social relationships between migrants, refugees and locals in cities across Europe by finding new ways to communicate with and relate to each other. At the same time, new collaborations with former and new partners in new European cities or places we have already been are shaping up for 2017.

We are very excited for all the work ahead to continue to bring migrants, refugees and locals together and we hope to see you soon in one of our Migrationlab Living Rooms!



**Special Thanks** to our volunteers, collaborators, supporters, and storytellers who helped us during the research activities in 2016. As well as to all those who contributed to the development of Migrationlab and the WTTLR concept from the beginning.

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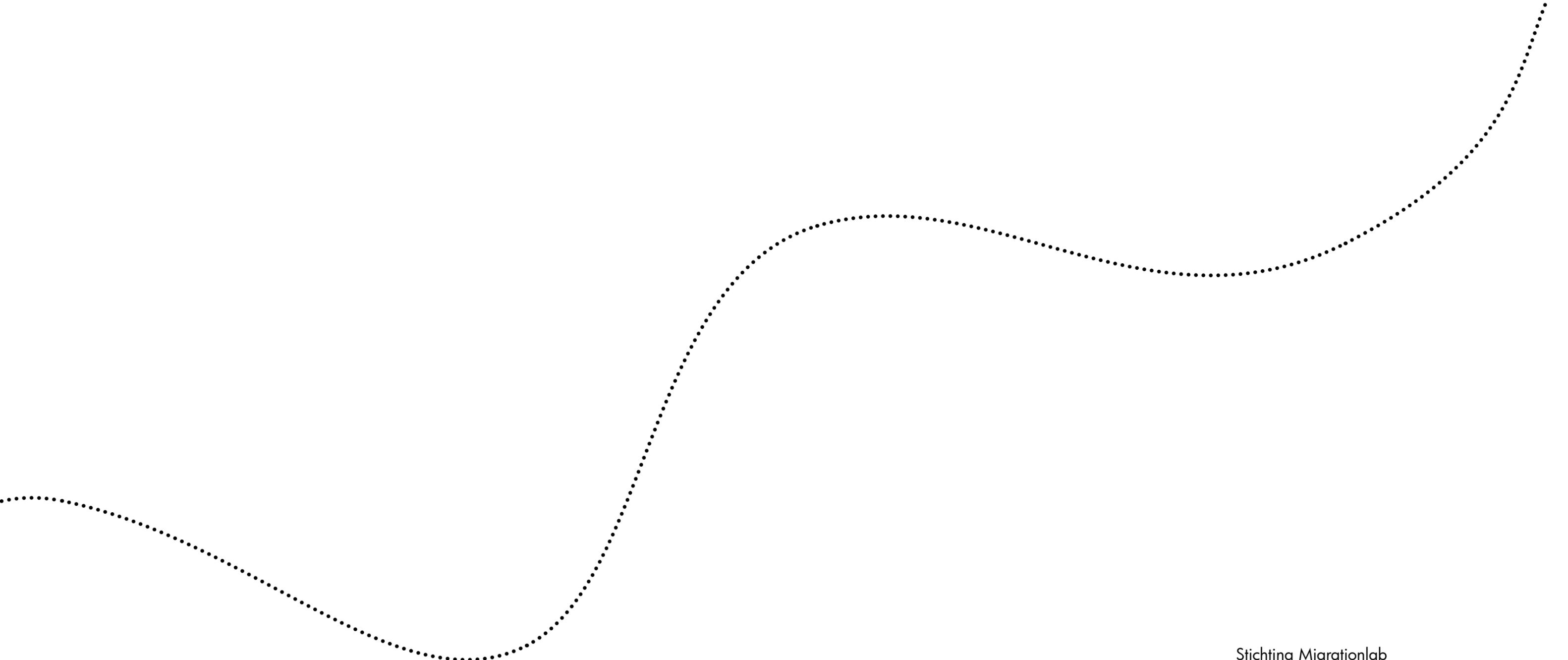
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