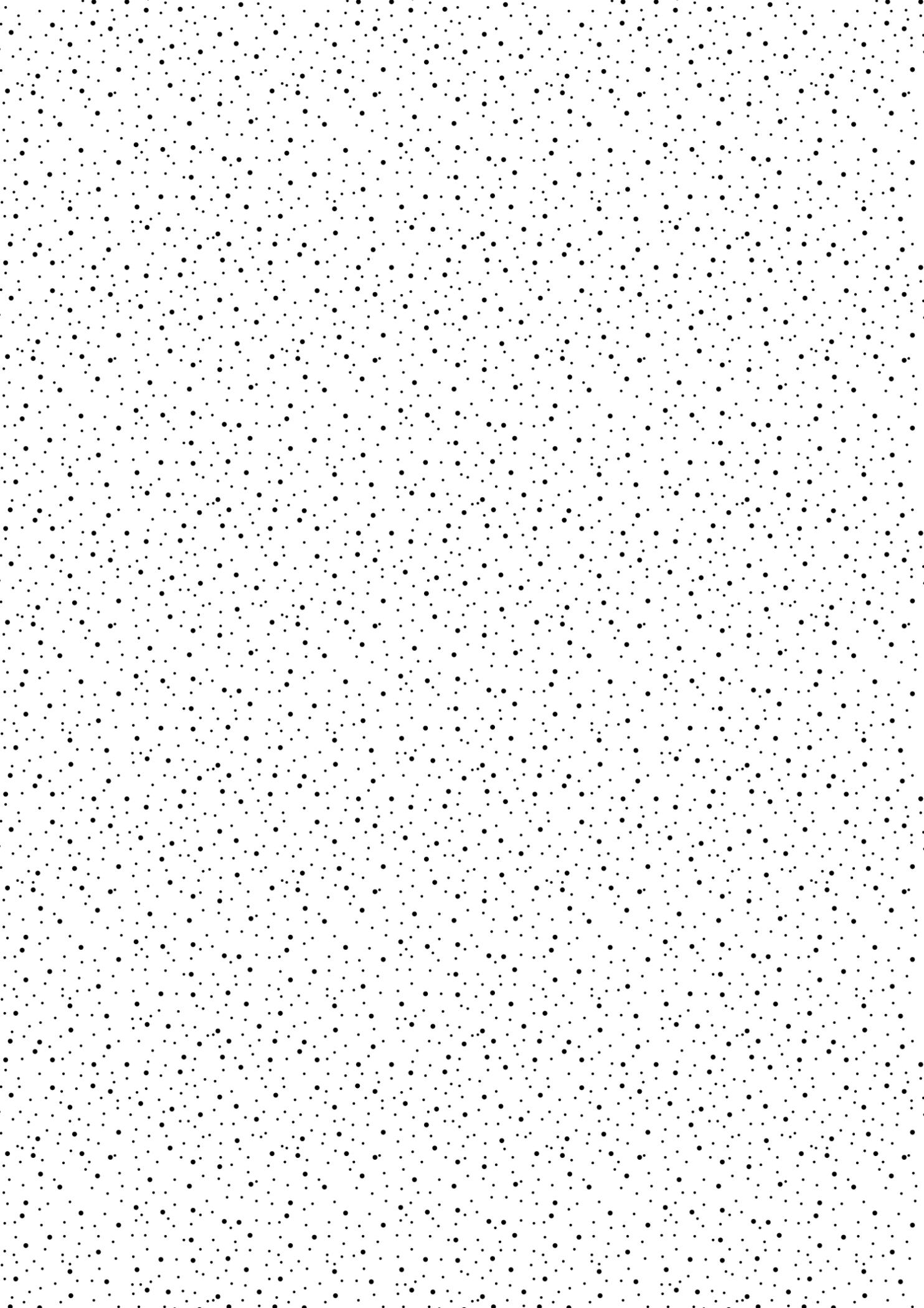


# Designing Urban Inclusion

Metrolab Brussels MasterClass I



Mathieu Berger  
Benoit Moritz  
Louise Carlier  
Marco Ranzato  
(eds)



Metrolab series

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# Rethinking Hospitality in an Era of Global Closure

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Teddy Cruz and Fonna Forman

**The Metrolab 2017 MasterClass entitled ‘Designing urban inclusion’ took place just weeks after a devastating national election in the United States. The subject of the MasterClass could not have been more timely for us. For those of us working to produce more equitable, inclusive and open cities in the United States and across the world, the narratives and actions that were spewing forth from Washington, D.C. represented the most hideous convergence of exclusionary political and economic narratives that we had witnessed in our lifetime. In the year following the election, this same sense of finding ourselves in new territory seems to persistently recur. The popular appeal of these divisive ideas in disturbingly large segments of American society is perhaps the most terrifying part of the story: decades of sublimated intolerance and racism given new life in a populist explosion of nationalism and xenophobia, with an intensity unmatched since the middle of the twentieth century.**

These dynamics in American politics have taken on a particular ethical urgency in the US-Mexico border region, where we live and work, where the specter of a new, higher and stronger border wall, accompanied by even more repressive infrastructures of surveillance and control, loom large; where public debate over immigration and the fate of ‘Dreamers’ gets very real<sup>1</sup>. In a period fraught with fear and real danger for immigrant communities, the immediate task must be: how to protect these communities from public reprisal or outright political repression.

While many cities and states across the United States immediately joined the wave, it is reassuring that many others have declared themselves ‘sanctuaries’ for immigrants and fortresses of resistance against attempts by the United States federal government to violate the human rights and dignity of the most vulnerable people in our society. This frightening resurgence of nativism is not an exclusively American phenomenon. We are witnessing a climate of protectionism and border-hysteria that has gripped geopolitics across the globe, from the victory of Donald

<sup>1</sup> ‘Dreamers’ are young immigrants brought into the United States by their parents as children, and granted special protected status under a deferred action program called DACA.

Trump in the United States to ‘fortress-Europe,’ to Brexit.

It is urgent today to reassert an ethical commitment to the ‘stranger in distress,’ and to intervene in the very sites of contact between the nation and the other: *the host city*. We need to return to a more humane ethical frame, like that first articulated by 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius, who described our natural duty as human beings to offer hospitality to strangers, to recognise the right to asylum for those escaping cruelty, persecution, and poverty. Oddly, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we can find inspiration in the international jurisprudence of the 17<sup>th</sup>, a time when some Europeans were resisting the scourge of empire and its twin brother, slavery.

In the Metrolab 2017 MasterClass, hospitality, as a signifier for urban inclusivity, involved five qualities. Hospitality characterises policies, practices and actions that invite, allow, host, comfort and shelter the arriving immigrant. Brussels has become a canvas to think spatially and programmatically about the protocols and policies that are necessary to increase hospitality and inclusivity in cities, at a time of rapidly accelerating global migration. As students began to focus on their projects to transform various neglected and underutilised spaces across Brussels into sites of hospitality, we invited them to think not only about physical intervention, but to first open a process for visualising the conflicts and contradictions their projects would tackle, as well as the programmatic framework to reorganise institutional protocols, knowledge, and resources. We worked with students to develop a series of scripts and diagrams to visualise the obstacles and opportunities latent in the city itself. On one hand, how to decolonise local and global social and economic policies that have spatialised exclusion and marginalisation, while on the other, how to imagine new interfaces between top-down and bottom-up institutions and agencies, in order to produce political, social, and economic frameworks for inclusion. Students

were asked to articulate and negotiate socio-spatial and geographic dynamics between and across the initially assigned analytical scales, boundaries, and thresholds, with the idea that not only physical things are being designed, but also the protocols and policies that will ensure hospitality and inclusivity over time.

While hospitality is the first gesture, an essential charitable opening, we wanted to problematise and expand the meaning of hospitality and its social and spatial consequences. The scripts and diagrams were offered as tools to see urban conflict as a creative process to open ways of ‘hosting’ the other, but also as an opportunity to transform the city into an infrastructure of inclusion and integration.

For sure, this charitable opening is the first step in creating a more inclusive and welcoming society when the immigrant arrives. Immigrants, particularly those from places ravaged by war, persecution, and poverty, have immediate needs of food and water, medicine and shelter—urgent needs of the body. Providing these needs is the proper charitable response of an ethical society. But needs become more complex over time, and charity is not the appropriate model for building a society inclusive of immigrant communities. Hospitality must be temporalised, and it must evolve from a charitable concept to a more integrative one. In other words, the real challenge is to create societies that escalate hospitality toward integration, and recognising that this integration demands transformation in both the programmatic and physical arrangements of the host city. Inclusivity means integrating the immigrant and their children into a meaningful social, economic and political reality, creating spaces for meaningful participation in the civic life of the community, opportunities for education, and psychological and spiritual health. Real inclusion is more than a hospitable embrace, it is a process through which we ourselves transform alongside the other.