

# Never Heard of a Migrahack?

Well, now you have!

Migrahack combines the word “migration” with “hackathon.” A hackathon (“hackers” and “marathon”) brings people of various disciplines together with the goal of developing open access digital projects that benefit society. Migrahack is unique because it specifically uses immigration-related data to develop digital projects such as maps, graphics, or databases.

## *Why open access and digital journalism?*

There is data, and there is also “social” data.

Social data is generated by non-profit organizations (NPOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social enterprises, and other public bodies that help deliver services in health, education, transportation, job training, immigration and other fields. They all collect useful data and statistics, but they do not always share this data due to privacy and other concerns. However, not all data is private and not all data should cause concern. There is plenty of data that can tell a story by postal code or gender that should be open by default. Without having significant segments of data open to the public in a usable format, without skills to read, and without the ability to visualize for easy understanding, the story behind the numbers, the data-driven narratives are denied their potential impact. In other words, access to open data and digital journalism allows “social” data to inform us about the systemic issues we are struggling with.

Many of these systemic issues are related to migration, and immigration-related social data e.g. data about newcomers and refugees, is not always easily accessible or readable for the public to understand their multilayered story. In our case, for example, we know we provide language services to people in need but we do not always know the longitudinal impact of our service, the larger story reaching beyond many smaller stories we are witnessing day to day, and we definitely do not know how the impact we believe we do create positively affects services connected to ours (see: [MCIS’ \(un\)Conference Report](#)).

We have been struggling with our own permissions to release and acquire, and our skills to visualize our social data for quite a while. Back in July, our (Un)Conference at the Centre for Social Innovation confirmed that capacity and skills in the field are lacking and that maybe we can do something about it.

Over the past few months we were extremely fortunate to encounter many supportive individuals and organizations:



*Craig Carter-Edwards* ([@OpenCCE](#)) from [WelcomeHomeTO](#), a dialog-driven organization conducting important conversations in public places, *Bianca Wylie* ([@biancawylie](#)) from Open

Data Institute and [Open North](#) providing initial strategic guidance and introducing us to the people behind the first Migrahack in LA, [Claudia Nunez](#) and [Patricia Carbajales](#), and Tableau representative [Meagan Corbett](#).

Just last week we also got generous support from Mozilla in Toronto committing their space, mentoring and technical support, including badly needed bandwidth. Please click on their logo to see their incredible manifesto points 7, 8 and 10.



### *Migrahack Toronto*

[#MigrahackTO](#) is a 2.5 days community hackathon/ training on using migration data for visualization and journalism that will take place from Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> around lunch time to Sunday, Nov 5th, 2017.

The idea is to gather non-profits, community agencies, journalists and developers to form mixed teams and discover and tell stories supported by acquired data sets. Our primary goal is to the importance of open “social” data, but also to learn about free or affordable tools such as Tableau, while encouraging settlement and immigration sector related non-profits to connect with each other, the tech community and journalists, collaboratively contributing to more accurate reporting about social issues.

On the very last day, we expect to have project demonstrations, and a celebration party. A dedicated website ([Migrahackto.com](#)) will host all completed projects to be used as a reference tool for anyone who wants to experiment further in this field.

### *Who is #MigrahackTO for?*

- **Non-Profit Organizations** will be provided with an opportunity to work with students, journalists and tech-savvy individuals using their own or relevant data sets. It will provide the opportunity to work on solutions that articulate and respond to NPOs’ own specific needs. A very unique value of Migrahack is that learning about evidence that is hidden in data is not only about how the data should be manipulated to gain better clarity, but also how it should be communicated. This will help with positioning, supporting funding reports or new funding applications for additional funding streams.

- **University students** interested in improving their data visualization skills will be able to work on solving real issues using open data sets (provided by either non-profit organizations or various government repositories). Unlike other workshops aimed at increasing the overall skill level, these provide an opportunity for a multidisciplinary perspective on challenges that the third sector has by using technology and open data.
- **Non-technical journalists** struggling to find return on investment when using open data sets, will be able to find a fresh perspective on how data can be used and how evidence based, data-driven stories can be enriched by collaborating with NPOs, web-developers, programmers and university students to create a deeper understanding of immigration issues. Unlike interviewing or finding anecdotal evidence, Tableau can conduct a deep analysis based on freely available resources. This optimizes the budget, helps create a solid background for the investigative process to take place, and has a greater impact on the audience.
- **Technical folks**, programmers and web developers, will have an opportunity to connect with an atypical audience with uneven, if not beginners' technical skills but very specific data needs. This direct access to end users will provide opportunities to experiment with new ideas, which will likely stimulate creativity and problem-solving.

In addition, risk-taking is welcome here and the cost of failure is low. We are interested in actionable solutions that can be implemented immediately. And we are interested in stories.

### *Finally, Calling All Journalists...*

If you are a journalist or a journalism student interested in attending Migrahack, please contact [Eliana](#) or [Zoya](#). We would love to have you on board!

Migrahack Topics of Interest:

- Language Access and Barriers
- Homelessness
- Employment
- Mental Health

For further information or a chance to discover you inner hacker, please visit our [Migrahack](#) website and keep in touch on our social media channels!

Happy Hacking!