



**REORGANISING POWER**  
FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

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CONFERENCE REPORT

"Do we know where we want to go?"

Question of a participant during the second panel.

## Impressions of the EDGE Conference 2017

This April, for the first time outside of the U.S., 260 funders, donors and movement allies came together to "Reorganize Power for Systems Change" at the 6th annual EDGE Funders conference. While funder and civil society partners from across the globe have made EDGE an international space since its beginnings, bringing the conference to Europe allowed EDGE to fully embrace the still new transatlantic nature of the Alliance, to bring European and American funders together, and to more formally step into its role as global convener. Convening in Barcelona allowed for the rich activist history of the city to inspire us throughout our days together. From the pre-conference "fishbowl" discussions on concrete ways Just Transition manifests in movement spaces, to walking tours throughout the city, to panel discussions, engagement labs, dine arounds, site visits and more, EDGE Conference 2017 brought us all a little closer to answering the hard questions and strategies we've been developing since the start of EDGE, namely: how do we dismantle oppressions of the current system, how can we be more effective and collaborative at moving resources to key sectors and constituencies working to promote systemic alternatives at the local, national, and international levels, while simultaneously "building the new" in just, inclusive, equitable and sustainable ways?

This year's conference was our second year working in a semi-open conference format, and once again with the expert guidance of facilitator Adrienne Maree Brown, lab leaders shepherded conversations about systems change across seven broad topics, engaging in deep discussion, cross-sector relationship building and both personal and professional growth. In topics ranging from regenerative economics to non-extractive narratives and worldviews, conference

participants committed to investing time, thought and heart into listening, sharing, and sharpening the vision of the world we want to live in. And while the open conference format sometimes seemed messy, we come to understand that stepping away from the typical rhythm of speakers and audience fit more with EDGE's organizational personality, our political and social commitments, and our "outside-the-box" ways of thinking about the world we're trying to build together.

The EDGE community's challenge felt particularly daunting this year, considering the accelerating rise of right wing and radicalised populism, corporate power and enclosures of the commons all over the globe. Many participants joining us came from situations of great violence and struggle in their home countries. Acknowledging this sacrifice, the work accomplished and relationships built over our days together are all the more precious, and reinforce EDGE's critical responsibilities in philanthropy and towards our movement partners at large. As a key global funder conference inclusive of working sessions with civil society activists and grassroots movement partners, the breaking down of barriers among sectors at the conference reflects the shattering of borders we seek in the broader world. A Barcelona Commitment Statement for EDGE members and concrete recommendations from movement partners challenge us all to step up, bring our personal and political commitments to our professional environments, and deepen our solidarity with one another.

Thank you for joining us, and see you next year!

**EDGE Funders Alliance**

# Plenaries

Based on the pillars of people power, systemic alternatives and progressive philanthropy, the plenary panels brought together civil society experts, movement representatives and funders from different parts of the world to talk about the challenges of organising alternatives to the system we live in, and reaching for what may seem as utopian goals.



## People Power - Organising to Build the New

The first plenary brought to the stage stories that confirm the systemic causes of the different struggles. Our guest speakers shared their experiences on how their respective movements co-ordinate and balance resistance and resilience and political organizing with the cultivation of solutions. They shared reflections on day-to-day challenges they face, and long-term strategies towards systems change.

### Presenters



**Elizabeth Tang**  
International Domestic Workers Federation



**Graça Samo**  
World March of Women



**Miguel Stedile**  
Movimento dos Sem Terra



**Rosalinda Guillen**  
Community 2 Community and Grassroots Global Justice Alliance



**Xavi Ferrer**  
Barcelona en Comú



## Systemic Alternatives across borders - Thinking backwards from Utopia

As the system seems to be the problem itself, alternative ways of living and building our communities are needed. In this panel, speakers explained the importance of envisioning a different type of democracy to dismantle the various borders (racial, geographic, linguistic, technological) and to expand the human capacity to act, empowering people to actively engage in alternatives to the system we live in.

### Presenters



**Danijela Dolenec**  
Institute for Political Ecology and Faculty of Political Science Zagreb



**Kali Akuno**  
Cooperation Jackson



**Sinam Mohamad**  
Autonomous Region of Kurdish Rojava Democratic Administration



## Progressive Philanthropy - Re/Organizing Philanthropy for System Change

On the funders side, representatives of foundations, challenged by movement partners contributions, discussed about strategies for funding and how to better mobilize resources to the frontlines, that are urging for a better structured support. In a fishbowl, guest speakers and other participants discussed whether the entire foundation's endowments should be funding movements, instead of just a portion of it.

### Presenters



**Aisha Mansour**  
Dalia Association



**Mutisya Leonard**  
UHAI EASHRI



**Chris Stone**  
Open Society Foundations



**Regan Pritzker**  
The Libra Foundation



**Dennis Van Wanrooij**  
Red Umbrella Fund



**Sarah Gunther**  
Astraea Foundation



**Isis Amlak**  
Edge Fund UK

# Engagement Labs



2017's conference marked the second year EDGE allotted extended time for engagement labs, relied on lab leaders to craft sessions on chosen topics, and allowed time for action labs following the engagement, so leaders and participants alike could continue their conversations beyond the realm of thinking and learning to the realm of strategizing and building. Although topics varied, some ideas and vocabulary permeated all engagement labs, from Progressive Philanthropy to Reworking Economies to What's the Story?

All labs recognized that while vocabulary might differ across sector and geography, shared values are most important on our paths to systems change. Long-term vision was also called up as something equally critical yet under-developed, pinned to current values and necessary for our future work together.

Despite this emphasis on shared broad values, there was also a request across labs for more specificity around words and individual contexts. Lab participants also called for further transparency across sectors and frameworks, with honesty and healing as core elements necessary for systems change. While the lab format allowed for an exploration of power and privilege, often omitted in funder conferences, there was still a call from participants to prep facilitators even more for the sometimes painful conversations that are necessary to navigate as part of a just transition.

Most labs spent time talking about how the "building the new" part of transition is currently less developed than the breaking down of the old, and how shifting this imbalance is critical to our work. However, some labs came up with concrete follow-up actions, like the lab Seeds of Systemic Change: what can we learn from municipalism, new relationships with money and models of commoning?. As a first very concrete outcome, some foundations are supporting the international summit on municipalism, Fearless Cities, described on page 9. Moreover, after the conference, 12 of the lab participants convened a steering group to explore future collaboration opportunities and to implement the recommendations highlighted throughout the conversations enabled by the lab.



# Movements

“It is the only funders’ conference where movements have a voice”

Conference participant

One of EDGE’s taglines is “For Funders, with Movements”: EDGE holds a fairly unique position within philanthropy precisely because of its relationship with movement partners. Andrew Milner, in his article published in Alliance Magazine entitled, “Can funders and activists work together?”, mentioned something pointed out by a speaker: “EDGE deserves praise because although it’s not perfect, it’s the only forum where movements come and speak out to this extent”.

Throughout the years, the EDGE Conference has been expanding

the active participation of the civil society to promote the exchange between funders and activists. Barcelona was the perfect setting for this interaction, as it concentrates an impressive number of collectives that inspire social movements from all over the world in creating different ways to organise our societies.

This year, over 75 delegates were representing social movements and the local host committee had a crucial role to shape their participation in the conference.

## Funder-free zone

For the first time, the EDGE Conference had a series of Movement to Movement spaces, where more than 60 organisers from all over the world had the chance to gather to connect and strategize for the future. The sessions were organised in three meetings:

- Organising Visionary Movements to Win
- Moving Money for Movement Needs
- Building Global Solidarity with Local Organising

## Linking local activism with global system change

Barcelona was not chosen to host the conference just because of its charm. The city has a vibrant history of activism and very active civil society, which enabled important social achievements. In order to integrate this scenario into the conference, the local advisory committee worked hard to prepare a set of walking tours and community meetings and share with the conference participants how local initiatives organise to tackle the threats of the multiple crises.

The city will host in June the Fearless Cities International Municipal Summit, bringing together people from all over the world to discuss the empowerment of the cities and to build a municipalist network. As a result of the interactions between movement partners (local and international) and funders during the conference, EDGE members committed to supporting this important event, both bilaterally and through a pooled, EDGE facilitated travel fund, which will enable activists to continue to build solidarity with Barcelona movements, and to attend the upcoming summit. This is an important outcome of the conference, as it continues to facilitate exchange between movements internationally.

Besides all the networking, the local committee also put a lot of effort and thought to shape the photo exhibition and the performances by Idrissa (Metromuster), Ende Gelende (with Kevin Buckland), and Filastine. A celebration was also organized with the support of the local committee and the team of La Nau Bostik, a recovered factory transformed into a cultural center for the community. All these elements set the tone of the conference - provoking and integrating at the same time.

## Movement Recommendations

Based on discussions held throughout the week, civil society participants representing various organizations, networks and social movements provided feedback on the last day of the conference, along with recommendations urging EDGE and our community to deepen efforts aimed at shifting philanthropy towards support for transformational change. Specific suggestions ranged from ways to improve participation and broaden representation of movement allies in the conference and in our overall work, to supporting members’ capacity to help organize within the field of philanthropy and improve grantmaking practice by deepening understanding of complex dynamics between funders and grantees, including around issues of power and privilege. EDGE was urged to prioritize representation of partners accountable to communities, continuously deepening our collective understanding of diverse movement strategies, cultures and practice so that grantmaking goals and principles can better align with and support allies on the frontlines of systems change.

# Conference in numbers

The EDGE  
Conference 2017  
had over

260

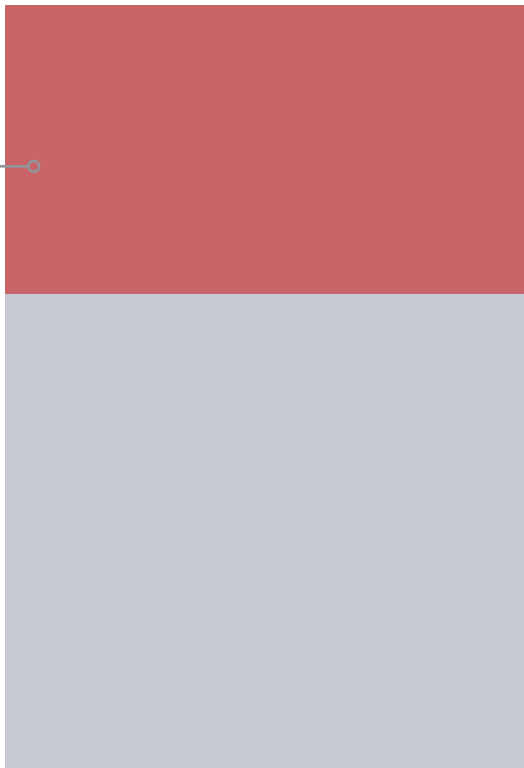
participants,  
coming from

34

countries



A total of 75  
movement  
partners  
attended the  
conference,  
which represents  
almost 1/3  
of participants.



Counting the  
Engagement  
Labs, Workshops,  
Dine Arounds,  
Walking Tours  
and Community  
Meetings, there  
were

85

people organizing  
these sessions,  
working together  
since January

## Number of site visits

6

walking tours:  
workshops including  
a visit to an initiative  
in walking distance  
of the venue

3

community  
meetings: visit to  
movement initiatives  
and discussions with  
local activists in or  
around Barcelona

## Based in Spain



31

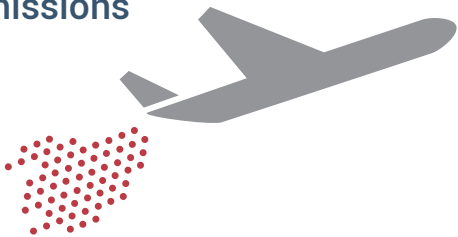
registrants were  
based in Spain,  
including the  
local advisory  
committee and  
some volunteers.

To make the magic  
happen, over

40

people worked  
on catering,  
venue organizing,  
translation, party  
and performance  
organizing and  
technology and  
photography  
services. Most  
service providers  
were part of the  
local social and  
solidarity economy.

## CO2 emissions

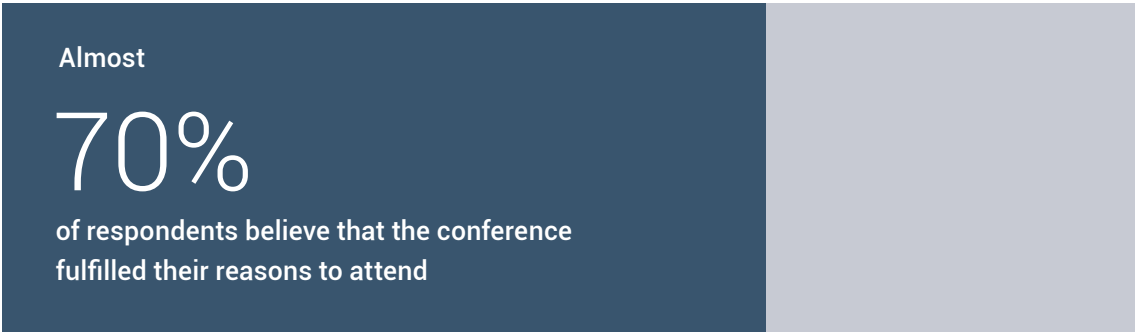


EDGE, like every other actor, is part of the  
problem as much as part of the solution:  
Climate gas emissions through air travel  
to the conference was 500 tons CO2,  
equivalent of the emissions of the same  
number of people living in Colombia  
during one year.



Kontent Films conducted  
formal 30 minute interviews  
with nearly 28 participants,  
gathering content that will be used in  
future short films produced by EDGE.

# Survey preliminary results



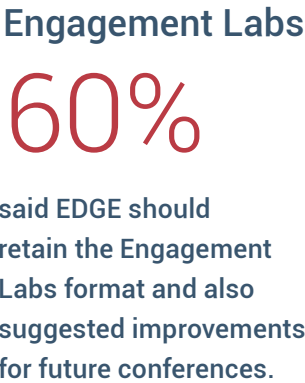
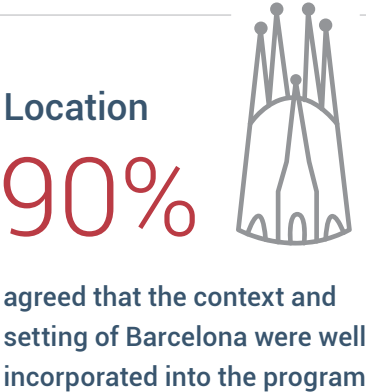
**85%**  
would recommend the conference to others interested in progressive philanthropy. Why?

“Good politics and innovative people. We need more of that, and of people drawing strength from such alliances.”

“This is the only funder forum I know with a (socially) radical vision for systemic change.”

“All in all I think it's sometimes good for funders to be pushed out of their usual comfort zone and EDGE should remain this place within philanthropy - otherwise who's gonna do it?”

“I don't know anything else of its kind. It's not perfect, but it's trying.”



Networking, Local dimension and plenaries & plenary table conversations were the most mentioned positive aspects

# Reorganizing Philanthropy for Systems Change

Noting the urgent need to support a transition towards societies and economies rooted in notions of dignity, justice, ecology and the importance of place and culture, EDGE members and social movement partners gathered in Barcelona drafted **The Barcelona Commitment on Reorganizing Philanthropy for Systems Change**, which will help orient and guide us in our work. This Commitment calls on our community to advance a collective vision that helps clarify the directions in which philanthropy needs to move, and to shift philanthropic culture and practice from transactional grantmaking towards support of networks and movements building long-term systemic transformation. The full text of the Barcelona Commitment can be found on our website.

## Save the date

EDGE Conference 2018 - Next Spring - United States

# Special appreciation

## Conference Co-Chairs

**Chung-Wha Hong**, Grassroots International

**Donal Mac Fhearraigh**, Open Society Initiative for Europe

## Conference Planning Committee

**Amanda Gigler**, Mama Cash (Netherlands)

**Graça Samo**, World March of Women (Mozambique)

**Guppi Bola**, Activist and Organiser (UK)

**Kali Akuno**, Cooperation Jackson, Climate Justice Alliance/Grassroots Global Justice (US)

**Laine Romero Alston**, Ford Foundation (US)

**Lyda Fernanda**, Transnational Institute (Netherlands/Colombia)

**Manish Jain**, Shikshantar (India)

**María Palomares**, Calala Women's Fund (Spain)

**Nicolas Krausz**, Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation (Switzerland/France)

**Shalini Nataraj**, Ing Foundation (Taiwan)

**Tatiana Cordero**, Urgent Action Fund (Colombia)

**Vivian Paulissen**, European Cultural Foundation (Netherlands)

## Local Advisory Committee

**Alfons Pérez**, Observatori del Deute en la Globalització

**Amaranta Herrero**, BCN en Comú

**Carla Alsina**, Feminist Activist

**Diego Isabel La Moneda**, Global Hub for the Common Good

**Henk Hobbelink**, GRAIN

**Jorge Sanchez**, La Nau Bostik

**Juan del Río**, Red de Transición

**Kevin Buckland**, ARTivist Network

**María Palomares Arenas**, Calala Women's Fund

**Mariel Vilella**, Zero Waste Europe/GAIA

**Xavi Ferrer**, BCN en Comú

## Conference Facilitator

**Adrienne Maree Brown**

**Ana Huertas**, **Juan del Río** and **Jules Peck** as Lab Facilitators

## Sessions Organisers

EDGE Funders would like to thank the organisers of all sessions for their huge contribution to the conference content.

## Conference Volunteers

**Yeshica Weerasekera**

**Mary Lou Malig**

**Emma Aviles**

**Claire Fauset**

**Bea Sanchez**

**Antoine Langeard**

**Rasheeda Farage**

## Consultants

**Ananda Lee Tan**, EDGE Just Transition

**Samantha Harvey**, EDGE Just Transition

**Mireia Mora**, Cultural Coordinator

**Linda Smith**, Conference Organizer, GreenMeetings

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We also appreciate the enormous work of CCCB Events team and Ben & Jerry's for the icecream.

Finally, we want to thank La Nau Bostik and all the organizations that opened their doors to receiving us for the Walking Tours and Community Meetings.

## Conference Art

"Movements in Movement: 100 Years of Activism in Barcelona"

**Kevin Buckland**, ARTivist Network

## EDGE Funders Board of Directors

**Terry Odendahl**, Global Greengrants Fund

**Nicolas Krausz**, Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation

**Amanda Mercedes Gigler**, Mama Cash Fund for Women

**Cuong P. Hoang**, Chorus Foundation

**Donal Mac Fhearraigh**, Open Society Initiative for Europe

**Laine Romero-Alston**, Ford Foundation

**Matthias Fiedler**, Bewegungsstiftung

**Monica Enriquez-Enriquez**, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice

**Nikhil Aziz**, American Jewish World Service

**Rose Longhurst**, Edge Fund UK

**Sanjay Bavikatte**, The Christensen Fund

**Shalini Nataraj**, Ing Foundation

**Tanya Dawkins**, CarEth Foundation

**Tatiana Cordero**, Urgent Action Fund Latin America

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**Luciana Nemeth**, Communications Coordinator

**Masum Momaya**, EDGE North America Director

## Conference Visuals

**Photography**: CFD Barcelona

**Video**: Kontent Films

**Design**: Filtro.us



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