

Organising  
Philanthropy

For Systemic  
Change

EDGE Conference &  
*Encontro* 2019

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*"This was a powerful experiment that brought the voices and priorities of the social movements to the center to trace the route of our systemic change philanthropy work. Tumultuous times require Radical Actions. There is no time...It is crucial that philanthropy commits with radical transformation and action!"*

Jovanna Garcia Soto, Conference Co-Chair

# ORGANIZING PHILANTHROPY FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

## EDGE Conference & Encontro 2019

Brazil, April 9-12, 2019

*"It is wonderful to be outside of the US/ Europe because it forces those of us from those places to get out of our normal way of thinking"*

Our 2019 gathering offered us an opportunity to situate our work within the context of developments in Brazil, Latin America and the wider world, and to broaden perspectives on the systemic and global nature of today's challenges. Following movement feedback during previous conferences, this year EDGE organized things differently.

With generous contributions from our membership, we were able to support the efforts of social movement allies in selecting and bringing together over 50 leading thinkers and organizers from around the world, for a three-day Systemic Alternatives Symposium to advance and consolidate their own work of renewal and development of alternative visions.

Their analysis, strategies and thoughts on ways of resourcing their work were shared and discussed with over 120 funders attending the conference, during our funder/movement "Encontro." Presentations and conversations through panels, thematic table discussions, cultural activities and even a farewell celebration for EDGE Executive Director Mark Randazzo provided input and inspiration for Funder Assemblies over the next two days, allowing EDGE members and allies to deliberate and propose philanthropic responses to movement analysis, strategies and calls to action.

Through this approach we hope to have contributed to emerging debates and concrete strategies that advance an alternative

philanthropy, moving from transactional to transformational grantmaking in support of deep and long term societal change.

Our goals in Brazil were:

- To support civil society allies in their efforts to analyze global trends, strengthen alternatives for systemic change and advance renewal and hope; and
- To identify and develop strategies aimed at moving more resources towards those struggles and alternatives by advancing a "systemic change philanthropy"



This report offers a short overview of these discussions, links to [documents](#) from the Symposium, and presents feedback from post-event surveys. Most importantly we want to share [key initiatives](#) that emerged from our time together in Brazil, and invite the wider EDGE community to join in these efforts over the period ahead.



# Funders Assembly

## Open Space Conversations

After the Encontro, conference participants took part in Open Space discussions, and engaged in evening discussions - the 'Dine-Arounds'. Continuing in the tradition of EDGE's action-oriented 'Engagement Lab' conversations of previous years, the Open Space format produced opportunities for an amazing array of initiatives. Attendees are now committed to building on these together, and with allies, in the months ahead:

- **Initiative on Racism and Islamophobia** - an exploration around how to strengthen grassroots organising
- **Organizing within philanthropy to support Palestinian Self-Determination** - looking into how resources can be shifted to support boycott, divest and sanctions work
- **How to build an African coalition** - beginning of a collaborative effort for Black allies to step up and commit to collaboration
- **Colonial Legacies** - how can we challenge colonial legacies in progressive and unconventional ways?
- **U.S. Policies undermining the human rights and autonomy of activists** - sharing information about the latest expansion of the Global Gag Rule

## Dine arounds Conversation

This year we were pleased to host 12 Dine Arounds organized by conference participants. These dinner conversations provided additional opportunities to propose projects and to ask questions, furthering engaged debates around systemic alternatives, mounting crises, and the relationship between philanthropy and movements for change.



- **Feminist Organising School** - concrete steps forward towards building a training specifically for funders
- **Feminist Infrastructure, Communication Tech** - showcased examples of feminist movement-centred technologies, and how funders can provide support
- **Building synergies between EDGE/systemic alternatives and the WSF of transformative economies**
- **Participatory Grantmaking** - a discussion around different models and uses of participatory grantmaking.
- **Digital Security of Movement Partners** - first steps to evaluate the knowledge and digital security in place at the movement level.

Key funder contacts, more detailed descriptions, and online links for each of these can be found on the conference website. Please [read more about them here](#), and contact initiative leaders for more information and how to become involved.





# Systemic Alternatives Symposium

## Systemic Alternatives Symposium

As noted, EDGE worked with a group of [social movement allies](#) who brought together some 55 leaders from organizations and networks across six continents and from throughout Brazil. They characterized this event as "Social Movements: Resisting, Defending the Rights of Peoples and the Planet, Reinventing the World," noting the "remarkable... mix of resistance, resilience, hope and creativity, expressed by a very diverse group of people immersed in the vast global tapestry of popular and social movements."

### Plenaries and Table Conversation

Following introductions, acknowledgements and the screening of our short intro film [Come to the Edge](#), the Encontro set the context with an inspiring panel, on "Analyzing global trends and the evolving nature of social movements." Moderated by Cindy Wiesner (Grassroots Global Justice Alliance), the discussion introduced challenges within the current socio-political context, and opportunities explored during the Symposium earlier in the week. Speakers Walden Bello (Philippines), Thenjiwe McHarris (US), Hakima Abbas (Senegal), Nick Dearden (UK), and Tchenna Maso (Brazil) contributed enormously to a passionate and enlightening opening.

Table conversations provided an initial opportunity for funders and movement partners (many of whom had little or no previous contact with philanthropy) to get to know each other, and to discuss the ways in which these issues were relevant to their own work and understanding. Self-selected small group conversations in the afternoon allowed for deeper discussions on feminisms & feminist alternatives; rethinking democracy, power and counter-power; food sovereignty and defense of the commons; the energy transition; art and culture; and technology for systemic change.

### Culture and Art at the Conference

It was incredibly inspiring to part of a group of participants coming from all over the world. Different cultures and traditions were lifted up in various ways, including through a lively "jornada internacionalista" collective exercise led by Conference Co-Chair Jovanna Garcia Soto, which she described as "*a moment of cultural expression and remembrance of the beauty of our resistance and commitment to build a collective vision,*" through music, poems, and dance.

Equally inspiring was the participation of [Mangureira](#), the Samba School that won first place in this year's Rio Carnival with a parade dedicated to Brazilian heroes, many of them indigenous, black and women. The day together ended fittingly with a dance party animated by DJ Ani Hao, a feminist writer and researcher.

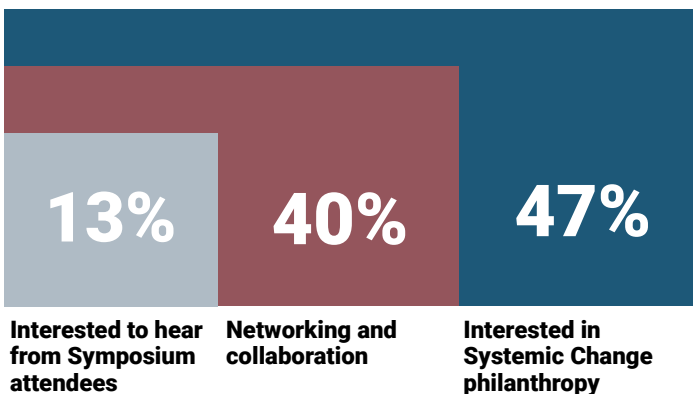
*"The diversity in the room was incredible. Also like-minded people - you felt an energy that we could really do something special"*

[Read here the Summary of the Systemic Alternatives Symposium](#)

# The Conference in Numbers

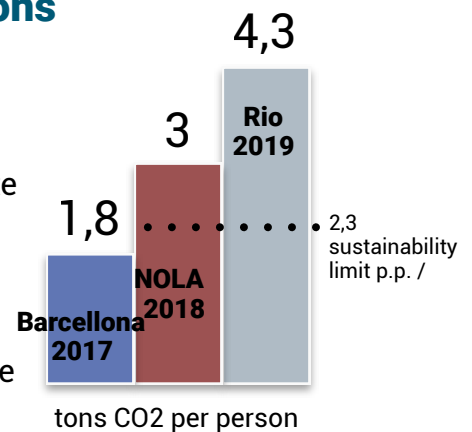
## Participants

This year 121 funders participated in the Funders Assembly. They were joined during the day of the Encontro by 56 movements representatives from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe who'd attended the Systemic Alternatives Symposium earlier in the week. We are proud that funders chose to attend the conference, despite the format of the event not providing the opportunity for them to plan workshops or invite their grantees in the manner of traditional conferences. Amongst funders, the post conference surveys indicated the following main reasons for attending:



## CO2 Emissions

EDGE is part of the problem as well as the solution. Estimate climate gas emissions from air travel to the conference are estimated to have totaled 823 tons, or 4.3 tons per person.



This compares with estimates of 1.8 tons per person for the Barcelona conference in 2017, and 3 tons per person for New Orleans in 2018.

## Sessions

During the three-day of the conference, participants contributed in organising 12 dine arounds, 12 Open Space Conversations, 6 deep dive conversations on Systemic Alternatives, along with plenaries and table conversations focused on analysing global trends and movement as well as philanthropic responses.

The Conference Planning Committee and EDGE's Board took some risks in organizing this year's events in the ways that we did. We are therefore especially pleased to see that while there are ways we can improve on this approach, a clear majority of survey respondents indicated they like the way we engaged with movement partners in Brazil: 70% said EDGE should retain the format of the Encontro

92%

would recommend the conference to others  
interested in progressive philanthropy



# Acknowledgements

## Conference Co-Chairs

**Maria Amalia Souza** | CASA Socio-Environmental Fund  
**Jovanna García Soto** | Grassroots International

## EDGE Board of Directors

**Amanda Mercedes Gigler** | Mama Cash - Fund for Women  
**Cuong P. Hoang** | Chorus Foundation  
**Chung-Wha Hong** | Grassroots International  
**Conniel Malek** | True Costs Initiative  
**Donal Mac Fhearraigh** | Open Society Initiative for Europe  
**Laine Romero-Alston** | Open Society Foundation  
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**Nikhil Aziz** | American Jewish World Service  
**Ryan Canney** | Wellspring Philanthropic Fund  
**Sanjay Bavikatte** | The Christensen Fund  
**Shalini Nataraj** | Ing Foundation  
**Tanya Dawkins** | CarEth Foundation  
**Tatiana Cordero** | Urgent Action Fund Latin America  
**Terry Odendahl** | Global Greengrants Fund  
**Vivian Paulissen** | European Cultural Foundation

## Conference Planning Committee

**Amalia Fisher** | Elas Social Investment Fund  
**Cristi Nozawa** | Samdhana Institute  
**Mark Annunziato** | Wallace Global Fund  
**Graciela Hopstein** | Philanthropy Network for Social Justice  
**Graciela Salaimen** | Ford Foundation  
**Laura Señan** | Fundación Avina  
**Ledys Sanjuan** | FRIDA, The Young Feminist Fund  
**Stigmata Tenga** | Africa Philanthropy Network  
**Tanya Dawkins** | CarEth Foundation  
**Tin Gazivoda** | Open Society Initiative for Europe

## EDGE Team

**Arianne Shaffer** | Global Engagement Lab  
**Mark Randazzo** | Former Executive Director  
**Martina Fin** | Communications & Events  
**Rose Longhurst** | EDGE North America  
**Samantha Harvey** | EDGE Just Transition  
**Tobias Troll** | EDGE Europe

*Special gratitude to to our logistics and event organizing partners in Brazil, **Légere**, and to our amazing volunteers **Yeshica Weerasekera** and **Samudra Randazzo**. Without their incredible support our conference would not have been run so smoothly.*



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# EDGE in Transition

As the saying goes, all good things come to an end. At the Annual Conference, we announced the retirement of our dear executive director Mark Randazzo. After being for a long time the mind, soul and heart of EDGE Funders Alliance, Mark is now retiring, dedicating his life to social work in his beloved *Marseilles*.



Eight years after the founding of EDGE Funders Alliance (through the merger of two other funder affinity groups), EDGE is moving into the next phase of its work with the search and appointment of new executive leadership.

Transitions are full of challenges, and opportunities, and this is why in such a crucial moment, your support is crucial! As we enter the second phase of EDGE, there are some things that we know and many things that we do not yet know, as the future of EDGE will be guided by its new executive leadership. In order to support this new EDGE, the board has launched a [Transition Fund](#).

[In this letter](#), EDGE's outgoing director shares a few thoughts as he finishes up his time in our organisation, and asks for your ongoing engagement and support during this important time of change.

Thank you for your help in this crucial time of transition. Special thanks go to Mark Randazzo, who has greatly contributed to making EDGE the fantastic group of progressive and inspiring foundations that it is today.

## Get ready for the EDGE Conference 2020!

It will be held at the end of March, in Berlin, in collaboration with ARIADNE, European Funders for Social Change and Human Rights.