

# CAF

Compendium

Annual Forum

2015-2019





**CAF** Editorial Office is located at:

**Common Action Forum**

Calle Claidio Coello 5

28001 Madrid, Spain

Tel: +34 910 175 850

Email: [caf@commonactionforum.net](mailto:caf@commonactionforum.net)

Website: [commonactionforum.net](http://commonactionforum.net)

 [commonactionforum](https://www.facebook.com/commonactionforum)

 [CommonActionCAF](https://twitter.com/CommonActionCAF)

 [common-action-forum](https://www.linkedin.com/company/common-action-forum)

This work is licensed under a:

**Creative Commons Attribution**

**4.0 international license**

Design: **El Fantasma de Heredia** 2021

Cover photo: **Paul Pehrson**\_ CC BY 2.0

# CAF

Compendium

Annual Forum

2015-2019

This compendium of content resulting from its work over the past years consists of collaboration with renowned and emerging experts from a varied range of field, including academia, politics, journalism and activism. Ultimately, in offering alternative narratives oriented towards fair, global cosmopolitanism, CAF's mission is to institute and facilitate independent platforms of cooperation, research, innovation and advisory. In outlining this alternative agenda, CAF seeks to support an active citizenry and to foster virtuous social pacts . The following insights illustrate how the organization particularly addresses urgent issues including neo-fascist politics, increasing inequalities, the social impacts of technology and the environmental limits of the planet.

# Introduction

The Common Action Forum (CAF), a transnational non-profit founded in Madrid, Spain in 2015, invites the reader to share in celebrating its five-year anniversary as a global network.

This publication summarizes the subject matter and relevant work produced in its first five years. This entails first outlining CAF's projects and activities within this introduction, to be followed by chapters corresponding to each of CAF's first five years. It will become apparent that each of these years produced thoughtful and substantial observations, findings and proposals. These are specifically drawn from the contributions and cooperation of participants in CAF's annual events and various interspersed congresses, seminars and debates.

In particular, since its founding in 2015, CAF has organized a forum annually, examining a series of progressive issues with a view towards expanding a productive conversation oriented towards change. In 2019, CAF extended this to a program of two annual events, allowing for even further exchange and action among relevant experts and actors. In normal circumstances, the OCTAGON event described in this report takes place in Madrid in November, and is meant to allow a candid, invite-only debate among its participants that shapes the CAF annual agenda. The second, CAF's Annual Forum, is hosted in Mexico yearly in October and is open to the public. Topic specific events or conversations have also made up CAF's contributions to the progressive thought space, and will be further detailed here.

Before going into further detail, however, it would be remiss to not contextualize these signature annual events within CAF's overall activities, which can be further explored on CAF's website. For example, CAF periodically convenes several other seminars tailored to audiences from academic to policy. In particular, it has coordinated or co-sponsored: a congress in São Paulo "Brazilian perspectives on Palestine in a changing Middle East" in December of 2016; the course "Education methodology for community development" from February to March 2018 in Madrid; "Oslo at 25, An Illusive Peace," held in São Paulo in October

2018; the IAPSS (International Association for Political Science Students) 2019 World Congress "Overcoming Injustice" in Madrid in May 2019; Interpretation of Sacred Texts in Judaism, Christianity and Islam with the Spanish State Science Institution (CSIC) in May 2018 in Madrid.

CAF also facilitates, supports and engages in time sensitive or continuing projects, which can again be found in further detail on the website. These include, *inter alia*: Refugees Map, an interactive tool on migration crises; the Capital Flight Convention a proposal registered at the UNCTAD and UNASUR, led by CAF member Eduardo Barcesat; Octal, a Hoizon2020 sponsored light pollution tool for cities; LiQen, an online platform identifying environmental sensibilities; 19 Million Project, an alliance of journalists, coders, designers, digital strategists, and global citizens confronting the migration crisis in Rome during November of 2015; Favelado 2.0, a 2016 two week youth residency program on media and technology in Rio de Janeiro; Spain Youth Model United Nations (SYMUN), co-organized by the Common Action Forum and the United Nations and International Law Association (ANUDI) of the Carlos III University of Madrid, where for three years (2017-2019), CAF sponsored three high school student group trips to foster critical thinking in engaging with public institutions among high school; and a series of 2019 workshops for the Lawfare Committee organized by CAF and the São Paulo, Brazil based Lawfare Institute, along with an August 2019 intensive course.

These projects and initiatives represent a sampling of CAF's work in its first five years. The Common Action Forum is conscious of the importance of diverse formats, transnational involvement and interactive participation in order to formulate and provide its progressive insights and actioning to an intricate and interconnected global community.



# Who we are 2015-2019

Before proceeding to outline the analysis and conclusions that CAF meetings and collective thought have produced over this time period, it must be reemphasized how CAF's backbone and engine includes its members and collaborators. Here, we recognize not only the CAF Executive and Advisory Boards, but also acknowledge those key actors essential to CAF's conceptualization and founding.

In particular, CAF was conceived after a successful experience entitled "Forum for Change" to debate "Beyond Springs: exchanging perspectives on Arab and Ibero-American challenges," held in Madrid in on the 24th and 25th of May 2014 with the support of Al Sharq Forum Foundation based in Geneva. There, a group of individuals chose to continue their conversation and actualize their cumulative ideas. Thanks to their vision in laying the groundwork, CAF has evolved to the extensive network it has become today.

These individuals include CAF's Co-Founders, Wadah Khanfar and Rafael Heiber. The group also included critical reflections from: Rachid Al-Ghannouchi, Tunisian political activist and thinker, and co-founder and intellectual leader of the Ennahdha Party; Marcelo Freixo, Brazilian politician and historian; Eduardo Barcesat, Argentinean jurist and professor; Tatiana Roque, Brazilian philosopher, mathematician and politician; Seumas Milne, British journalist and political aide; Pedro Brieger, Argentinean academic and journalist; Andrew Murray, British trade union and Labour Party official and activist; and Saad-Eddine El Othmani, former Moroccan Prime Minister.

Thanks to this veritable think tank of individuals, CAF's organizational structure has grown and now benefits from a solid and global range of support and expertise. It is composed of a Board of Directors, Advisory Board, Thematic Clusters driving research lines, and an Executive Office that leads a staff working around the world as well as out of offices in Madrid. Provided here are brief biographies (as of the year 2019) of those various operational arms, integral in the overall functioning of CAF.



# Index

**CAF Board** / [page 10](#)

**CAF Thematics Clusters** / [page 14](#)

**CAF Executive Team and staff** / [page 16](#)

**Participants** / [page 18](#)

## **2015**

> Steps of progress in times of crisis / [page 31](#)

## **2016**

> The rise of global fear: why is the world becoming less tolerant and more radical? / [page 37](#)

## **2017**

> The Ibero-American countries and their role in light of the Trump administration

> The limits to inequality: seeking a sustainable society / [page 45](#)

## **2018**

> A progressive call to sustain democracy and the multipolar order

> Global racial polarisation and the rise of right-wing politics / [page 59](#)

## **2019**

> A new path to development

> The era of (in)security: urgent matters and self-defeating prophecies / [page 71](#)

**Concluding thoughts** / [page 89](#)

# CAF Board



**Wadah Khanfar**

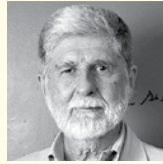
CHAIRMAN & CO-FOUNDER

Wadah Khanfar is Co-Founder and President of Common Action Forum. Former CEO of the Al Jazeera Network, he was named one of the 2008 World Economic Forum's "Young Global Leaders" and is ranked number one in Foreign Policy's 2011 Top 100 Global Thinkers.

**Rafael Heiber**

CEO &amp; CO-FOUNDER

Rafael Heiber is Co-Founder and Executive Director of Common Action Forum. Geographer and climatologist, Master in Territorial Planning and PhD in Sociology; he is an expert in the political links between technology, citizenship and territory. Apart from his academic and research activity, he also works as a journalistic advisor, commentator and columnist in several international media.

**Celso Amorim**MEMBER OF THE  
ADVISORY BOARD

Celso Amorim is a former Minister of Defense and Foreign Affairs of Brazil. He was a member of the Panel of Experts of the UN Security Council and named "Best Foreign Minister" by *Foreign Policy* magazine.

**Renata Ávila**MEMBER OF THE  
EXECUTIVE BOARD

Renata Ávila is a human rights lawyer and digital rights activist. Ávila is part of the Creative Commons International Council and part of the Steering Committee of the Information Society Advisory Council for the OECD, as well as a Member of the DiEM25 Coordinating Collective.

**Eduardo Barcesat**MEMBER OF THE  
ADVISORY BOARD

Eduardo Barcesat is a constitutional lawyer, professor at the University of Buenos Aires and advisor to the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina. He is also a human rights advisor to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

**Arlene Clemesha**MEMBER OF THE  
EXECUTIVE BOARD

Arlene Clemesha is a well-known academic, television commentator and professor at the Center for Arab Studies at the University of São Paulo. She has published several books on Middle East issues and is a member of the Coordinating Committee of the UN Coordinating Network for Palestine (ICNP-UN).

**Herta Däubler-Gmelin**MEMBER OF THE  
ADVISORY BOARD

Herta Däubler-Gmelin is a lawyer, academic and social democratic politician, former German Minister of Justice and former member of the Bundestag. She continues to practice law and is an honorary professor of political science at the Free University of Berlin.

**Daniela Expósito**ASSISTANT OF THE  
EXECUTIVE BOARD

Daniela Expósito is a lawyer and professional consultant in social research. She is an expert in International Administrative Law, Human Rights, and Environmental Law.

**Thembisa Fakude**MEMBER OF THE  
EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thembisa Fakude is a researcher at the Al Jazeera Centre for Studies and a commentator, columnist and analyst for various publications. He is also a former Director of Al Jazeera's South Africa network and former President of the Foreign Correspondents' Association of South Africa (FCSA).



**Bilaal Hoosein**MEMBER OF THE  
EXECUTIVE BOARD

Bilaal Hoosein is the current Programme Director of Al Jazeera English. With an academic background in Political Science, he has nearly two decades of experience as a journalist, producer and expert in the international buying and selling of broadcasting rights.

**Guillaume Long**MEMBER OF THE  
ADVISORY BOARD

Guillaume Long is a French-Ecuadorian academic and politician. He served as Foreign Minister, Minister of Culture and Heritage, and Coordinating Minister of Knowledge and Human Talent during the mandate of Rafael Correa in Ecuador.

**Ayo Obe**MEMBER OF THE  
ADVISORY BOARD

Ayo Obe is a lawyer and partner at the Nigerian law firm Ogunsola Shonibare, based in Lagos. She also heads the Board of Directors of the Gorée Institute (Senegal) and is Co-Vice President of the International Crisis Group.

**Fernando Ron-Martín**SECRETARY OF THE  
EXECUTIVE BOARD

Fernando Ron-Martín has practiced as a lawyer in Madrid since 1989, orienting the activity of his law firm towards the defense of civil rights. It was from his lawsuit that the UN condemned Spain, via resolution, for the violation of the economic, cultural and social right to housing.

**John Ralston Saul**MEMBER OF THE  
ADVISORY BOARD

John Ralston Saul is an award-winning Canadian essayist and novelist. A committed defender of freedom of expression, he is a former President of PEN International and has written prolifically throughout his career, with "The Unconscious Civilization" being his most celebrated work.

**Emad Shahin**MEMBER OF THE  
ADVISORY BOARD

Emad Shahin is the current Dean of the College of Islamic Studies at Hamad bin Khalifa University of Qatar Foundation, Professor Emeritus at Georgetown University and former editor-in-chief of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Politics*.

**Javier Solana**MEMBER OF THE  
ADVISORY BOARD

Javier Solana is a Spanish physicist and politician, former Secretary General of NATO. Currently President of the Aspen Institute Spain, he has held several positions in the Spanish government, including that of Minister of Education and Science.

**Sami Zeidan**MEMBER OF THE  
EXECUTIVE BOARD

Sami Zeidan is an award-winning senior presenter with Al Jazeera English. He has worked with several of the world's biggest broadcasters, interviewing several legendary leaders such as Nelson Mandela, as well as covering numerous historic events.

# CAF Thematic Clusters



**Patricio Cabello**  
DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Patricio Cabello is a Researcher at the Center for Advanced Research in Education at the University of Chile. He holds a PhD in Social Psychology and two Masters in Anthropology and Social Research Methods. Patricio directs several research projects and has been a consultant for organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF.



**Gaspard Estrada**  
GEOPOLITICS AND DEMOSCOPY

Gaspard Estrada is Director of the Political Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean at Sciences Po, France. His area of research is based on political communication and electoral campaigns. In addition to his academic publications, he contributes regularly to the international press.



**Andrés Lomeña**  
ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY

Andrés Lomeña has a degree in Journalism and Literary Theory, as well as a PhD in Sociology. He is also a professor of Philosophy and his most recent publications include *Ficcionología* (2016), *El Periodista de Partículas* (2017) and *Rescaldos Mentales* (2018). He writes regularly for The Huffington Post.



**Fernanda Ribeiro**  
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Fernanda Ribeiro is an international civil servant currently working at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. A graduate in Law and recipient of the British Foreign Office Chevening Scholarship, she also holds a Master's degree in International Peace and Security from King's College London and a Master's degree in International Public Law and Administration from the École Nationale d'Administration in Strasbourg.



**Rafaela Rodrigues**  
WORLD HEALTH

Rafaela Rodrigues is a political scientist and researcher. She holds a master's degree in International Politics and her research focuses on global health, international cooperation and public policy. She has worked for the United Nations and other institutions in South-South cooperation initiatives.



**Mi You**  
MEDIA, ART AND TECHNOLOGY

Mi You is a curator and academic staff member at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne (Germany), where she teaches media theory with a social-political perspective. She is a member of the Zentrum Paul Klee (Switzerland) and Independent Curators International (New York). Mi is also a member of the Academy of Arts of the World.

# CAF Executive Team and staff



**Mercedes Bellavista**  
LOGISTICS MANAGER

Mercedes Bellavista has held various positions such as management assistant, executive secretary and project manager, working with international companies, consultancies and foundations in Spain, Switzerland, USA and UK.



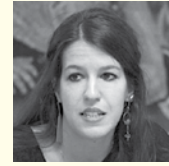
**Colleen Boland**  
RESEARCH MANAGER

Colleen Boland holds a PhD in the Sociology of Migration from the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain. She was previously the Editor-in-Chief of a quarterly international public health journal at John Hopkins University, USA. She also holds an MA in Middle East Politics from SOAS, University of London.



**Sofia Gohlke**  
SYMUN COORDINATOR

Sofía Gohlke has a degree in Political Science from the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, and two master's degrees, one in protocol and the other in political communication and marketing from the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares.



**Irene López**  
PROJECT MANAGER

Irene López has a degree in International Relations and a Master in Human Rights. She has worked as Chief of Cabinet, analyst and advisor for political parties in Spain and Ecuador, as well as international aid worker and responsible for Political Advocacy in various humanitarian and environmental organizations.



**Maribel Mateos**  
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Maribel Mateos Rosado holds a degree in journalism and specializations in multimedia and digital marketing. She has worked in corporate communication, public relations and event management, particularly for international relations and cultural organizations.



**Rafael Moya**  
PROGRAM ASSISTANT

Rafael Moya is Global Alliance Manager at the Common Action Forum. His expertise includes past work experience at UNCHR Spain, and he holds a Master in International Relations from the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals.



**Fabio Pradera**  
SYMUN COORDINATOR

Fabio Pradera is a graduate in Social Communication specialized in political communication and government management. He advises companies on communication matters, as well as conducting independent training activities in debate and public speaking.



**Tristán Torrejón**  
PROGRAM MANAGER

Tristán Torrejón holds a degree in Literary Theory from the Complutense University of Madrid and a Master's degree in Cultural Management from the Carlos III University. With extensive experience in the production and organization of high-level forums and conferences, he was assistant programmer at the diplomatic cultural center Casa de América.

# Participants



### Faith Abiodun

Faith Abiodun is a writer and international affairs analyst. His early career in journalism included working as a reporter for The Guardian and as a radio broadcaster, where he had the opportunity to interview historical figures such as Nobel laureates Wole Soyinka and Leyman Gboyee.



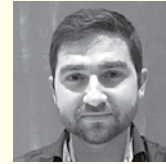
### Alfredo Aguilar

Alfredo Aguilar is Chairman of the Bioeconomy Task Force of the European Federation of Biotechnology. He has been at the European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation since 1986, promoting knowledge based bioeconomy in Europe.



### Aasil Ahmed

Aasil Ahmed is co-founder of Discourse Analytics and co-founder and editor-in-chief of Votifi. He has worked in data analytics, technology, politics, and mobile in the United States, the Middle East, and Asia. He is also a member of the Truman National Security Project.



### Simon Allison

Simon Allison is the Africa editor at the Mail and the Guardian. He is also a researcher-consultant for the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). Prior to joining these publications, Simon was Africa correspondent for the Daily Maverick.



### Michael Amoah

Michael Amoah is a visiting professor at the Firoz Lalji Centre for Africa, Institute of Global Affairs, London School of Economics (LSE). He specializes in foreign policy and diplomacy, international political economy, international relations, African politics and the theory of nationalism.



### Nurul Izzah Anwar

Nurul Izzah Anwar is a Malaysian politician, and a human and civil rights activist. She is currently a Member of Parliament for the Permatang Pauh. She has also served as Vice-President of the People's Justice Party.



### Andrés Arauz

Andrés Arauz is an Ecuadorian economist specialized in regional integration, finance and technology. In his home country he was Minister Coordinator of Knowledge, Vice Minister of Planning and Director General of the Central Bank. He collaborates with several civil society organizations in the Americas.



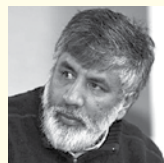
### Mehmet Asutay

Mehmet Asutay is a Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy & Finance, MSc Islamic Finance Programme Director in the Business School at Durham University.



### Amin Awad

Amin Awad is the Director of UNHCR's Middle East and North Africa Bureau, and Regional Refugee Coordinator for Syria and Iraq. As an expert in crisis management, he has worked on several crises, including the Gulf War. With a degree in Political Science, he is a specialist in political negotiation and development cooperation.



### Neeshan Balton

Neeshan Balton is Executive Director of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation. He has been involved in community and political activism for over 35 years, with trade unions, civil society organisations, and formal and underground activism for the South African ANC.



### Ramzy Baroud

Ramzy Baroud is an US-Arab journalist, writer, internationally-syndicated columnist, Editor of Palestine Chronicle and former Deputy Managing Editor of Al Jazeera online.



### Paula Barrachina

Paula Barrachina is a lawyer and human rights expert. She is a recipient of the U.S. Government's Award for Academic Excellence and works as a policy officer and Executive Assistant for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.



### Laura Basu

Laura Basu is a writer and researcher affiliated with the Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Utrecht University and Goldsmiths, University of London. She is co-founder of Amsterdam-based project Good Societies, and openDemocracy's ourEconomy Europe Editor.



### Matías Bianchi

Matías Bianchi is a political scientist with a PhD from the Institute d' Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po). He is the Founder and Director of the think tank Asuntos del Sur.



### Bob Black

Bob Black is an American philosopher known primarily for his work on anarchism. Author of several books and political essays, he specializes in the sociology and ethnography of law.



### Pedro Brieger

Pedro Brieger is an Argentinian journalist and sociologist, and Professor of Sociology of the Middle East at the University of Buenos Aires. He directs Nodal, an online media resource centered on sociopolitical and cultural news in Latin America and the Caribbean.



### Agnes Callamard

Agnes Callamard is a French international human rights expert and serves as Special Rapporteur on summary executions for the United Nations, as well as Director of Columbia University's Global Freedom of Expression Project.



### Laura Carlsen

Laura Carlsen is Director of the Americas Program at the Centre for International Policy, based in Mexico City. A former correspondent for Latin Trade magazine and editor of Business Mexico, Carlsen is a recognized expert on the social, political and economic development of Mexico and Latin America.



### Cheryl Carolus

Cheryl Carolus is a South African politician who served as South Africa's High Commissioner in London, as well as the Executive Director of SA Tourism (SATOUR). She is a current member of the Executive Committee of the International Crisis Group.



### Juan Luis Cebrián

Juan Luis Cebrián is a Spanish journalist and writer. Founder and first Editor-in-Chief of El País, of which he is now Honorary President, he was also President of Grupo Prisa for ten years.



### Gabriel Chamorro

Gabriel Chamorro is professor at the University of Buenos Aires and the University Institute for the Federal Police. He is Director of the Center for Political Studies on State and Society.



### Galip Dalay

Galip Dalay is Research Director at Al Sharq Forum and Senior Associate Fellow on Turkish and Kurdish Affairs at Al Jazeera Center for Studies. He is a regular contributor to German Marshall Fund of the United States' Turkey policy brief series, and is a columnist for Middle East Eye.



### Mohammed Dangor

Mohammed Dangor is a former South African ambassador to Libya, Syria and Saudi Arabia. He and his brothers were active in the South African liberation struggle from an early age. Five of the nine brothers were active in the struggle.



### Layla Dean-Verity

Layla Dean-Verity is a practising lawyer in England and Wales, a Visiting Professor of Law and Research at the University of Westminster and a former Director of the international NGO Basic Human Rights.



### Martha Delgado

Martha Delgado has been the Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2018. She was also the head of Mexico City's Ministry of the Environment between 2006 and 2012.



### Romualdo Díaz

Romualdo Díaz is a sociologist, philosopher, writer and professor at the Sao Paulo State University. He has experience in the area of Pedagogy, Political Philosophy and Psychoanalysis.



### Mario Domínguez

Mario Domínguez is Professor of Sociology at the Complutense University of Madrid. His academic work focuses on the cultural critique of modernity, the challenges of globalization and political violence.



### Maysoun Douas

Maysoun Douas is a PhD in physics, an expert in entrepreneurship and innovation, and Ecosystem builder for the Innovation Hub "LaNave" in Madrid (2017-19). In addition to being an evaluator for the European Commission for the H2020 framework programme, she is currently a councillor for "Más Madrid" in the Madrid City Council.



### Melanie Dulong

Melanie Dulong de Rosnay holds a PhD in Law, is a professor and associate researcher at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), and director of the Centre for Internet and Society at the same institution. Her area of research focuses on the digital commons, technological regulation and information technology law and regulations.



### Marcelo Ebrard

Marcelo Ebrard is a Mexican politician and current Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico. In addition, he was Head of Government of Mexico City.



### Comfort Ero

Comfort Ero has been Crisis Group's Nairobi-based Africa Program Director since January 2011. She oversees projects covering South, West, Central and the Horn of Africa. She has a PhD from the London School of Economics. Comfort also sits on the editorial board of various journals, including *International Peacekeeping*.



### Antonio Escotado

Antonio Escotado is a renowned Spanish thinker, essayist and professor of Philosophy and Social Science. He rose to prominence for his work on how drugs play a role in culture and his trilogy *The Enemies of Commerce*



### José Escribano Úbeda-Portugués

José Escribano Úbeda-Portugués is a Spanish academic. He holds a PhD in International Studies and in European Studies, he is a professor at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. His main areas of research include Terrorism and Organized Crime; Human and Environmental Rights; and General Studies of the EU, the US, and Latin America.



### Gonzalo Fanjul

Gonzalo Fanjul is an academic researcher and anti-poverty activist. He currently directs ISGlobal's Policy Analysis Department and promotes Fundación porCausa's research. He is a fellow researcher at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), as well as at the Spanish think-tank CIECODE. He too writes for several media and is co-editor the blog *3.500 Millones* (2012 FAO Award).



### Paola Félix Díaz

Paola Félix Díaz is the Head of the Fondo Mixto de Promoción Turística. Recognized social activist for the fight against human trafficking, she has also served as a federal deputy in Mexico City.



### Heidi Figueroa

Heidi Figueroa is a social psychologist, professor at the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico. Her area of research revolves around the relationships between digital technologies and the transformation of everyday life, subjectivity and materialization.



### José María Forte

José María Forte holds a degree in Information Sciences from the Complutense University of Madrid, and joined Radio Nacional de España in 1981. He has held various positions of responsibility in the News Services, such as the direction of Radio Nacional.



### María Ángeles Gallego

María Ángeles Gallego is Tenured Researcher and Director of the Spanish Research Institution (CSIC)'s Institute of Mediterranean and Near East Languages and Cultures. She has taught at Saint Louis University, University of Alicante and Cambridge University.



### Baltasar Garzón

Baltasar Garzón is a Spanish jurist, expert on crimes against humanity. He formerly served on Spain's central criminal court for 10 years. Currently, Head of Julian Assange's legal team.



### Martin Gegner

Martin Gegner is an academic researcher at the WZB in Berlin and served in South America as director of the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD). He is expert on Politics and Sociology of Urban Heritage.



### Catarina Gomes

Catarina Gomes works as a global digital campaigner, building campaigns around the world, having worked in India, Egypt, Kenya, Uganda, Mexico, and China.



### Felipe González

Felipe Gonzalez is a Spanish lawyer and politician. He served as President of Spain from 1982 to 1996, as well as was integral to the revival of Spanish social democracy, heading the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) as General Secretary from 1974 to 1997.



### Stéphane Grueso

Stéphane Grueso is a filmmaker and social activist. He worked in Berlin for TVE (Spanish Public Broadcaster). He directed several documentaries on social and political issues, such as 'Copyright, or the right to copy.' At the Associated Whistleblowing Press, he is responsible for FILTRALA (filtrala.org), a whistleblowing platform.



### Rebeca Grynspan

Rebeca Grynspan is a Costa Rican economist and politician. Former Vice President of Costa Rica, she is the current Secretary General of the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB). She has also served as Associate Administrator of the UN Development Programme.



### Jo Guldi

Jo Guldi is a Professor at Southern Methodist University and a former Research Associate at the Harvard Society of Fellows. She is an expert on the history of land and water titling and how it currently affects property, human displacement, and the climate change narrative.



### Bernardo Gutiérrez

Bernardo Gutiérrez is a Brazilian-Spanish journalist, writer, and researcher on networked practices, hacker culture and technopolitics. He is the founder of FuturaMedia.net



### Khalid Hajji

Khalid Hajji is an academic researcher, author and Professor in the Department of Anglo American Studies at Mohamed Premier University in Morocco. He is also a founding member of Al Jazeera Centre for Studies.



### Liia Hänni

Liia Hänni is a former Estonian politician and public figure, internationally known for her fight for Estonian independence. She is currently an expert advisor on digital governance for the E-governance Academy, where she advises on digital democracy and civil society.



### David Hearst

David Hearst is a British author and journalist specialising in the Arab world. Currently a Middle East correspondent based in Beirut, he was a reporter and contributor to *The Guardian* for more than 30 years. He has also written for *The Irish Times*, *St. Petersburg Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Daily Star* in Lebanon.



### Soud Hyder

Soud Hyder is President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and President of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Soud is the current Provincial Treasurer for the City of Gauteng for the African National Congress, South Africa's ruling party. He is also the former Executive Mayor of Johannesburg.



### Katja Iversen

Katja Iversen is the CEO of Women Deliver, a leading global advocate for investment in the health, rights and wellbeing of women. She holds a BA in Political Science and Administration and a Master degree in Communication, and she has more than 20 years of experience working with NGOs, corporations and United Nations Agencies.



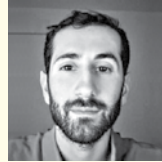
### Khairy Jamaluddin

Khairy Jamaluddin is a Malaysian politician who has served as Youth Chief of the United Malays National Organization. He has also served as Minister of Youth and Sports and a Member of Parliament.



### Miguel Jiménez

Miguel Jiménez is Deputy Director of Information of the Spanish newspaper *El País*. He is specialised in Law and Economics, Business Administration, and Political Science.



### Talal Kanaan

Talal Kanaan is the General Coordinator of the Al-Sharq Youth Network. He also advises UN agencies, as well as humanitarian and development organizations on the transitioning to renewable energy, with a primary focus on the MENA region. He received his Master of Engineering from the University of Toronto, and Bachelor of Engineering from the University of Nottingham.



### Steve Keen

Steve Keen, Professor of Economics at the University of Western Sydney, is a post-Keynesian economist and critic of neoclassical economics. An expert in Minsky's "Financial Instability Hypothesis", he used this theory to try to warn the world of the 2007 crisis.



### Jamal Khashoggi

Jamal Khashoggi was a Saudi journalist and opinion columnist for *The Washington Post*, author and former managing editor and editor-in-chief of the *Al-Arab News Channel*. He also served as editor of the Saudi newspaper *Al Watan*.



### Intissar Kherigi

Intissar Kherigi is a lawyer specialised in human rights. She has worked in the House of Lords, the United Nations in New York, and the European parliament in Brussels.



### Murilo Komniski

Murilo Komniski is the head of the Sector of Governance, Communication and Information, Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Permanent Delegation of Brazil to UNESCO. He has experience in multilateral affairs in the areas of human rights, South-South cooperation, defense, public security, combat of transnational illicit activities, Internet governance and ITC.



### Orit Kopel

Orit Kopel is a human rights lawyer and co-founder of *WikiTribune*. She is also the former CEO of the Jimmy Wales Foundation for Freedom of Expression, defending bloggers and social media users persecuted for speaking out.



### Javier López Casarín

Javier López Casarín chairs the Reinventing Mexico Foundation (FRaM), a young non-profit organization whose objective is to promote the development of a community of thought in Mexico. He holds an Honorary Doctorate from the Mexican Academy of International Law and is an expert in innovation and technology.



### Peter Lunt

Peter Lunt is Professor of Media Communication at the University of Leicester. His research focuses on audiences, public participation in pop culture, media regulation, consumer research and the links between media and social theory.



### Alexander Main

Alexander Main is a foreign policy analyst and international cooperation consultant. He currently serves as director of International Policy at the Center for Economic and Policy Research. His areas of expertise include Latin American integration and regionalism, and U.S. and counter-narcotics policy in Central America. He is a regular contributor to several news outlets, including the *The New York Times*, and *Foreign Policy*.



### Peter Matjašič

Peter Matjašič is senior program officer at Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE), part of Open Society Foundations, based in Barcelona. He works with citizen activism, including accountability through whistleblowing and right to protest, which links to civic space issues in Western Europe.



### Chumani Maxwele

Chumani Maxwele is a South African Political activist best known for his involvement in #Rhodesmustfall. In October 2015, Maxwele was involved in a nationwide protest against rising costs of attending university otherwise known as the #FeesMustFall movement, during which he was arrested outside the parliament of South Africa.



### Alberto Mayol

Alberto Manyol is a Chilean author, sociologist, political analyst, Professor at the Santiago University. He is a researcher and wrote several works on Social Sciences, Politics and Culture.



### Lorenzo Marsili

Lorenzo Marsili is Co-founder and Director of European Alternatives. He is also the initiator and spokesperson of the European Initiative for Media Pluralism and a member of the DiEM25 Coordination Collective.



### Leticia Merino

Leticia Merino is an anthropologist and professor at the Institute for Social Research at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Her area of expertise is environmental policy, more specifically collective action and communal management of natural resources.



### Miguel Ángel Moratinos

Miguel Ángel Moratinos is a Spanish politician and diplomat. Since January 2019, he has served as United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. He headed Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation from 2004 to 2010. Previously, he represented the European Union in the Arab-Israeli peace process.



### Nazinine Moshiri

Nazinine Moshiri is UN member of Somalia and Eritrea panel of experts. This involves investigating violations of the sanctions regime on Somalia and Eritrea, for the UN Security Council. Prior to that, during her 17-year career in broadcasting and news, she thrived in some of the most dynamic newsrooms in the world.



### Carlos Moya

Carlos Moya is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the UNED. Master in Law at the University of Valencia, he also studied Sociology at the University of Cologne. In 2010 he received the National Prize for Sociology and Political Science.



### Fatima Muneer

Fatima Muneer is research analyst at Earncliffe Strategy Group, Canadian government consulting firm. An award-winning photographer, she is a graduate of Georgetown's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and holds an M.S. from Columbia University.



### María Navarro

María Navarro is a philosopher, professor at the University of Salamanca, and researcher at the CSIC-Spain. She has written several works on Philosophy, Hermeneutics and Argumentation theory.



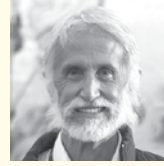
### **Ivana Nenadovic**

Ivana Nenadovic is a producer at the National Theatre in Belgrade. She is a member of the DiEM25 Coordination Collective and a member of the Belgrade branch of the same organization. She also works with "Don't drown Belgrade", an urban social movement.



### **Joaquín Nieto Sainz**

Joaquín Nieto Sainz holds the position of Director of the Spanish branch of the International Labour Organization. He has also been a founder of several organisations, including Sustainlabour, ISTAS and Fundación Renovables.



### **José Olives Puig**

José Olives Puig has been Dean of Humanities at the International University of Catalonia, where he taught Thought and Foundations of Socio-political Theory. He is a specialist in urban studies and applies his knowledge of the humanities in many other fields.



### **Ömer Önhon**

Ömer Önhon has been Ambassador of Turkey to Spain. In addition, he has held important official positions as Consul General of Turkey in New York, Deputy Director General for Africa and the Middle East and Ambassador of Turkey in Damascus, among others.



### **Mesut Özcan**

Mesut Özcan is the Director of the Diplomacy Academy at MFA and is part-time professor at Istanbul Sehir University. A Senior Associate Fellow of Al Sharq Forum, he graduated with a degree in Political Science and International Relations from Marmara University in 2000, and received his PhD in 2007.



### **Taha Ozhan**

Taha Ozhan is Head of Foreign Relations Committee at Grand National Assembly of Turkey and former president of SETA Foundation at Ankara. He is an academic, writer and columnist for Daily Sabah, The Middle East Eye, among other international media.



### **Mayte Pascual**

Mayte Pascual is a journalist for TVE, specializing in international news and society. She currently participates in "Informe Semanal", one of the most relevant news programs in Europe. She has won numerous awards and has covered news and events of a historical nature over the last few decades.



### **Alain Pescador**

Alain Pescador is a Mexican public affairs specialist with a deep international network of contacts in government, business and civil society. He currently serves as the Founding Director of 6 Degrees ([www.6DegreesTO.com](http://www.6DegreesTO.com))



### **Alicia Puleo**

Alicia Puleo is a renowned ecofeminist philosopher. A professor at the University of Valladolid, Puleo focuses her research on feminisms and gender equality. She is a member of the Committee of the Institute for the Study of Feminism at the Complutense University of Madrid.



### **Alicia Puyana**

Alicia Puyana is an academic and professor of Economics at FLACSO. She is the author of numerous publications on integration and socio-economic dynamics in Latin America.



### **Carolina Rehrmann**

Carolina Rehrmann is Research Assistant at the Department for International Relations and the Jena Center for Reconciliation, at Friedrich Schiller University. She holds a PhD from the same institution and is an expert in European cultural identities.



### **Magdalena Rua**

Magdalena Rua is a Public Accountant, PhD candidate in Economic Development and professor at the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires (FCE-UBA). She is also an investigator of economic crimes for the Argentine Public Prosecutor's Office and a prolific academic author.



### Vladimir Safatle

Vladimir Safatle is a Professor of Philosophy and Psychology at University of Sao Paulo and a writer. Fellow of Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (South Africa).



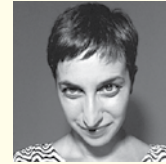
### Pierre Sané

Pierre Sané is Founder and President of Imagine Africa Institute. He has served as UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences as well as Secretary General of Amnesty International.



### Mariana Santos

Mariana Santos is Co-founder and CEO of Unicorn Interactive and Chicas Poderosas, a digital community-platform for the training and promotion of women journalists in the world of media technology. Previously she was also a member of The Guardian's interactive service team.



### Fátima Sao Simao

Fátima Sao Simao is the public lead of Creative Commons in Portugal and Executive Coordinator for the Creative Industries Centre of the University of Porto's Science and Technology Park.



### Magdalena Sepúlveda

Magdalena Sepúlveda is Executive Director of the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and a member of the Independent Commission on Corporate Tax Reform (ICRICT).



### Resul Serdar Atas

Resul Serdar Atas is a Turkish journalist who worked for Al Jazeera for four years. He was also member of Editorial Board at Euronews during two years. Currently, Serdar is Director of Programmes and Managing Editor at TRT World.



### Haroon Soddiqui

Haroon Soddiqui is Editor Emeritus of the Toronto Star, Canada's largest newspaper, and also Distinguished Visiting Professor in the faculties of Arts and Communication at Ryerson University, Toronto. He has been a reporter and supervisor of media coverage in Canada for 50 years, as well as a correspondent in more than 50 countries.



### Jessé Souza

Jessé Souza is a Brazilian professor and sociologist who formerly served as President of Brazil's Institute of Applied Economic Research. He is renowned for his work in social theory, Brazilian social thought and inequalities.



### Eduardo Suplicy

Eduardo Suplicy is a Brazilian professor, economist and politician. One of the leaders and founders of the Workers' Party of Brazil (PT), Suplicy has served as Senator for São Paulo for 25 years.



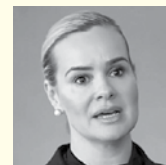
### Clayton Swisher

Clayton Swisher is an American journalist and author, currently working as the Manager of Investigative Journalism for the Al Jazeera Media Network in Doha (Qatar).



### Parks Tau

Parks Tau is President of South African Local Government Association (SALGA), President United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). He is the current Gauteng Provincial Treasurer of the African National Congress, the governing party in South Africa. He is also the former Executive Mayor of Johannesburg.



### Valeska Teixeira

Valeska Teixeira is a lawyer and currently works in the legal defense of former Brazilian President Lula da Silva. A member of the International Bar Association, she is also a member of the Steering Committee of the Lawfare Institute, an organization dedicated to studying and exposing cases of manipulation of justice around the world.



### Amanda Third

Amanda Third is a Senior Research Fellow in Digital Sociocultural Research at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. Her research area studies the cultural and social dimensions of new generations' use of technology.



### Jana Traboulsi

Jana Traboulsi is a visual artist and designer. Her work focuses on image making as social and political commentary. She lectures at the American University of Beirut and arts direct the pan arab quarterly Bidayat. She is a member of political movement Beirut Madinati.



### Stacco Troncoso

Stacco Troncoso is an author, teacher and activist specialized in the field of the commons. Advocacy coordinator at the P2P Foundation, he also heads the Commons Transition project, the main communication and activism core of the foundation.



### Félix Vacas

Félix Vacas Fernández is assistant professor of International Law and International Relations at the University Carlos III of Madrid. Félix does research in International Security, Human Rights, International Criminal Law and rights of victims of international crimes, migration and protection of cultural diversity.



### Natascha Van Weezel

Natascha Van Weezel is a Dutch journalist and filmmaker. Her most recent work has focused on minorities in the Netherlands, leading to the publication of her book "Meeting the Enemy".



### David Vine

David Vine is Professor of Anthropology at American University (USA). Author of "Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World", he has recently won an award in the International Book Competition on Public Anthropology at the University of California.



### Qing Wei

Qing Wei is the current Chief Technology Officer for Microsoft China. He has also served as General Manager of the Windows Business Group and Chief Marketing Officer of the Microsoft Consumer Group. He is a renowned speaker and coach specializing in digital transformation methodology and related technologies.



### Cristiano Zanin

Cristiano Zanin is a Brazilian lawyer who currently serves on President Lula's legal defence. He specializes in civil procedural law and has taught as a professor on the subject. He is co-founder and Executive Committee member of the Lawfare Institute and a member of the Brazilian and International Bar Associations.



The Common Action Forum is conscious of the importance of a multi-perspective exchange, rich in diverse viewpoints, backgrounds and expertise, in order to fulfill its mission. It remains grateful to the generous time, thought and action offered by its collaborators. The following content, following a chronological timeline, is thanks to their collective effort, pooled from across the world.

Steps of progress in  
times of crisis

**Common Action  
Forum**

Photo\_ **Valentin Charlier**\_ CC BY 4.0



# 2015

## Steps of progress in times of crisis

In 2015, CAF launched its inaugural forum, an event held in Madrid annually until 2019, when CAF partners in Mexico graciously hosted it for the following two years. In the 2015 Forum, celebrated on December 5th and 6th 2015, participants explored the theme of 'Steps of Progress in Times of Crisis,' addressing the impact of global transformations and crises taking place, including the so-called 2015-2016 migrant crisis in Europe. It was an honor that renowned Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khahshoggi joined CAF for this meeting, where he spoke to entrenched governments and leadership that are afraid of change, and enjoined to not simply react to events as is so often the pattern, but to instead proactively reform and seek new systems that offer a better vision for the future. Much in line with CAF's aspirations, he eloquently called for reform and challenged the world to become a more progressive space. A brave dissident, Khashoggi was murdered at the Saudi consulate in Turkey in 2018, and while this tragedy has left a hollow space, his legacy serves as inspiration.

## **CAF Annual Forum. Steps of progress in times of crisis**

The 2015 Forum addressed structural change in the international system, analyzing the reasons why global economic and political organizations have failed in the equitable sharing of resources and governance, resulting in the increase of the rate of poverty and marginalization worldwide, as well as a pervasive feeling of injustice and exclusion.

The first CAF Annual Forum also marked the launch of RefugeesMap.com, a volunteer-driven multimedia project collating information regarding the global movement of people to provide an interactive tool that empowers and optimizes transnational action in light of the increased refugee flows to Europe.

## The paradigms of international politics in a turbulent globalization

Three major events in 2008 modified the relationship between world powers, as their disagreement in foreign policy became public, leading to the loss of international consensus. These events included the Olympic Games in China, the military conflict between Russia and Georgia and the collapse of Lehman Brothers.

The Olympic Games in China represented the consolidation of the Asian giant as a major new geopolitical actor in the world. The Russian invasion of Georgia was the first time a member of the United Nations Security Council started a military conflict since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Finally, the shattering of Lehman Brothers meant the beginning of the current economic crisis and the end of the golden era of capitalism.

In the transition between the 20th and the 21st century, there was an increase in social and human rights, technological development, the significant progress of developing nations in certain areas and the establishment of democracy as the hegemonic political system. Despite these accomplishments, 2015 witnessed political crisis of representation worldwide, as citizens were unsatisfied with the performance of their democracies, thus generating the emergence of a new political demos. This political disenchantment was just a reflection of the structural crisis, characterized by imbalances between political, economic, social and cultural processes.

## To live without hope is to live without fear: time, politics and affection

From Ancient Greece to the Enlightenment, history was, to a great extent, a collection of examples. Since the French Revolution, the experience of a

radically new time presupposed the possibility of a profound rearrangement of the balance of power and our perception and understanding of history. Still, progress has evolved in a level time rather than in the spatial one, thus setting the basis for colonization built on controlling others. In the end, progress must not mean domination of others to endure time, but cooperation with them in the spatial dimension.

On the other hand, progress needs expectation to maintain its temporal continuity and thus, utopias were born. They could guarantee that the notion of progress was an account of what was not yet within the realm of possibilities in social life. In other words, utopias rise as the ideal representation to defend the power of transformation in politics, implying the articulation between time, politics and emotion.

Therefore, political life is affected by two emotional systems: inclination and vigilance. The first one administers emotions like enthusiasm, agreement or confirmation. Meanwhile, the second one handles the emotions of fear and distrust. Regulating fear ultimately plays an important role in the construction of "the vigilant dimensions of societies". This dimension focuses on the revision of protocols and legal mechanisms that ensure values such as participation, equal opportunities within political and epistemic inequities.

Furthermore, social movements are integrated via frameworks that provide interpretations and conceptions, explanations for events and diagnoses, with which people come to understand phenomena and establish consensus.

## New principles of universal jurisdiction for economics and environment

In recent decades, Universal Jurisdiction has proven to be a necessary instrument in ensuring a full and completely satisfactory judicial response to international crimes, under the precept that certain crimes, due to their nature and seriousness, transcend the responsibility of a particular sovereign state and affect humanity as a whole.

International criminal law has developed considerably, from the establishment of the Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials in the 1940s, to the creation of ad hoc tribunals. However, a major advance in International Criminal Law was the adoption of the Rome Statute (1998), which established the International Criminal Court, and its review in the Conference of Kampala (2010). The Princeton Principles and those of Cairo-Arusha went a long way in defining the key ideas of Universal Jurisdiction by offering a rational, measured response to criminal offences, which has led to progress in protecting victims and in combating impunity. In addition, Madrid-Buenos Aires Principles also went a step forward in the extension of Universal Jurisdiction, including in the prosecution of offences with economic and environmental aspects in crimes against humanity.

However, in legal doctrine, addressing economic or environmental crimes requires defining the protected legal asset and who the victims are and who the perpetrators, questions intrinsically connected to jurisdictional sovereignty and public property, which are often undermined.

Sovereignty is always understood within a territory, a nation, but the question of what sovereignty is exercised over is never mentioned. This is also accompanied by the fact that developing States have rejected and lost their legislative sovereignty. At the same time, historical constitutionalism has

little to say about public property, and protection from the legal system is scarce. As a result, two questions emerge: Which are the natural resources and wealth that form sovereignty? And, what is the legal protection regime of this sovereignty?

These questions of sovereignty apply to other areas, including culture and education. Intellectual property, for example, became a very controversial topic in these past decades. In this context, Creative Commons illustrates new articulations of copyright laws, free software licenses and open knowledge movements, allowing creators to decide to what extent they want to share their own work.

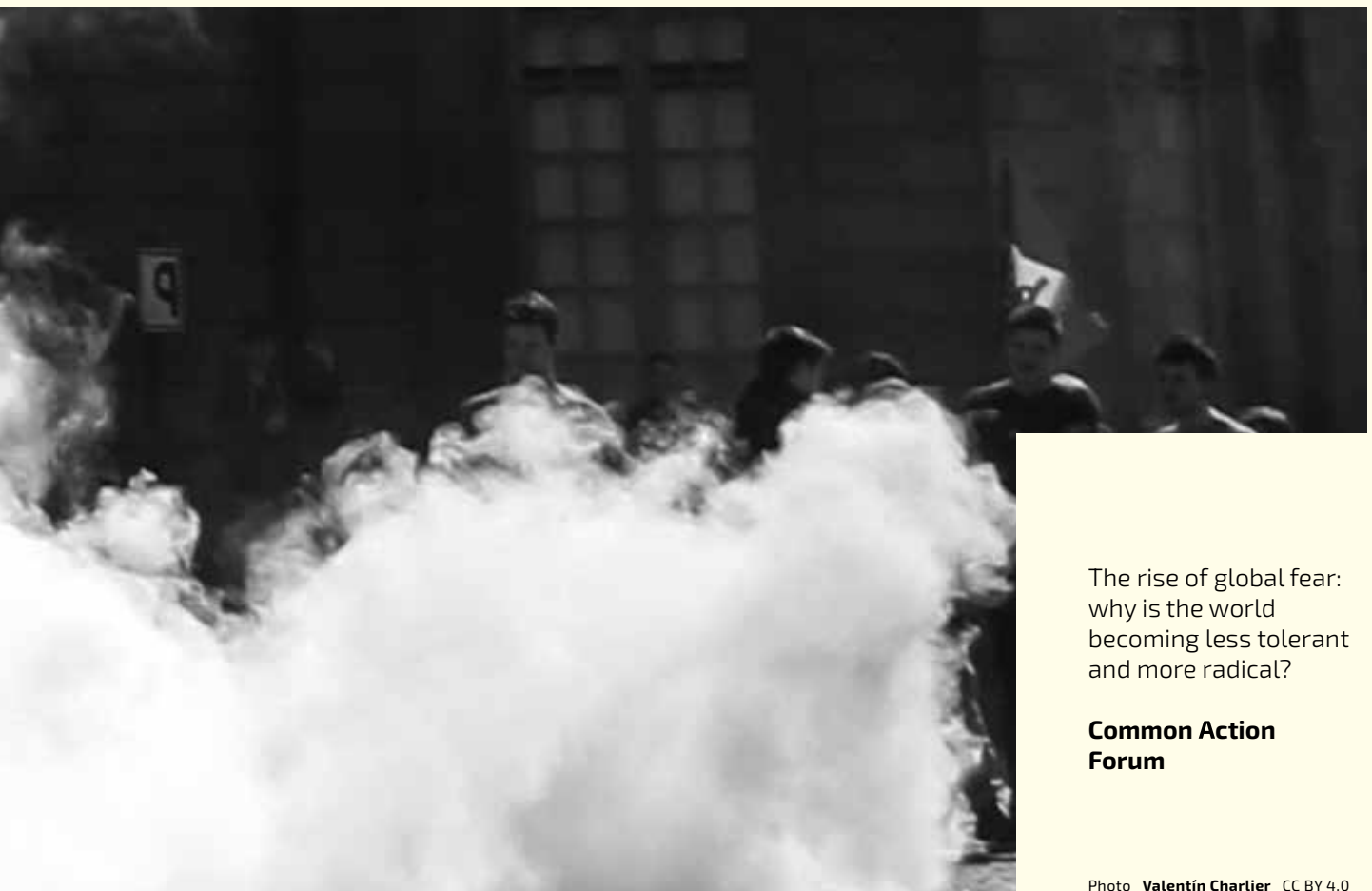
## Post-political governance: networks, cities, citizenship and micropolitics

Speaking of post-political governance implies thinking of the primacy of economics over politics, especially in this post-industrial era. However, in the last few years, classic forms of representation and governance are being challenged by social movements around the world in protest against social and economic inequalities. Right after the Arab Spring in 2010, there came the Outrage Movement in Spain and Greece in 2011; the same year, Israel and Russia experienced similar situations, as did the United States with The Occupy movement, and a year later in Mexico with the movement Yo Soy 132 ("I am 132").

This general discontent, translated into action, has opened a new hybrid space where hyperlocal politics are generated while spreading throughout the world in real time. Ultimately, we have moved from a Global City towards a Global Street. This "street" gives society the chance to cultivate new social relationships though a reconciliation of thoughts and feelings, and the acceptance of the existential category of suffering as a political exercise.

Nonetheless, some of these social movements are still in the making, so we cannot say yet whether they are revolutions. This is the case in the Middle East, an extremely complex region that has undergone many changes over the years. In fact, if we look back in history, the situation in the Arab region right now is similar to the one experienced in the last days of the Ottoman Empire: confusion in decisiveness, loss of control of all powers, wars, inconsistency in politics and interventions, overemphasis on maintaining regimes as the only way for stability. This generates two possibilities: either the Old Order falls and a New Order is implemented in the region, or the region enters a transitional status without a New Order in the horizon.

Technology then plays a major role in the construction of new narratives, to the extent that a new concept has emerged: the smart cities, those cities that use new digital technology for a resource preservation and sustainability, as well as conducting future-oriented policy. In other words, cities can use big data network applications for the efficient steering of (formerly) public services such as mobility, energy, environment, safety, health and administration.



The rise of global fear:  
why is the world  
becoming less tolerant  
and more radical?

**Common Action  
Forum**

Photo\_ **Valentin Charlier**\_ CC BY 4.0

# 2016

## The rise of global fear: why is the world becoming less tolerant and more radical?

In 2016, CAF again convened its network to continue the conversation that had begun in its inaugural 2015 Forum, moving on to explore "The rise of global fear: why is the world becoming less tolerant and more radical?" from November 5th to 6th in Madrid. This event proposed alternative solutions and narratives to rising nationalisms and discourses of fear. It complemented CAF's various activities and projects as it embarked on the second year of its work.

## **The rise of global fear: why is the world becoming less tolerant and more radical?**

The 2016 Common Action Forum sought to address emerging trends that threaten a cosmopolitan, international society united in solidarity. Events over the course of the year pointed to increased visibility of nationalisms, and a rhetoric of fear, on a global scale. The Forum focused on the challenge of humanitarian crises and the policy and debate surrounding current migration flows. Speakers and participants highlighted these issues primarily, but not exclusively, with examples from the North American, South American, European and African continents.

The Forum in 2016 benefited from a series of creative installations and participation entitled ARTWORKS. Six artists engaged in five presentations that revolved around migration. Rosalba Felba and Gabriella Guido presented "Our Liquid Border," a short film that documented a human journey based on photographs taken by Massimo Sestini during Operation Mare Nostrum in June 2014. "Where Are You?" by Livia Cobó similarly focused on Sestini's work, in particular the photograph "The Migrant Boat," by providing portraits of the boat's passengers post-voyage. "Let Me Tell You Who I Am," by photojournalist Sara Furlanetto, documented refugee movement in Europe over the course of a year with a series of portraits in combination with artwork and written expression from the protagonists themselves. Sonia Guggisberg presented "Migrant Dream," a documentary film centred on the Mediterranean and refugees trying to reach the European border. Finally, "Drawfugees" by journalist André Naddeo, consisted of a collection of over 60 drawings by refugee children in the port of Piraeus, Greece.

## Implications of the refugee crisis beyond the 1951 UN Convention

In the year of 2016, the plight of the refugee and displaced person came particularly to the fore, given the current situation in Syria and its implications for international responsibility for individuals forced to move. However, in addition to addressing those migrants defined as refugees by the 1951 UN Convention, those fleeing their origin countries based on well-founded fear of persecution, there should also be dignified and humane solutions to forced migration due to other reasons, including poverty and general conflict or violence. Moreover, internal displacement is also a significant phenomenon that demands solutions. The role of the EU becomes important as it negotiates cross-border movement from both the Middle East and Africa. Undoubtedly, alternative policy instruments and global cooperation is imperative in order to improve the situation not only for the individuals seeking refuge, but also in order to reshape the current economic and security dialogue that creates an atmosphere of fear and insecurity at the international level.

In this displacement it is important to keep in mind the lost generations of children that result from a life on the move without resources. Not only have they perhaps been rudely ripped from childhood by conflict, they are also contending with the trauma of leaving home, negotiating their identity in a new host society, and being at a disadvantage both economically and socially. Their parents also find themselves in a precarious situation as they have often time used all of their savings and are reliant on the benevolence of the host country for insertion into society and the job market.

European migratory policy has gained heightened attention in the past few years, perhaps owing to some media coverage of migrants both losing their lives en route to Europe, and due to political debate

arguing that security has become a concern for the European Union. While distress has been voiced about economic migrants, an academic and political consensus in liberal democracy states confirms the benefits of labor migration, both from a population replacement standpoint and human capital perspective. Moreover, European Union principles and commitments reaffirm the human rights necessity of accepting refugees, and humanistic values confirm the added culture and diversity migrants bring to society. At the same time, border surveillance and control has seemed to remain the priority, rather than humanitarian aid. Relief and its policy and implementation are crucial to upholding the legal and social principles of Europe.

At the national and international level emergency law or law of exception is permanently entrenched as legal frameworks are ignored in favor of self-interest or supposed security interests. Border control and securitization remain at the policy forefront, in place of real solutions. Migrant flows are viewed through the lens of counter-terrorism measures. Some argue that humanitarian efforts and search and rescue operations will only encourage increased cross-border flow. As a result, currently, the European asylum policy remains inhumane and inefficient, led by the rhetoric of security that often becomes politicized in the national politics of EU Member States.

In sum, various conclusions present themselves. In the EU, reorientation towards humanitarian efforts rather than a focus on securitization and border control would not only comply with EU principles but would also refrain from involuntarily encouraging smuggler economies and human trafficking. The international and national media and political establishments focusing on the human capital and cultural diversity that migrants and refugees offer, rather than on supposed economic burden or societal discord, would go a long way towards changing the conversation.

Moreover, a re-evaluation of what defines a refugee, and the need for global compassion for the displaced in general, is crucial to providing a more stable and peaceful world.

### Media coverage: managing terrorism and migration

An important theme that continually the migration debate is that of the "other." For example, Europe in particular has experienced significant immigration, and a boundary often remains between minority immigrant groups and native European society. There is increasing controversy regarding this immigration and a claim that there is lack of integration. Moreover, given the perceived Christian tradition and secular paradigm of Western Europe, some are wary of the recent increase in Muslim immigration specifically, believing the Muslim faith to be incompatible with European society; this suspicion is compounded with reservations that society may have about immigration in general. One of the more prevalent forms of essentialism has been the tendency to align Islam in general and all of its adherents with extremists, or terrorism.

Whether aimed at the Muslim, the Arab, or the immigrant in general, an "us versus them" dichotomy takes place. This dangerous essentialism is not limited to Europe. Europe surfaces as a salient example in the wake of the anti-immigrant bent of the Brexit campaign, as well as in the case of the growing success of populist movements and parties in several countries, including France's National Front, Switzerland's Swiss People's Party and Austria's Freedom Party. South America is not exempt, as in popular culture terrorism is associated solely with "the Arab" in countries like Brazil, and reactions to colonialism harden divisions; nations in Africa, including South Africa and Kenya, experience similar disassociation as they first look to neighboring

states or terrorist groups as the authors of conflict; and North America's U.S. has elected a president that employed anti-immigrant rhetoric to rally support in his presidential campaign. Nationalism, to the point of exclusion rather than inclusion, has emerged in several movements, promoting a fearful approach to politics and society, rather than an approach seeking solutions.

The media itself has been an accessory to essentialism and an environment of fear. Immigrants and refugees are often depicted as an endless tide and a burden to their receiving societies. Their social, cultural and economic contributions to their host countries are not mentioned, but rather their difference and their threat to the status quo are highlighted. Incoming refugees are said to be undercover terrorists, and asylum-seekers are rendered as largely young men coming to take jobs, with a disregard for the reality of large numbers of women and children fleeing conflict zones.

Sensationalism and politicization of the issues prevails in the mainstream outlets, and content is created for pure political consumption rather than for objective analysis. Female refugees are consistently painted as victims devoid of possibility for empowerment, and are not permitted to tell their story in a way that highlights their resilience. Terminology misconstrues the truth, with words like "terrorism" and "terrorist" applied without any clear definition; terms like "illegal" are used to refer, ironically, without any legal precision, to individuals; and dramatic invocations like "crisis," are employed to create a reaction rather than to provide an informed account.

Moving forward, the media has the opportunity to reform its role, avoiding this harmful and misleading narrative. This reorientation can focus on contextual and in-depth reporting, providing true investigative journalism that offers

the audience objective information rather than manipulative rhetoric. This alternative journalism could be conducted at the grassroots level, through smaller outlets, as well as could be encouraged by NGOs and civil society organizations committed to providing objective truth in the pursuit of solidarity and humanistic values. Standards of practice can be espoused and upheld, and monitoring mechanisms can be put in place.

Admittedly, financial constraints exist, and reporting of this integrity demands significant resources and time of journalists. For this reason, collaboration is crucial. Civil society organizations need to collaborate in a spirit of solidarity and pool their resources in order to provide individual contributions in the most effective way possible. This type of cooperation will allow for organizations to effect change in their area of expertise in the best way possible, as they rely on resources from other organizations to enhance their individual project.

Furthermore, new media has arisen as a new way to effect change. Especially in the pursuit of objective reporting, the amount of information available via new media is an invaluable resource. The task of aggregating this information is daunting, but the free flow of information also provides an unprecedented opportunity. As audiences may lose their empathy for stories of refugees' plights, new media can enable journalists to promote stories not immediately engrossing via digital journalism interdisciplinary work to tell the story in a new and engaging light. These platforms can give a face to the information communicated.

## Exits and selective integration: last sights of nationalism?

Given the rise of nationalist parties in Europe and the rejection of a Pan-European system by some populations up until and including 2016, including the examples of the rise of Le Pen in France and the Brexit phenomenon in Britain, there appears to be a movement away from solidarity and towards individual nationalism and populism rampant in Europe.

On the one hand, post-war Europe has continuously pursued a path of increasing integration, resulting in the European Union integration and development of the past few decades. This integration was not only based on a mutual economic benefit, but on common liberal democracy values and social welfare principles shared among these countries. However, constituencies in some Member States have begun to question its legitimacy and efficacy, and some national parties have called for exit from the European Union entirely. Indeed, due to self-interested and static elites, including political, financial and economic, there has been a weakening of democratic processes at the European Union level and thus the distrust of the whole institution.

Similarly, there are those who argue that elites from Brazil to Argentina to Colombia would rather negotiate with Washington or London, defending neoliberal policies, rather than concentrate on the local community dependent on them. And this resembles a form of disintegration because rather than an integrated South America dedicated to achieving common goals, protecting its resources on behalf of the people, and providing a local community, there is a nationalist push of self-interest at the international economic and financial level, excluding local communities and South American solidarity.

While integration via a platform of solidarity and common values is necessary, the risk and often consequence of international powers colluding includes a distancing between the elite and the people and a growing inequality. This can take the form of a hegemonic economic and financial global power that deprives nations of the economic independence and the benefits of such that their citizens are owed as a human right. The problem of capital flight, recently made more visible in the press via the disclosure of the Panama Papers, is one such example. As resources are no longer at the disposal of the general population and flee to global tax havens, individuals find their human rights profoundly compromised.

Given the growing inequality, which can perhaps be attributed to some neoliberal policies over the past few decades, but also simply to uncompromising and self-interested elites taking advantage of globalization and transnationalism for their own ends, a popular discontent has arisen that has threatened solidarity at not just an international but at a very individual, human level. The distribution of wealth has crippled the current democratic systems. The voting populations do not feel that they are being heard and indeed, there seems to be a stagnation among political and social leadership and measures that leave more and more people marginalized. A need for structural change is felt.

In light of the perceived deaf elite, structural rigidity and inequality, some have turned to nationalism as an alternative to the current political and social order. With compromise and real change having been perceived as impossible or a failure, citizens are attempting to reclaim democracy, identity and rights via sometimes exclusionary nationalisms. In order to combat the growing inequality, they confront, they turn to inward-looking, exclusionary nationalist policy as a form of protection, and reject the foreigner or migrant as yet another threat

to their already diminished resources. As such, populist anger can be translated into xenophobia, racism, and exclusion that ultimately can prevent change or prosperity in its exclusionary and rigid approach to solidarity, cooperation and progress.

There are ways forward. To begin, democracy has to return to an elastic process that allows for adaptation, and this can be accomplished through structural change that allows for political and social conflict and compromise that can lead to true change and development. Furthermore, a renewed and active commitment to human rights, the bases of international solidarity and the instrument of peace and prosperity in today's rapidly developing and globalized world, is certainly merited. Finally, there should be a reassessment and innovative approach as to how to combat inequalities so as to safeguard the progress and rights of all peoples, not simply an elite minority.

## Rethinking citizenship for a mobile world

These reflections bring us to the concept of a mobile world, questioning who this mobile world truly accommodates, as well as explored the notion of citizenship and its evolving meaning in the context of this mobility. The politics of fear has been successful in winning elections, as it feeds off insecurity and suspicion and remains a determining factor in migration and citizenship. The citizenship question should be discussed with basic respect for human life, as citizenship, ethics and coexistence are inextricably linked in the mobile world debate. Those without a legal identity, or subject to forced displacement, are entitled to an identity and sense of belonging. As an international community, we bear the responsibility to provide a legal framework so that refugees have options in their movement throughout the world. Negative tensions are expressed in terms of binary relationships,

including individual rights versus territorial rights, or cosmopolitanism versus nationalism. In the populist, intolerant and exclusive discourse, humans are described as disposable goods. This type of speech makes a single point: if you do not meet expectations, if you do not integrate or assimilate completely, you are disposable. Moreover, in certain mindsets, citizenship remains linked to origins and the past. Citizenship should be attributed to what humans do, and not what they supposedly are.

As of 2016, there were more than 65 million displaced in the world due to various conflicts. These displacements produce tensions in the construction and acquirement of citizenship, and this citizenship requires legal identity. The exercise of fundamental rights is inextricably linked with our legal identity, and yet many remain stateless. As a result of the war in Syria, 300,000 children had been born stateless as of 2016.

The crucial importance of the right to belong is often overlooked. Not having a state to which one feels belonging causes people to feel marginalized and excluded as if they had inferior societal value. As individuals, we are much more one-dimensional entities. We are many things, we are many personalities, depending on how we feel or the context in which we find ourselves. In this way, our identities are constructed in a way that is not only based on a country, but also based on ideas.

A mobile world can mean the ability to consume products and information from other places and cultures while remaining in place, or it can refer to the possibility of free movement and obtaining citizenship as one prefers. The latter seems to remain largely inaccessible to most of the world's population. The question remains, who is this mobile world for? It is certainly for the world's wealthiest, whose passports are accepted

worldwide, and who can easily pay to move where they like. Moreover, this population not only has freedom of movement, but security when they move. There is no threat to their lives.

However, for most the world, especially in the Global South, there are mobility and rights restrictions everywhere, as even goods seem to have more rights and mobility than persons. The mobility of refugees is not equivalent to that of those who move freely and due to their personal choice. The refugee's decision to migrate is a forced decision. Their priority is not to travel and see places or people. Rather, they have much seek stability and security, or to protect their lives.

This all points to a catastrophic lack of ideas of complexity and inclusion. Populist leaders do not create anti-intellectual thought, but it is rather intellectuals themselves who fail to observe realities and concrete problems with our society. People find themselves without options and adhere to populist discourses that define the problem in negative terms. Confronting the problem requires an integrated an inclusive perspective, that considers the actors involved. The intellectual elites, the elites in power, should work with the people creating spaces for dialogue so that these people can truly feel they are included in their society. This means balancing a feeling of belonging and mobility, and acknowledging diversity.

The Ibero-American  
countries and their role  
in light of the Trump  
administration/  
The limits to inequality:  
seeking a sustainable  
society

**Common Action  
Forum**

Photo\_ **Valentín Charlier**\_ CC BY 4.0



# 2017

## The Ibero-American countries and their role in light of the Trump administration/

## The limits to inequality: seeking a sustainable society

In 2017, given the significance of the issue, CAF convened an international seminar entitled "The Ibero-American countries and their role in light of the Trump administration," on July 3rd in Madrid in collaboration with Casa de America. In particular, with the advent of the Trump administration and the accompanying consequences, the seminar explored opportunities for Europe to strengthen links with Latin America, and to consider how the two regions could leverage their privileged positions within international affairs. While the CAF network was gathered, it allowed for exploring another crucial issue, the Gulf crisis and Qatar blockade. The following day on July 4, the Common Action Forum held an encounter with CAF Chairman and Co-founder, Wadah Khanfar, speaking to "the Gulf Crisis, Qatar Blockade and the Voice of the Al-Jazeera Network." Mr. Pedro Rojo, President of Fundación Al Fanar, a collaborating entity that leads the Observatory of Islamophobia in the Media, also engaged in the conversation.

These events also helped to shape and preface CAF's third Annual Forum, "the Limits to Inequality: seeking a sustainable society," which in particular noted the new forms of control, accumulation, solidarity and freedom resulting from globalization and an information society. What follows is the content from both the July international seminar and encounter as well as the 2017 Annual Forum held from November 3rd to 5th.

## **The Ibero-American countries and their role in light of the Trump administration**

In this international gathering, CAF experts and collaborators contemplated how the fluctuating isolationist and simultaneously interventionist directions of the Trump administration could allow for European and Latin American policymakers to pursue new scenarios and directions in which to exert influence on the international stage in an uncertain political climate.

Taking place at and in collaboration with Casa de America, panelists included Celso Amorim, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Marcelo Ebrard, former head of the government of Mexico City and Miguel Ángel Moratinos, former Minister of Foreign Relations and Cooperation of Spain. CAF Chairman and Co-founder Wadah Khanfar introduced the event that was open to the public, while José María Forte, director of Radio Nacional, served as moderator.

## Shifting traditional poles of power

It goes without saying that many voices, regions and peoples have not achieved fair representation or perhaps representation at all on the world stage. As always, the Global South must contend with dominant policies and dictates from the North, and entire regions are sometimes overlooked as established hierarchies consolidate and continue to pursue their own interests. The 20th Century saw the arrival of the concept of multilateralism via the creation of the United Nations, which invited dialoguing between multiple actors and powers. As we witnessed a shift towards the consolidation of only a few of these powers, it remained imperative that multilateralism undergo a renaissance in order to combat a return to old hegemonies that brought about world wars.

While nation-states pursuing their own interests is nothing new, and Trump's rhetoric of putting America "first" was simply a cruder variation on the theme, it begs consideration of why this is valued and vocalized more and more. As populisms and nationalisms rise, a disrespect for international institutions accompanies these fervors. Indeed, said institutions may possess multiple flaws and leave much room for improvement, but to devalue solidarity does not resolve the multiple issues. In shifting the problems of one country to the rest, there is a collective deterioration in the quality of life globally, and this shifting merely serves as a temporary solution to a growing problem. The Trump administration penalizing former allies in an attempt to curry favor domestically not only injured those countries, but also bore repercussions for the country he claimed to protect.

Even after Trump's presidency, politics appears as something negative and dangerous, when the concept of democratic politics was meant to serve the interests of the people. A combination of international counterbalances within political

structures can ensure accountability and that the people feel their needs are being met collectively, so that they may indeed experience solidarity.

## Rethinking the organization of politics

Although cooperation at the international level is invaluable, it is fundamental to remember what leads to the consolidation of power. Even within a country itself, for example in the United States, the tendency to centralize power and policies in an entrenched deep state provides little room for growth and explains the stagnant political era to which we have arrived. With little change from a Democratic to Republican administration, there is no renewal or reformulation of perspective and governance remains distanced from the will of the people.

The value of the local can be witnessed, for example, initiatives like UN Habitat. At the city level, there have been optimistic measures taken to convert some of technology's destruction to energy-conscious urban environments aimed at improving mobility and coexistence without harming those environments. While at the international level, the Trump administration may have hampered efforts towards bettering the environment on which humans subsist, these local level initiatives can circumvent such actions and allow local communities to take their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the planet into their own hands.

Trump manifested a strategy of commercialization that is replacing the inherent meaning of politics. Rather than diplomacy or compromise, the image of the businessman and bilateral or forceful negotiation only driven by economic interests redefines the higher purpose of governance and creating a sustainable, equitable world. Reacting to world currents and events on an ad hoc basis solely based on temporary, short-sighted economic interests is a grave concern.

The financial interests that align with political power are highly transparent, yet often go unchecked and unquestioned. Protectionist policies in the Trump administration clearly proved detrimental to several parties, but were embraced for their surface value. At the same time, reforming and reconfiguring a world order so dependent on financial powers is not something that needed an impetus like contravening a Trump-like administration. The global citizenry already had a clear mandate to combat such unbalanced power and inequalities.

In the current political climate, the media is exacerbating societal fissures, motivated by economic factors rather than journalistic integrity. Of course, this is not the case for all media and news organizations and networks. However, independent media outlets are threatened, and their members even jailed for criticizing or simply reporting the facts on authoritarian or semi-authoritarian political regimes. For example, in the Middle East, the situation is worsening with several progressively authoritarian governments, who either jail journalists under construed pretenses, or imprison them more blatantly when they provide anything other than regime propaganda. Simultaneously, the Trump's administration's dismissal of the press as "fake news" mirrored such actions and potentially worsened the worldwide epidemic.

## The opportunity for progressive leadership

The crisis rhetoric employed by Trump or the media often utilized the concept of victimization; for example, the populist or xenophobic currents in the US painting immigration as victimizing the American people. This mindset of crisis and victimization again serves for little productive value, other than to manipulate many for the benefit of a few.

Another example of this backwards trend includes the previously preferential economic collaboration between Mexico and the United States and how it greatly benefitted both parties, until the fear-mongering rhetoric of the US administration demanded a renegotiation of policies that the people of the two countries were served by. This rhetoric then multiplies as political actors and electoral movements throughout the world capitalize on such strategies in order to pursue less than altruistic paths to power. In this way, governments of the powerful are achieved, deepening inequalities and depriving the greater population of agency and rights.

A product of this rhetoric of crisis included a culture of aggression and a cheapening of what were once fruitful cultural spaces. Where the United States was a diverse "melting pot" of immigrant cultures, benefitting from a plurality of traditions, ideas and even languages, injunctions to remove Spanish speaking, for example, instead came to the fore. Not only was there a fragmentation on a global scale politically and economically, there was a leeching of cultural wealth that merited our concern.

While the European Union continues to have its crises and contradictions, many of its principles and initial goals initially sought remain relevant today, and an example for what other regions

could work towards, in creating a citizenship that not only champions but truly protects cultures, and diverse ones at that. In the case of Ibero-America, there could also be strides made towards an Ibero-American citizenship with its accompanying rights, protections and guarantees. By building these regional blocks of citizenship step by step, there is more room to transcend and create global solidarity.

There can no longer be a climate of inaction in view of the current situation. Often, the idea that China will dominate as an economic power and the United States must always be capitulated to are taken as unchallenged facts. Instead, Europe is called to divert from a passive stance and find allies in regions like Latin America in order to avoid a status quo of exclusionary policies and unchallenged, uninspired leadership.

## Conclusions

Divisions and boundaries are repeatedly occurring constructs in all societies. At the same time, they provide a teaching point that can inform how to avoid the manipulation of cleavages to destructive ends. For example, Ibero-America has witnessed its fair share of conflict and insecurity. Through these painful experiences, the region has been able to work towards serving as a voice for multilateralism, dialogue, cooperation and for peace. Given the clear benefits that this type of leadership offer, and the tragedy it thus avoids, this region can come forward as an example to the rest of the world as why it is more advantageous to seek points of unison rather than of division. While fragmentation is bound to occur, if the end goal is finding common ground, there is more room for a balanced and thus collectively better world.

## **CAF Annual Forum. The limits to inequality: seeking a sustainable society**

CAF's 2017 Annual Forum approached increasing inequalities from a citizens' perspective, as individuals and communities grapple with globalization and the era of the information society. These developments have meant reconfigurations of control, accumulation, solidarity and freedom. The Forum noted how the current path is pushing the planet's limits, both endangering material resources and triggering the volatility of virtual ones. Societies face inequality as the most imminent threat, both to establishment and marginalized groups. The gathering considered how this reality is not simply confined to economic considerations, but affects fundamental aspects of everyday life.

## Facing the mirror: what remains of the battle between equality and freedom

Citizens are often urged to choose between 'equality' and 'freedom,' which are presented to them in an ideological dichotomy by totalitarian and neoliberal regimes. These systems of power manipulate both terms in an effort to legitimize the rhetoric of left and right-wing apparatuses. The powerful and unprecedented nature of globalization has seemed to reinforce these fault lines, working against liberal and progressive doctrines. Moreover, as this false dichotomy is championed, the fact that the entire community faces the same challenges is a neglected reality.

In considering such political efforts to effect change, cultural change remains an important consideration. In order to pursue equity, it is essential to recognize that those suffering inequalities the most usually draw from marginalized groups. For this reason, in the Mexico City government policy measures from 2006-2012, efforts to include the LGBT community, public transportation, women's health and homeless education were among those that aimed for societal cohesion. Noting that race often underlies entrenched institutional inequalities is important to signal as well, as was mentioned in reference to realities in South Africa. Indeed, one way to work towards societal inclusion could be considering the most vulnerable groups in society and to focus together on aiding them, thus perhaps uniting the societal majority in a collective ideological goal along the way.

Moreover, examples of extreme, divisive rhetoric as a means to an end increasingly surface in communities throughout the world. While the most extreme parties do not gain the majority vote, their hyperbole influences the overall discourse, causing left and right-wing forces to polarize or invoke more extremist notions than they would otherwise.

In seeking stable and sustainable democracies, compromise and agreement is key to guaranteeing the most equal representation, yet instead, various regimes and competing interests find it more productive to seek division in the interest of acquiring power.

Freedom of speech is invoked by populist factions as an inalienable right, but is often misused in its exercise. Invoking the right to free speech in liberal democratic societies should not preclude tolerance and respect. In order to combat the miscommunication, fear and mistrust currently pervading societies riddled with extremist movements, including but not limited to the rise of populism in Europe, true dialogue is necessary. There is no need to divide society into bounded categories of freedom versus equality, individualism versus solidarity or conservatism vs. reformism.

Such dialogue would rely on not only civil society but also political leaders to engage in measured, respectful exchange, rather than appealing to emotional and divisive arguments in order to pursue exclusive interests. Instead of simply stating that this type of conversation must be based not only in principles and values uniting in humanity, we should also consider a reconfiguration and improved understanding of these human rights norms and liberal democratic principles. Most importantly, there should be an emphasis on the fundamental principle of self-determination. In asking for respect of one's own autonomy and agency, one must respect the very same in the other. Protective mechanisms enshrining agency and diversity should be further enforced or better developed so that marginalized groups and the subjects of extremist blame are better shielded.

In order to combat the machinations of various power players, and truly empower the citizenry to seek its collective good, engaging citizens is important. The Estonian example was presented, where steps towards e-democracy have allowed for better transparency, and have engaged citizens in democracy in innovative ways. Essentially, the traditional nation-state as understood in past definitions no longer addresses the current societal reality. What is necessary is flexibility and a reconceptualization of government and power, by recognizing that governance should resemble partnership, rather than a separate, bureaucratic and all-powerful state directing the people.

In attempting to reach egalitarianism and effective government, and more equitable relations and dynamics in society, the individual community member is an important component. Citizenship in a postnational, transnational environment, where diversity is an inevitable reality, finds common ground especially in how the members of the community interact with each other. Citizenship has surpassed bounded ethnicities and territories to encompass a definition that instead includes sociocultural interaction, with individual participation being key to lending legitimacy and value to the citizen's relationship with the community. Both institutions and civil society should encourage and enable citizen participation in order to provide for cohesive communities that are united in their shared civic interaction and investment in the community, allowing for a cross-cutting bond that works against segmented groups and divisive discourse.

A globalized modern age and increasing exchange of information and networks has demonstrated that there is ample room for error, as unprecedented impacts and variable factors can complicate what was intended as an initially noble project. This especially speaks to the sustainability aspect in looking towards a progressive future

society. Remaining mindful and thoughtful, and looking at long-term effects, rather than short-term policy fixes, is essential. In an attempted to obtain a balanced governance and sustainable society, the danger of ideology overwhelming the true needs and concerns of the people becomes ever more obvious. Imaginary threats conceived to rally popular support do not often speak to the real issues that affect quotidian life, but are simply manipulated as a way to obtain further power. Knowledge-sharing and turning to the micro-level and grassroots in order to pursue change and solutions is perhaps one way to achieve solutions. This approach can yield a fresh perspective, and avoid sweeping arguments and programs that are prone to miscalculations and misunderstanding.

### **Beyond entrepreneurship: real alternatives to the labor society**

As societal cleavages are exacerbated, and we seek basic liberties in the pursuit of egalitarian ideals, equality of opportunity may signify providing for certain basic needs. If development of society is to be understood as improved freedom and human dignity, the transforming social and economic structures that affect this dignity are a key consideration. Formal and informal markets continue to produce increasing gaps in society, and the definition and role of work comes into question in light of globalization and new technologies. Several challenges are posed in considering the future of decent work for an inclusive society. Decent work is an important distinction to make, as people perform work and are entitled to rights, and as such, work performed by people cannot be conceived of as a commodity.

As of 2017, 3,300,000,000 people globally saturated the labor market, more than ever to that date. Of those, 2,784,000 people died each year due to poor working conditions. Furthermore, 200

million in the world remained unemployed. At the current trajectory, the youth in this unemployed category could become a lost generation, signifying the economic loss of human, social and political capital. The demographics are also affected in the form of migration, with 240 million immigrants in the world, including refugees and forcefully displaced persons.

Given this precariousness of work, the substitution of work is a looming threat that presents itself in the form of digitalization and globalization. Both produce unknown and unprecedented phenomena, and change the structure of work, as well as transform the human role. Moreover, digitalization signifies that robotization processes are not limited to the mechanical. The processes of robotization and substitution of work with logarithms and machines can affect not only mechanical tasks, but also organizational issues and creative tasks. The effects of digitalization, for example, are demonstrated in the financialization of the economy and its impact on the productive economies, sometimes a clearly negative impact.

Indeed, it seems that direct labor is less and less prevalent, and many current jobs are involved in either directing machines or directing bureaucratic societies revolving around such machinery. Indeed, a reconfiguration of work is inevitable, and the component of speed in all these processes is crucial. As a society managing change and attempting to achieve sustainability, the speed at which the technological revolution brings about change is difficult to process and manage. Moreover, the need to revolutionize the way we obtain social consensus is an important challenge to surmount in order to manage such change. In considering how digitalization and technological transformations impact work, the management of change in light of these transformations demands new strategies.

It is argued that universal basic income can serve as a stimulus for progress as we face stagnation and new definitions of growth. Essentially, in understanding universal basic income (UBI) in its purest form, it would entail granting each individual, regardless of wealth, the unconditional right to receive the same amount of money on a consistent basis. The stipulation that it would be granted regardless of wealth is key, because without such a condition, the income would be means tested and thus, according to UBI proponents, there would be a humiliating administrative process, complicated by delay and uncertainty. Moreover, proponents insist that without such basic guarantees, basic dignity is unachievable, as many are forced to put their life or health at risk in order to survive without this social safety net. In this way, everyone could be enabled to bargain through a body politic, rather than only an elite few.

Experiments have taken place in Canada, Kenya, Sweden, Finland and India, among other countries, and the possibility and potential presented by this option is under examination. One caveat in the discussion of universal basic income includes that it is not the only ingredient in creating a successful or wealthy economy. Production is still necessary, and some contend that only wealthy societies are capable of instituting a universal basic income program.

Moreover, with the revolution brought about by technology, there is the possibility of pivoting from traditional energy sources. Since the industrial revolution, fossil fuels have driven modern society. Through the pursuit of green energy and energy preservation, it has been postulated that many jobs could be lost. At the same time, a shift in energy management could be managed and organized so as to create jobs. Indubitably the societal use of energy and environment has to be transformed in order to achieve sustainability and avoid global

disaster. As work is one of the organizing principles of society, creative strategies as to how to leverage work in the pursuit of environmental sustainability is essential.

This serves as one example of why, in seeking alternatives, continuing to emphasize the role of education in a flourishing society is necessary. Education underpins work in many aspects, and social protective systems in a reconceptualization of a sustainable future society must include education as a priority, and education underpins work in many aspects. Harnessing entrepreneurial ability and developing a system that combines energy and work in truly visionary ways is means to avoid the current trajectory of unsustainable activity. Indeed, education prepares us for the future.

### From facts to fake, from fake to facts: when news become a symptom

54

The power of information, including utilizing it as a means of propaganda, is neither unprecedented nor surprising. Facts, in this case, are quotidian or existential realities that can be objectively explained within both a descriptive and interpretive logic of social repercussions. Nor is it unprecedented that, via a reflexive dynamic, news can transform into the repercussive effects of facts. The entirety of the underlying logic permeating our information society corresponds to a discursive construction, generally hegemonic, that sustains certain visions of the world and reaffirms a purported state of things.

Technology has allowed for communication of information without geographical boundaries and with less economic limitations. Due to speed and demand, mainstream media covers local, regional and national news less and turns more and more to sensational or celebrity journalism. Moreover, the field of news and journalism is transformed

by mediums like Facebook and YouTube, run by giant corporations that have unfettered access to a multitude of content, including personal data. Social media, moreover, can be co-opted by populist and extremist forces. In considering the how new technologies affects the way our society communicates, it is notable that they can be channeled in a form of nationalism or majoritarian cultural warfare. Such cycles of fear mongering have occurred in the past, for example in the 1950s with the Communist and red scare. However, the reach and speed that new technology allows is remarkable, and in the crossfire, minorities and immigrants remain especially vulnerable. The Brexit case provides example of an event swayed by fake news via populist campaigning, despite a UK tradition of parliamentary democracy, commitment to social policy and public service broadcasting.

In short, there is a loss of faith and trust in institutions and by association, traditional media. Moreover, the speed and appeal of new media, especially its accessibility, makes for a new model of news consumption that has led to several consequences. The mainstream media has been increasingly edged out and antiquated as a successful business model. Furthermore, media consumers are increasingly able to self-select their content feed, sometimes creating a so-called "bubble," as the individual self-filters the information they want to know, rather than canvassing an objective array of information. Social networks can become atomized and increasingly narrow, and people may initiate less and less contact within these networks. However, social media and new technologies can also provide opportunities for legitimate contestation of hegemonies and the ability to create new collectives. For this reason, we must seek new ways of utilizing new technologies as a means of agency and leveraging the collective good, rather than vilifying it as a tool of populism.

In examining this subject, the new digital culture can create a sense that traditional forms of media do not reflect the fluidity and dynamic reality of today, and thus mainstream media can be associated with the establishment. Or perhaps, it does indeed entrench hegemonies that produce inequalities. Established power does often exercise too much control over the media, and up until recently, only a portion of the population could really access it. Serbia offers an example: no longer suffering from the propagandistic nature of the state as characterized the past regime of Yugoslavia, it is contested that even in a multi-party, democratic system, the ruling party still holds the most vocal position in the media. Transparency and plurality of viewpoints remains lacking. Another example includes state censorship in Saudi Arabia. While more vivid examples, these tendencies toward monopolization and lack of transparency plague even those countries that are deemed the most democratic. One way to ensure that mainstream media or traditional media models are not aligned with hegemonic interests would be to ensure a plurality of information providers. This would be an alternative to simply having a handful of established organizations, corporations or networks responsible for information-sharing.

Currently and perhaps arguably for quite some time, the sensationalism of news has been a factor in attracting audiences. The more radical the information, the higher the likelihood of attracting attention, whether social media or mainstream media. The business model of old relied on advertising content to propel news organizations, and thus sought wide readership to in turn gain advertisers. With this advertising income came the ability to field large organizations that could sustain huge field operations and maintain multiple bureaus and teams of journalists. The new business model driving new technologies is "click-bait" driven, though not dissimilar in concept. As long as a news provider can provide

a headline that convinces a user to click on that headline, the click is registered as a member of that provider's audience and thus can help generate ad revenue. Such clickbait has been likened to yellow journalism, and is cited as a symptom of a post-truth society.

One suggestion as to how to avoid traditional business models includes micro-payments for journalism, rather than having to subscribe to every newspaper or pay in full for every article. However, to truly seek a reconfiguration of the broken system, perhaps a business model at all is constrictive. Alternatives to a business-driven model of information sharing includes community-led models, likened to that of Wikipedia and a new project, WikiTribune. Apart from refraining from ads-based methods or instituting paywalls, such communities or networks could capitalize on the involvement of its volunteer members to fact-check and engage with the content. It might rely on voluntary subscription to support a few professionals dedicated to the full-time maintenance of the project. Finally, there should be a search for ways to create a new media hybrid, that capitalizes on the cost-saving and access provided by new technology, but that does not forfeit in-depth, specialty and investigative work provided by qualified individuals.

Clearly, given these revelations regarding truth, facts and fake news, a reconfiguration of how to provide news and information is necessary. Increasingly, with globalization and liberal democracy dialogues underpinning our society, an emphasis on the individual surfaces. While individual diversity is emphasized, we still seek societal cohesiveness in a bid for a sustainable future. News broadcasters or providers should reconsider how they might relate to the public in a way that supports individual autonomy, while simultaneously integrates the community. Rather than addressing the public as a mass or seeking to

ameliorate certain interests, those attempting to provide news should address, support and sustain emergent forms of political autonomy amongst citizens and embrace more innovative forms of political participation.

Of course, the burden of determining what is truly objective informative may not only rely on institutions or the organizations and networks that set about providing news. The individual is also called upon to develop the skills necessary to critically analyze the information they receive or are faced with. This demands an exhaustive inquiry as to why an audience is prone to accept so-called fake news in the first instance. Thus, there is a two-fold burden for the individual and society: for the individual on the one hand exercising their autonomy, and society on the other for educating its members to thoughtfully digest the information they are presented with, and the realities they confront.

56

### Another idea for a universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view

To truly confront present inequalities, a new social pact is essential. This pact needs to adopt a much more complex ecological and technological approach in an effort to understand and create new collective solutions. Such an approach must be based in diversity and a reformulation of the power structures that shape gender relations, media concentration, consumption, authoritarianism and individualism in today's present society. As part of a modern, nuanced and revitalized understanding of a universal collective, we must revisit past thought formulations and how that can still bias and impact the way in which we construct our thought today. What is more, there is consideration of solidarity and an understanding of existence beyond merely the human. We must incorporate ecological respect into our repertoire for the survival of

humanity. Moreover, we must find a way to leverage technology that pursues the common good, rather than aggravates the fragmentation already in existence. Finally, the face of new realities, conflicts, and risk, we must consider how securitization is not the answer, as it creates only further cleavages and leads to further military polarization of the world.

An inclusive concept of citizenship that counts all humans among its members has only surfaced in very recent history. Even so, it must be critically analyzed to determine whether a newly conceived citizenship based on voluntary membership and participation, does not continue to maintain old hegemonies and boundaries that protect the interests of few at the expense of the many. Indeed, over the course of history, citizenship rights that have been used for domination and exploitation, and must be considered with care and caution. For example, our societies have begun to champion women's rights as an essential component of human rights. We clearly have begun to recognize that there were perhaps historical values and viewpoints that we ignored in marginalizing other human collectives.

However, should they be simply included in an ad hoc manner, added to what we have constructed from a constricted point of view? Or should a new ethics or universal viewpoint be constructed from the ground up, and should the universal values that we have agreed upon be perhaps reconfigured to reflect the values of this new or pluralistic citizenry we have allowed into the fold?

Technology has brought about new configurations of everyday life and new forms of inhabiting the world. It raises multiple questions about new formulations of power, domination, contestation, time and space. It ushers in the potential for yet another reconsideration of the universal perspective, and within this a variety

of concepts arise, including post-humanism and transhumanism. Agency, usage and access are all key components in a debate regarding technologization. Thanks to technology, the global community has become a complex network of local and distant relationships and belongings.

The impact that this has on information sharing, and all of the various socio-political events and factors it influences, has already been discussed in the previous session. An example includes migration phenomena, and both its exploitation and facilitation. We must account for the ways in which technology is affecting a sometimes passive society. We unconsciously use it without understanding how it works and its impact or consequences for societal organization, our agency, our complacency, and much more. The state vision, which has brought us so much, including globalization and informing sharing, has served its purpose, but is finding its reconfiguration in the idea of the machine, and it is clear that humanity and the world it inhabits cannot simply operate in imitation of a machine-like paradigm. As such, the key takeaway within the framework of a debate on a universal perspective remains the same: we must investigate how humans should rely on their agency to transform technological developments into improving society and way of life, rather than the reverse.

As we have thus far built society through the lens of an androcentric viewpoint, and we are now facing the realities that technological processes have brought about, we should also consider the cosmological and ecological means by which to refocus our perspective and efforts. Environmentalism can help to achieve this new understanding, as there are clear limits that need to be respected and serve as a foundation for our future activity. Moreover, from an even more all-encompassing and transcending cosmological understanding, we should reconsider the spaces

we have created and contemplate how to subvert them in order to achieve true, objective meaning and emancipation.

Again, in order to truly achieve solidarity and a universal viewpoint, we must deconstruct our past, preconceived notions and build from a blank slate, free of imagined boundaries that have pervaded our socio-political life and history until now. A new consciousness asks us to look beyond forms, beyond searching for demarcations. It requires attention, presence and beginning from a starting point of listening and empathy. Humanity must consciously strive for an objective viewpoint that considers ecological, technological and cosmological elements that the Western trajectory has largely neglected. In seeking a peaceful world order, and a sustainable society, a universal, cosmopolitan approach is the tool with which we can hope to make progress.



A progressive call to  
sustain democracy and  
the multipolar order/  
Global racial  
polarisation and the rise  
of right-wing politics

**Common Action  
Forum**

Photo\_ **Valentin Charlier**\_ CC BY 4.0

# 2018

## A progressive call to sustain democracy and the multipolar order/

## Global racial polarisation and the rise of right-wing politics

Continuing into 2018, the year was marked by another international seminar, as well as the Annual Forum being hosted in Johannesburg, South Africa. Common Action Forum (CAF), Regarding the former, alongside partner the Perseu Abramo Foundation, with organizational collaboration from Casa de América, CAF worked together to create a two-part international seminar series addressing threats to democracy and the rise of populism and isolationism. CAF hosted the second event in Madrid, "A Progressive Call to Sustain Democracy and the Multipolar Order," on 17 September 2018. The Annual Forum then took place from November 10th to 11th, tackling, "Global Racial Polarisation and the Rise of Right-wing Politics." Both gatherings offered complementary understandings of the polarizing global political climate.

## A progressive call to sustain democracy and the multipolar order

Several illuminating debates and conclusions arose out of this September seminar in Madrid, the second event in the series. The first event, organized by Perseu Abramo Foundation in São Paulo, Brazil, on 14 September 2018, was an international initiative led by Celso Amorim, former Minister of Foreign Relations and Defense of Brazil and CAF Board Member. The Madrid event was composed of an invitation-only Welcome Lunch for invited speakers and guests, where Celso Amorim presided and began the conversation with details of the preceding Brazil Seminar in this international series, before the group explored various democratic crises in Latin America, Europe and the world. This lunch was followed by further private discussion of conference themes during a Round Table Session at Palacio Linares of Casa de América, led by Wadah Khanfar, CAF Chairman and Co-founder. The Seminar was then made open to the public in the amphitheater of Casa de América, which consisted of an introductory session with Casa de America's Santiago Miralles and CAF CEO and Co-founder Rafael Heiber, followed by two panel sessions with the audience at full capacity. The multi-format event allowed for various perspectives on the dangerous processes and phenomenon that threaten multilateral cooperation and continuously augment populist movements and isolationist governments.

## Closed door lunch and roundtable assessing securitization and development

Securitization is seen as a state power that allows the nation or body to manage other areas of governance, for example the economy or migration, by classifying them as a security issue and exercising more political power over that issue. Issues can be securitized at the global level as well, when threats are identified by supranational bodies and they assume greater political authority to address those "threats" than they otherwise had. Undoubtedly, there is room for great manipulation of securitization for interests that do not necessarily align with the principles of liberal democracy. There should be a political framework within which to discuss securitization, and it should not solely be relegated to executive authorities. It can cause the polarization of a region, rather than leading to a more constructive conversation about how to build society. Latin America has provided an illustrative example with in how police operations have reached the point of military level sophistication.

A system of violence is not inherent to any particular country, but is provoked by a discourse that remains focused on security rather than development. Things like unemployment, and increase in debt, are being linked to security issues. This linking remains problematic because it does not allow for a more nuanced discussion of the many factors implicated in these problems, nor does it address root causes. Another example of where securitization is prioritized over development includes in how financial interests emphasize securitization in order to further the worldwide arms business.

For some time now, international organizations have made the Global South a priority on the international development agenda. However, there is a marked emphasis on economic development,

and a neglect of the importance of social and political rights of the people these policies purportedly aid. Global interests are clearly aligned with financial interests that do not signify long term improvement for the target regions of development and their peoples.

In Africa, for example, there are rotations of power between the same elite groups that control the political parties. These elites usually demonstrate a pattern of implementing the same economic agenda and policies and do not consider alternative economic models of development. Meanwhile, alongside this concentration of wealth and power, as of 2018, 65% of the African population is under the age of 25, and face very few employment prospects. The World Bank conducted a study of Boko Haram combatants, and found that 60% of the youth joining Boko Haram were joining for the salary, rather than for the ideology. This demonstrates how socioeconomic disparity and failed or inauthentic international development policies have driven people to duress and extremism.

This international development policy that solely targets the economic and is devoid of social or political orientation is not the only factor undermining social democratic rights of the people. In the case of Brazil, there is a highly visible series of networks of power where corporations, criminal organizations and religious organizations exercise unequal degrees of influence on what should be democratic governance. Not only in Brazil, but in several countries, decisions are being made without a true political power in place. Then, judicialization of politics is used to step in and attempt to rectify these imbalances of power. However, this is not the solution to a system where the greatest powers and interests control what should be a democratic system. In fact, the judicialization of power represents an imbalance that begs the question of what is fair, and leads to a sense of injustice that can only reinforce

and exacerbate destabilization. There needs to be a global perspective and effort to combat such imbalances in order to avoid destabilization throughout the world.

The international community has an obligation to address social economic and cultural rights, not just civil and political rights. These types of rights are often not championed by the greatest national powers, but the past example from Brazil can serve as an example of how to change the way forward in the future. Redirection of the BRICs is necessary, because Brazil was one of the few countries within this group that sought to address the needs of the polity rather than just geopolitical interests. True representative democracy must represent the whole individual and the entirety of their human rights.

This leads to the reality of intertwined economic considerations in a globalized world. The current international economic crisis has affected developing countries profoundly, and plays an important role in the rise of nationalisms and populisms. This realization should inform how we react going forward. There are various paths in the wake of these ramifications. Some turn to authoritarian and fascist methods, or focus on economic strategies that simply rehash former neoliberal regimes and mindsets. Using nationalism to manipulate currency is a problematic symptom of these strategies. Trump is a pertinent example of how this type of nationalism can contribute to economic volatility and instability. Instead, innovation and exploration of new pathways is key in rectifying what has proven to be an economic cycle that continually is a detriment to our global society.

In economically destroying many developing countries with poorly constructed international development policy, there has yet to be a rectification of these failures, or creativity and new

responses in light of clear mistakes. This requires collective, open-minded thought, that considers the primary causes of these crises before continuing the effort to ameliorate them. It is also necessary to include diverse perspectives from across regions and spectrums, in order to truly capitalize on the human capacity for creative thinking and progress.

Meanwhile, development and security are often mixed in a rather perverse way. Securitization can and often has taken the form of counter-terrorism rhetoric and state of emergency regimes, which also threaten democracy and basic liberties. When a rhetoric of security and state of emergency is circulated, insisting that the rule of law must also be upheld, and emergency powers should not usurp this rule of law, is condemned as sympathizing with terrorism, or construed as anti-nationalist and seditious. However, the threat does not draw from "the other," or the imagined enemy of individuals or groups that break from societal norms (albeit there may be certain extremist or criminal factions that do impose a real threat), but instead, the threat lies in allowing citizen liberties to be sacrificed to a disproportionate state power.

The hostile and politicized atmosphere that surrounds narratives of counter-terrorism often share many of the same consequences and implications demonstrated by acts of terror. Liberal democratic states' response to the "terrorist challenge" fall prey to many pitfalls that often entail human rights abuses. In the counter-terrorist regimes and dialogues that have pervaded many of our nations, the threat of terrorism has been utilized to repress dissent, promote otherwise unrelated international policymaking and to engage in fearmongering, in order to rival political opposition. Moreover, criminal law has been expanded as a response to terrorism, which presents a danger to civil liberties and the general principles of criminal law and legality. This is a new paradigm that did not exist barely a few decades

ago. For this reason, now more than ever, the need to pursue a globally beneficial human rights framework and common ground is important to protecting the liberties of our global citizens and the democratic order they deserve.

### **Public Panel One– The present is not what it was: how do we reconfigure democracy in light of current challenges?**

It is important to look at the root causes of extreme movements, and the fragmentation they produce. Societal dissatisfaction amplifies with increases in social inequalities, and as swaths of the population are forced to live on the margins and face disenfranchisement, the appeal of aggressive, populist and divisive movements is unsurprising. Mob mentality takes the place of participatory citizenship as rights are deprived, including basic right to social welfare. Austerity policies increase this societal strife and disorder. And these inequalities are not only limited to class, but can include race and gender, among others. Throughout Latin America there is a rise in power of right-wing parties, as well as in Europe, with the exception of the 2018 presidential victory of López Obrador in Mexico.

Citizens are forced to live on the margins, operating outside of the system and expecting nothing from it, and for this reason citizenship, participation and what those concepts mean need to be revolutionized. Not only in Latin America and in the case of Brazil previously, but also throughout Europe, disorder ensues as societal membership no longer carries with it basic rights and inclusion. There are many international agreements and transnational commitments to basic rights in a functioning society, but at local and national levels, these mechanisms fail the general population.

Before, citizenship was predicated upon the idea

of national communities. Now, we are working towards a definition of global citizenship, paired with international human rights. Regardless of whether it is within the local, national or international sphere, individual and community claims-making must be recognized by institutions and governing systems in order to provide a legitimate anchor for a functioning society. Individuals and communities must receive protection for and enjoy basic rights so as to participate and prosper in their societies, including in our global society. If power networks and unbalanced interests detract from the basic rights of these communities and individuals, continuing to worsen inequalities, even further instability than that which we have already witnessed is in store. Rights are being deprived or ignored in order to protect entrenched systems of power, prioritizing the interests of an elite few over the many. This further destabilizes society as the majority of the population must operate, usually unsuccessfully, outside of a system that has failed it. Rather than the pitfalls of capitalism, alternatives that include a rigorous social welfare system must be sought in order to remedy the situation.

Propelled by populist movements, authoritarian leaders are able to consolidate power, as discussed in various cases in the seminar relevant to the year 2018. These included the examples of Orbán in Hungary, Salvini in Italy, Erdogan in Turkey or Trump in the United States included. Concerns regarding the judicial manipulation in Brazil, or inequalities and the erosion of representative democracy in any country, have become a global problem. By way of example, Spain has a great deal of financial investment in Brazil, and vice versa. These relationships multiply and take the international stage. However, some of these interests reflect the previously referenced pockets of power, and do not align with the principles of representative democracy or the will of the people. Alternatives to a banking system and cycles of debt that profit

the few at the expense of the many are necessary at the global level in order to truly aid communities. Societal cohesion is important at the local level, but as we face the reality of an increasingly globalized order, we must consider the importance of cooperation and seeking the common good on an international scale, as well.

When the balance of powers is jeopardized, rather than healthy competition, pockets of power are created, and unilateral decisions deprive citizens of their voice. This takes place at the national level and then is reflected on the international scale, as we see in the tendency towards unipolar models of international cooperation rather than a multipolar world order.

### Public Panel Two– The new world (dis) order: multipolar crisis and neoliberalism's invisible borders

64

In circling back to Trump's 2016 election, it could be attributed to many factors, but is due in no small part to his campaign platform of fighting a global order that harms the common people, and combating a global media conspiracy. Again, an example of populism in an increasingly fragmented world, the message resonated with those suffering from the financial crisis and seeking alternatives to a system of elites. His actions had great repercussions in the international arena, from the US's role in NATO, to fragile relationships with Europe and Canada and an anti-globalist approach to diplomatic relations, to name a few. At the same time, Trump worked within the confines of the American "Deep State" of neoconservatism, with entrenched policies and traditional "enemies," like Iran, China and even Russia remaining a problematic reality.

However, withdrawing from a US hegemonic order, there is space to move towards a cooperative,

multipolar order. These opportunities manifest themselves in various ways. There the chance to create a new global financial architecture. There is also the possibility of constructing more regional balance to avoid Eurocentrism. Essentially, there is an opportunity to challenge the dominance of a few, powerful forces and networks that continue to reinforce inequality and instabilities to the point of human disaster.

There have been governments in Latin America seeking an alternative to neoliberal models and these condensed, powerful networks, though often it took the form of discourse. In the past, movements have spread throughout South America and Central America, with their bases including women and the indigenous. These could be viewed as populist movements, but positive populist movements, demonstrating that grassroots efforts by an invested citizenry can be directed towards progress. As a result, policies of fair trade versus free trade were promoted by some governments, including those in Venezuela and Brazil.

Unbalanced power, inequalities, and breaches of human rights have brought about unrest and popular movements. But such unrest and popular movements can be levied as a means for positive change. Black women in Brazil promise to be a decisive vote in the next election, and there is inspiring political will and action on the part of many women's groups throughout the world, with women taking to the streets to protest in unprecedented numbers. Old power structures are being threatened and challenged, and this type of movement can be harnessed to revolutionize our approach to global cooperation and exchange. These types of movements are facilitated by social media platforms. This must be considered with caution, however. The old power structures of energy and banking corporations or financial systems have given way to, or collaborate with, the power harnessed by corporations who control

the majority of technological tools. A neoliberalist vein still runs through the current reality, as these technological companies have harnessed control in a way that is sometimes not as visible as with old power structures, but in a way that is equally potent and perhaps even more influential. Grassroots movements, popular unrest and civil society action can be manipulated by these platforms. Still, as long as citizens commit to action, remain vigilant and avoid the temptation to apathy, these networks of power can be monitored, restrained and utilized for the common good. We must confront the consolidation of power by technological corporations, and their rewriting of the rules, so that the right to information remains free and uninhibited for the sake of social progress.

## **CAF Annual Forum. Global racial polarization and the rise of right-wing politics**

As noted earlier, CAF's 2018 Annual Forum took place in November in South Africa. It marked the 100th anniversary of Mandela's birth, and discussions centered on the issues of deadly migration to Europe and the rise of right-wing politics, populism and the future of politics from a youth perspective, and non-racialism and multiculturalism. It marked the importance of the current and potential role played by the Global South, and included participation of many leaders from the African National Congress (ANC) in addition to the diverse group of participants annually convened by the CAF network. The keynote was delivered by Mr. Parks Tau, President of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Chairperson of South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Gauteng Provincial Treasurer of the South African ruling ANC party and the former Mayor of Johannesburg. Thembisa Fakude, CAF Deputy Chair and event organizer, closed the Forum thanking collaborators the Mail and Guardian, Al Sharq Forum and the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation.

## Deadly immigration to Europe and the rise of right-wing politics

In contemplating the rise of the right-wing politics, one must consider the active attempt by leaders and groups to create divisions in order to assume their own power. For example, this type of maneuvering is manifested by groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS, in how they specifically attempt to drive a wedge between Muslims who live in Europe and the rest of the community. Or, as the theme of the conference highlights, another example includes the way in which right-wing parties seek to gain votes by rendering immigrants as "the other." Nationalisms and regionalisms are manipulated in a manner akin to tribalism, with co-option and even fabrication of identities in order to maintain power.

Especially in light of right-wing parties, a reoccurring theme throughout these discussions, there is a move to outflank their extremism and popularity, and in doing so, a general drift toward the extreme right occurs, from all sides of the spectrum. Instead of addressing the social and cultural issues that underlie this polarization, there are attempts to gain attention and following with increased extremism and division.

As extremist and right-wing politics prevail throughout various corners of the world, there is still an opportunity to reverse the situation. Instead of a focus on phenomena like Brexit, we can look to examples of how to overcome polarization and division. Australia provides a hopeful example in how it eliminated its whites only policy, and began to open its doors and borders to its Southeast Asian neighborhoods while making efforts towards assimilation and accommodation. Moreover, in Malaysia, especially through 2018 there was an attempt to create parties that crosscut ethnic ties, in an effort to build coalitions avoiding ethnic divisions and the harmful rhetoric that encourages further tension.

It is especially important to be mindful of the forces that engender these divisions. Polarization can be more insidious and less obvious than authoritarian governments stepping in or terrorist organizations attempting to create cleavages. Instead, it can take place more subtly, with blame and accusation for economic or social problems levied on an outsider or more vulnerable group. There are those that capitalize on the backlash against failed establishment policies. Throughout this, it is important to remain aware of the ways in which we dehumanize others or deny them access to the common good, solely in order to protect selfish interests. Instead, we should seek solutions for society as a whole, and work towards collaboration that overcomes such tendencies.

In speaking of the common good, migration arises a reality and timeless phenomenon that has pervaded our society. In considering migration, it is no debate that asylum-seekers are afforded protections in human rights norms. However, we must consider the fact that other types of movement should also be embraced and sanctioned. The movement of poor people to rich countries not underpinned by a similar asylum-seeking intention effort, albeit economic asylum. We should remain more open to the range of reasons for migration, including climate change, and how we can adapt our policies in order to accommodate migration flows with human dignity.

It is an exercise of human autonomy to enter a country and spend time there, and it draws from the universally declared human rights to freedom of movement, association and occupational choice. Instead of searching for ways to prevent such human autonomy, we should instead look to how we can alleviate the situations that caused the migration in the first. This should be considered with the common good of all communities in mind, rather than solely the interests of a few.

## Populism and the future of politics: a youth perspective

New technologies were at first utilized to organize people and give rise to ideas that challenge the status quo. Now, however, they are being appropriated in order to divide and govern with right-wing policies. These extremist movements and governments, sometimes with authoritarian or fascist tones, are using the same tools that were used in the past by legitimately elected, democratic governments so maybe the question. It is important to examine how we allowed this transition to occur, and in what way these tools can be reclaimed and used once again for societal improvement rather than consolidation of power.

As technology and globalization advances, it is important that politics and methods of governance develop in keeping with this change. As demonstrated in the recent Cambridge Analytics scandal, politicians and leaders have little understanding of how these developments significantly affect society. There needs to be increased awareness and knowledge sharing regarding how this news tools can be leveraged for improved governance of societies.

One very real outcome of populism is that it practically eliminates centrists, and people who attempt to remain in the center are either drawn to the far right or silenced and ostracized due to their less abrasive or visible manner of advocacy. Extremists are emboldened, and people are manipulated with polarization and the tactic of fear to pursue narrow-ended objectives. Meanwhile, large constituencies of our populations are being ostracised as these extremist factions take control.

It is evident that in order to combat these divisions, centrism and a drive towards compromise is necessary. One way to give voice to the more passive or less vocal, yet moderate of our society,

would be for the media to change how it covers extremism. Rather than providing a platform for these extremist factions to continue pushing their agendas, the media should avoid giving extra attention to these movements and instead look towards providing objective and reasoned information to the people. This will avoid further contributing to a frenzied social reality.

There is a temptation to accept meagre or symbolic gestures on the part of governments or those in power as sufficient progress. Instead, there needs to be active participation on the part of the citizenry for true change. It is evident that populism has caused renewed participation, as seen in recent elections, including that of Brazil. This energy calls for a counterbalance, as experienced in the 2018 US midterms, which saw a record turnout by youth in response to the populism that has surged in the past few years.

Indeed, youth have adopted activism in some ways, including via social networks and fleeting activism, in the form of hashtags and soundbites. It would be useful to move beyond such superficial movement and engage youth in a more thoughtful, educated way that allows them to understand the roots of the problems and issues our societies face and how to realistically contend with the issues and provide solutions, rather than solely causing agitation and frustration with no true change.

## Non-racialism and multiculturalism

In engaging with local networks, it is imperative that there is a recognition of the community, but also of the differences within the collective. Without recognizing difference, various interests can manipulate these differences as cleavages and abuse it for their own political ends and agendas. These agendas often supersede local communities and are the agendas of national or supranational

powers without a commitment to the people. Commitment to the needs of local populations and examining policy and change on a local scale is one way in which to address the global. Local level processes can promote engagement in which citizens are not passive consumers but instead active participants in the creation of a common space. These processes can be promoted via social and civic encounters, allowing for mobilization and attending to individual and group interests at the micro level. When truly focusing on and attending to the interests at the local level, and gaining success in managing communities in that sphere, we can then align these practices with policies that cater to larger collectives and transnational social space.

Inclusivity, multiculturalism and non-racialism has been encouraged at length in recent decades. Meanwhile, there is a resurgence of othering taking place. Understanding race or ethnicity in a way that does not engender further division is key in preventing further cleavages and falling prey to racism, xenophobia or classism. To date, models of multiculturalism have failed in many countries, precisely due to a lack of understanding.

Despite the recent rise in minority rights and a universalistic human rights discourse, attempts to support minorities have met with backlash that have only worsened their marginalization. This can be corrected via renewed efforts in both academic and policy spheres in order to achieve policies that take into account past failures. Instead of a policy of non-recognition of race, or recognition of race and diversity, which has created further divisions, it would be important to instead focus on non-discrimination while acknowledging the pluralism in our societies.

Important in this discussion is how globally, there is a stark imbalance in the allocation of resources. A small percentage of beneficiaries enjoy all the progress our society has enjoyed so far, while

the rest of the population becomes isolated, marginalized and frustrated by the inequalities that they see growing rapidly and that they also experience personally. Meanwhile, institutions and old power structures fail to translate advances in technology and globalization in a manner that aids the totality of the population.

With a mind to reorienting this situation, it is first important to examine what went wrong with the institutions in the first place, and why the same hegemonies keep resurfacing with the same elites. From that point on, coherent change can only be affected by reinventing the system and perhaps completely rethinking it. Notions of equity and equality must be discussed in a global conversation, so as to truly understand how they work and how to implement them. A new future should negate inequalities and social injustice, with an aim towards the common good of society.

A new path to development/  
The era of (in)security: urgent matters and  
self-defeating prophecies

### **Common Action Forum**

Photo\_ **Valentin Charlier**\_ CC BY 4.0



# 2019

## A new path to development/

### The era of (in)security: urgent matters and self- defeating prophecies

In 2019, CAF's Annual Forum was hosted in Mexico for the first time on October 14th, 2019, collaborating with Mexico City's Joint Tourism Promotion Fund and Foundation FRAM to present, "A New Path to Development." Moreover, CAF launched its annual, official gathering for its formal members, the OCTAGON. This event offers the opportunity to for CAF members to meet in Madrid, debate specific topics in round-table sessions and participate in the planning of institutional activities. It remains a closed door event, apart from an opening session open to the public.

## CAF Annual Forum. A new path to development

The 2019 Annual Forum took place at Mexico City's Memory and Tolerance Museum in October, and emphasized the false promises of 21st century financial and economic systems. It went further to investigate how they affect both humanity and the environment, and advocating for a reconceptualization of models in order to remedy the repercussions affecting us all. By meeting in Mexico City, in a country experiencing a new political ethos at the time, it was a space serving as a laboratory of new ideas and their implementation. This allowed for reconceptualizing development and the socio-ecological system not simply in the Latin American region, but also the world. It sought paths towards living well, rather than living unlimitedly.

## Recognizing diversity, governing the commons

"The commons" can be conceived of as a collective conscious and public ethics, followed by new governance, spaces and public goods. In aspiring to an advanced collective in response to the current models that threaten both humanity and the surrounding natural world, we can look to examples of communities that have already achieved solidarity and the common good, or at least resemble this paradigm. Past populations found equitable ways in which to share natural resources, and now we have co-created shared resources through public platforms. Perhaps not purely representative of the commons, but still in the orbit, includes local currencies, urban management systems, and peer to peer networks. In effect, the concept deals with any system that imagines governance, provisioning, resource management and social processes with an ethics of meeting mutual needs and providing for the entire community. In contemplating a new path to development, we can look to the principles of freedom and fairness, as well as emphasize the importance of life, given the very little attention that living systems, especially those non-human systems, have received until now.

Resources become privatized, social relationships become services and nature becomes products. We face problems of displacement, colonization, extraction of resources, and commodification of the environment. Knowledge is limited via legal mechanisms, and even human DNA can be "owned." While all of these things were once shared, or even inherently meant to be shared, they have fallen prey to exclusive interests. For the sustainability and management of common resource, states and markets have proven insufficient. In fact, while states were meant to be oriented towards the public good, they have been coopted by other powerful interests, including authoritarian

leadership, financial markets and organized crime. In pursuing the commons, the idea of community is foundational; it requires that a community govern, manage and cooperate around shared purposes.

Community must be conceptualized as a social space instead of a centralist structure. Such communities need to consider not only federating the commons and creating large-scale systems, but also must keep in mind the local context of community. These micro or meso relationship foundations can establish trust and cooperation, leading to the coordination of collective action. Only then can we restore, preserve and protect the social and environmental systems that have been exploited. Of course, to date, there have been calls to action and social movements with these very aims. Several local references are already in existence, including coffee, cocoa and honey cooperatives, when speaking in the context of Latin America. The denial of local markets and the privilege that the financial markets have demanded, however, have created drastic and rampant inequalities within the human world, and have had disastrous effects on the environment. It is important to keep in mind how such centralization and consolidation of power can initiate a dangerous path, and look to the ways in which the local both demonstrates and has the potential to secure communally managed social processes and existence. While there might be a general blueprint for the commons, they must ultimately be adapted to given specific conditions and situations.

At this point, we have understood "the commons" as a response to crises of democracy, environment, economy and politics, as an alternative to old models of producing and regulating common goods. The discussion has especially referenced how the old models have destroyed or co-opted our environment and natural resources. However, it is also useful to look to the digital commons. This

includes open access to science and information. These digital common goods are distinct from common natural resources: the latter must be protected in order to reproduce, and instigate rivalry for their ownership; meanwhile, digital commons are generated, produced, and require care in a different way. Given the futuristic nature of a digital commons, it assists in conceptualizing an organizational system, a system of rights and responsibilities meant to consider future generations and not solely individuals in the now. These new technologies allow us to think in terms of living well, rather than only thinking of living in terms of consumption, and redirect efforts to as to how to strategically conduct community management and self-organization.

### Capital flight and the crossroads of theory and value

74

Global financialization, increasingly deregulated and liberalized since the 1970s fall of the Bretton Woods agreement, has led to a hegemonic system that leaves peripheral and developing countries in a volatile state. The liquidity of currencies follows a clear hierarchy. Meanwhile, peripheral countries remain embroiled and dependent on this global financial system and are thus subject to its fragility and series of crises. Meanwhile, the system itself remains very poorly regulated, or completely unregulated, with operations hidden. Countries have deregulated financial instruments, with regimes that not only provide tax havens and shell companies, but also allow for very flexible trade regulation. Business is conducted in countries or jurisdictions that allow financial and fiscal secrecy, with no norms requiring transparency or a public record of corporate hierarchies. In fact, one of the first steps in the right direction could be ensuring that there is a public record of the ultimate beneficiaries of these systems and networks.

The interests behind these financial networks can often be traced back to Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. The United Kingdom has an extraterritorial network of dependent territories, as well as now independent states like Hong Kong and Singapore that maintain strong political and commercial ties. Meanwhile, the United States often has a degree of deregulation at both federal and state level, and influences the network of the Marshall Islands, US Virgin Islands and Panama. All of these webs receive financial flows from the rest of the world, via a complex financial architecture composed of offshore companies created for tax evasion purposes. Meanwhile, this very remainder of the world experiences capital flight, although they actually produce based in a real economy. Capital flight could be defined in a broad sense as the transfer of assets or capital from the local community to an exterior context, for the purpose of being accumulated in savings or invested. This definition allows us to understand how capital flight can even take place within a nation itself, as elites hoard wealth. Latin America, for example, not only experiences capital flight from its various nations to those financial networks outlined above, but the Latin American elite can even stockpile assets and capital within their own countries at the expense of the surrounding local community. In each case, regardless, a pyramid structure of assets leads to a social regime where only a few elites benefit.

International transfers are largely operated by the SWIFT's obscure and monopolistic messaging system. The SWIFT company and the government of the United States are examples of how certain entities have access to transactional information, while many countries that are the actual victims of capital flight are unable to access this data. On the one hand, this system provides exclusive surveillance, and on the other, there is the ability to evade transparency entirely, through segmenting

transactions, or by obscuring the origin of funds that may have been obtained via corruption, money laundering and tax evasion. However, there are technological resources and capital, as well as strategies, that could reverse this situation, and introduce transparency and regulation in order to combat the pyramid scheme of international financial networks. Rather than data surveillance for geopolitical aims like controlling money laundering and terrorist financing, technology could be utilized for progressive social justice. This of course would require a significant degree of political will, coordination and initiative throughout the world in order to combat the current geopolitical system and presiding hegemonies.

Capital flight, by nature of its lack of transparency, can facilitate crimes including drug trafficking, arms dealing and human trafficking. Given this perspective, another manner of addressing it, in addition to reconceptualizing our economic systems, would be from a legal point of view. In seeking a more egalitarian world and solidarity rather than the asymmetry that capital flight enables, one strategy for managing it could be by legally classifying capital flight as an economic crime against the people. This crime would extend to a universal jurisdiction, and could be achieved via international human rights treaties. Such initiatives would have to recognize natural resources as public property of the people, and to delineate criminal punishments for natural or legal persons: companies that engage in the practice, as well as the authorities, the legal experts and other professionals who provide for and permit this exploitation.

## GDP and development from outside of Plato's Cave

As part of the post-war period, there was an attempt at a progressive division of countries

in order to manage development. In dividing the world, and measuring these divided countries and their growth by their GDP, the inherent nature of division already created an asymmetry of power and an international arena in which power was manipulated. The neoliberal free market was meant to be a paradise of development, and has been embedded in our critical thinking to the point where it is not possible to break from the paradigm. This is despite the fact that it has presented so many challenges and perhaps, ultimately, failure. What the GDP as a measure of economic development and overall welfare cannot properly address is inequalities. Moreover, it has often proved unsuccessful in converting countries from undeveloped and underdeveloped to developed. Free trade agreements, like the one between Mexico and the United States, are meant to encourage convergence in order to benefit all. However, instead, it has been demonstrated that rather than improving quality of life for the collective, inequalities, especially between North and South, are exacerbated, as the South and its inhabitants are exploited for their commodities.

Again, while GDP supposedly measures economic development, many examples demonstrate as to how it may not remain the most relevant or catch-all system. In the wake of the financial crisis, as well as in light of recent distrust in institutions, citizens call information into question. Even if a country's production may be on the rise, and the economy overall is doing well, they may perceive (and it may be true) that their welfare is not improving. Moreover, this measurement of short-term production does not take into account long-term sustainability. At the same time, in the information society, access to data can be achieved more rapidly. These greater and accessible data sets allow for us to experiment with the wide range of phenomena and variables that contribute to or stimulate advances, whether economic or regarding the wellbeing of populations. There are

a number of factors to simultaneously address, including not only consumption, wealth and material life conditions, but also health, education, leisure and work conditions, social relations, culture, security and environmental health, to name a few. There are two cautionary considerations in taking this path, however. For one, we must keep in mind the danger of relying on agenda-laden macroeconomic indicators and how it has served us poorly so far. And, in utilizing new technologies and information to our advantage, we must remain conscious of the consequences of handling such data, and be prepared to create consensus regarding privacy and data regulation.

Oftentimes, in the name of development, there has been a human and environmental cost. Human needs and wellbeing are sacrificed in order to increase profit for a small portion of the population. Simultaneously, the emphasis on consumption affects the natural world, as it does the communities that evidently rely on their local resources. In a plan for development, peace must necessarily factor into the equation, with a mind towards balancing the societal fabric, and the environmental world of which it forms a part, in order to obtain the "security" and "progress" that development purportedly offers. An illustrative example to look to are those communities that choose less income and a lower level of consumption, and instead look towards common values as a good, placing importance on a united community and stewardship of nature. For this reason, societal groups will sometimes oppose "megaprojects," although they promise wealth and investment. Societal good is prioritized over the monopolization of resources. In this sense, it may be useful to look to grassroots cues when seeking visionary paths to challenge current hegemonic, traditional understandings of development.

Given the mounting and understandable distrust in the face of corruption and inequalities, there are questions of restoring political and institutional legitimacy. These debates are intertwined with public policy, and with the political will. In order to restore this legitimacy, it is necessary to discard old elites and hegemonies, while keeping in mind the new polity and how to represent them. In designing a roadmap to a sustainable future, the youth voice and their future prospects must be incorporated into the political agenda. Gender, racial and socioeconomic equality still remains far from balanced in all societies throughout the globe. Civil society can help in providing a check on public institutions that have violated trust in the past, as well as fill in the vacuum when public and private entities do not fully provide the services required by the citizenry. Maintaining standards in keeping with universally declared human rights is also long from being accomplished, but provides a framework with which to begin. With this integrated approach to reality, there is also the promise of achieving a just society with respect for present, past and future, as well as for human and natural life.

## The Global South leadership and the Green New Deal

In the wake of the economic crisis, many countries contributed to a further cycle of economic recessions in implementing austerity policies, including in the Global South. These measures reduce public spending and negatively impact everyone from the poorest of the poor up to the middle class. Cuts are made in pensions, social security and public sector salaries (including those of teachers and public health workers), while increasing privation and aggressive tax measures continue. Prices rise and wages stagnate, while increasing numbers of people live in precarity. Rising unemployment and reduced domestic demand also result from such austerity in the

public sector. Moreover, the accumulated impact of these measures can have effect on several different collectives, including women, who thanks to occupational segregation, are often over-represented in the public sector; they may require more access to public resources given their role in a reproductive economy. Overall, austerity measures have further entrenched inequalities among the populations.

Political and societal discourse continuously argues that there are no alternatives to austerity measures in the fight against inequality, both among fellow human beings and in the exploitation of our planet. However, many alternative proposals exist and merit consideration. For example, investment could be redirected towards productive employment and social protections, adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. Another proposal includes restructuring the tax system, overhauling all of its flaws and mechanisms that have allowed us to arrive at this point in the first place. The current international tax system allows for tax havens and shell companies with a great deal of the profits obtained by multinational entities stored there. Conservative OECD calculations estimate that 240,000 million dollars to escape annually. However, it is also perilous to rely on institutions like the OECD, largely composed of or driven by powerful and elite countries, to spearhead fiscal reform. Rather, in constructing a new taxation system, multilateralism with inclusive representation would better ensure that benefits are not distributed so unequally.

Despite earlier attempts to create post-neoliberal development, neoliberalism has been institutionalized and even championed by increasingly authoritarian regimes. Moreover, outside of the internal inequalities, despite the production of commodities, the international division of labor and world trade exchange exploit the region. Geopolitical alignments and

realignments are made at the expense of true Latin American integration. Efforts for a Latin American New Deal are rejected as elites prefer to maintain power at the expense of wider stability and prosperity. At the same time, at the regional level, there are signs of growing opposition to these authoritarian regimes and vertical structures of power, and examples exist throughout Latin America of progressive movements and social pacts that are attempting to rectify the mistakes of the past, as well as combat their continued exacerbation. There is room for Latin America to make steps toward multilateralism as a preface to a broader, planetary New Deal.

In discussing alternatives to development, pursuing a Green New Deal, or reshaping our systems in a way that reflect the common good and solidarity, we must keep in mind that some are already in action, at the forefront. Relevant examples in the host region of Latin America include rural women of Brazil, Guatemala and Mexico, fighting against austerity. There are those already campaigning or experiencing sustainable ways of life. Many youth throughout the world are protesting the exploitation of the planet and demonstrating their hope and willingness to commit to a new world order. We must acknowledge their effort and support them in the face of oppression. Moreover, a roadmap is necessary to have in place when such political will is gathered, and we must be ready to implement our own initiatives even if New Deals in North America or Europe face defeat. This means donating our time to advance these new social pacts and commitments, as the window to achieve a society based in the common good is closing.

## Inaugural OCTAGON- The era of (in)security: urgent matters and self-defeating prophecies

Held from November 22nd to 24th, CAF's first OCTAGON allowed experts and actors surrounding the topic of "(in)security" to engage with each other within a private setting, facilitating the free exchange of ideas and proposals. It launched with two panels in its public opening session on Friday at Casa de America in Madrid, "Threats to Universal Rights in an Era of Security" and "Contestations Over Space: from Securitization to Activism." This was then followed by four separate closed-door sessions on Saturday, discussing various key aspects of the 2019 OCTAGON theme. In particular, these sessions sought to pinpoint the political strategies of power underlying narratives and counter-narratives such as terrorism, corruption, climate change, economic crash and migration: how these narratives are coopted with the promise of security, or rendered as a threat of insecurity, in order to manipulate, dominate and regulate public opinion and policy.

Within the framework of its OCTAGON conference, CAF presented the Common Action Tribunal (CAT), an ethics tribunal composed of eminent magistrates and jurists of international prestige, to issue independent verdicts on cases and judicial processes of global significance (including those related to genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and environmental crimes), with the objective of contravening impunity and safeguarding human rights. The CAT press conference was presented by: Renata Ávila, Rigoberta Menchú and Julian Assange's lawyer; Eduardo Barcesat, Argentinian constitutionalist and human rights advisor for UNESCO; Agnes Callamard, former UN Special Rapporteur for Summary Executions; and members of Lula da Silva's defense team, Valeska Teixeira and Cristiano Martins. Baltasar Garzón, former magistrate of Spain's central criminal court, was also invited as a guest. Following the press conference, a CAF expert panel addressed the phenomenon of lawfare and the instrumentalization of justice, as well as the different cases forming the subject matter of the work of CAT, including those of Julian Assange, Jamal Khashoggi and Mohamed Morsi. It included participation from specialists like Ayo Obe, William Bourdon, and Gabriel Chamorro.

## Public Panel One- Threats to universal rights in an era of security

While the North-South dichotomy and disparity is evident throughout the global context, communities, countries and entire regions are experiencing commonalities in undergoing crises and facing situations of insecurity. With advances in globalization and the interconnectedness of societies, systems of inequality become entrenched and perpetuated. Financial systems, multinational corporations, unregulated capitalism and the elites they benefit span borders to appropriate what once were, or by right should be, commonly shared resources and gains. For this reason, protest and precariousness answered with institutional violence or neglect, generates instability and insecurity on a global scale. Underlying the (in) security phenomena are breaches of universal human rights.

With wealth and power concentrated in the hands of a few, institutional erosion and deterioration in democratic governance pervades. For example, strategies of lawfare, and its manipulation of the justice system, detract from human rights regimes and thus stability. Rather than public administrations taking responsibility for the education of its citizenry, such a role is increasingly compromised by corporate or partisan interests. This often means neglect of climate science results in consequences affecting everything from the natural environment and non-human ecosystems, to human displacement. International institutions even succumb to hegemonic powers and narratives, affecting how public goods are distributed and further contributing to imbalances of power. In recognizing what has occurred, new and reformed national and international systems or institutions must be constructed to correctly allocate resources and apply advancing technology for collective benefit and a more stable, sustainable society and environment.

As part of or alongside institutional compromise, big data and technologization, as well as the communications networks and larger interests that often manipulate them, undoubtedly create precarious and even emergency situations for many different publics and peoples. Privacy and anonymity have either been violated or are in danger of exposure thanks to large corporations and institutions that have almost or completely exclusive access to, and control of, data and technological resources. At the same time, citizens continue to be or choose to remain unaware of this unbridled control and manipulation, succumbing to fake news or engaging in consumerism without regard for the short and long-term effects it will have on their privacy, security and autonomy. While the threats and pitfalls that big data and media pose have been identified, further action is required in contesting and opposing surveillance, lack of transparency and consolidation of power.

Again, while big data and the media are identified as culprits of surveillance, and implicated in the deprivation of rights, they remain tools for democratic activism and action. Reform is not limited to redirecting the use of technology and communications. It would require collaboration on the part of both individuals, institutions and systems: the recognition that solidarity holds the promise of true stability and security. Looking to the past, we can witness how human ingenuity was utilized to advance common interests and progress, via public works systems or the facilitation of collective mobilities and access. A fresh, innovative and future-oriented perspective from current generations could employ the resources available in order to create more equal systems and distribution, and thus provide security for all. To do so, it is imperative that individuals as well as collectives mobilize and engage in constructive dialogue with an aim to restore power, decision-making and equality to all citizens.

## Public Panel Two- Contestations over space, from securitization to activism

The post 9-11 “wars on terror” have taken countless military, civilian and aid worker lives in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and Yemen conflicts. Moreover, many civilians harmed or displaced, the latter adding to a growing number of refugees without recourse. Desensitization occurs as these conflicts continue, and further interventions and aggressions go unchallenged. Meanwhile, lawfare takes its toll on both individuals and institutions as well as entire countries, as political persecution, imprisonment, and altering of democratic elections can occur in this miscarriage of justice.

The violence occurring in these new forms of war are often justified with calls for securitization and the supposed need for increased militarization. Ramping up military spending and securitization efforts creates a domino effect, as various affected nations and regions feel the need to respond to threat. This creates a continuous cycle of insecurity justifying purported security measures, meanwhile feeding conflict that creates both human and environmental destruction. Determining which actors are using tactics of fear and terror becomes more complex, as a range of interests wage an escalating power struggle. Instead of making the world a safer place, this type of securitization destabilizes it further.

New forms of warfare alongside cyclical violence evidently detracts from universal human rights and the steps the international community has taken thus far in both committing to and implementing them. In fact, the international community has fallen short in recognizing, condemning or intervening in the face of multiple blatant and persistent human rights transgressions. Again, cases of lawfare serve to illustrate the point: rule of law is challenged or ignored when justice systems are manipulated for political ends, due to

a climate of disinformation and fake news directed at swaying public opinion, as well as inaction on the part of international institutions, which treat transgressors with impunity. Judicial power and the institutions that wield it must be scrutinized and held to account, or even reformulated, in order to divert from this dangerous path.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of crises in our global society, there is possibility and room for reform, or complete reconceptualization of our systems, in order to deal with the current reality. While the advent of globalization and transnationalism and the technological transformations and networks that accompany these processes has allowed powerful actors to pursue ends contrary to the common good on an unprecedented scale, the same tools they coopted can also be used by a global citizenry committed to solidarity. Technology, digitalization and revolutionized means of communication can and already have been employed by social justice and citizen-minded movements. Humanity, instead of falling prey to the fearmongering of security actors, or standing idle while human and environmental rights are jeopardized in a cyclical race to pursue exclusive interests, can enact radical change if they are prepared to work together for a future beneficial to all.

## The political language of (in)security: militarization and geopolitics

No matter the conditions, security can be presented as the sole solution, whether referring to pre-conflict, to ongoing conflict and post-conflict situations. These forms of control and their development proliferate as powerful actors understand the possibilities. The security narrative and its strategies are exported, or imported, to gain or maintain control. It can be billed as national, regional or global security, and promises freedom from fear, or need, while really it is used as a means to power. Citizens are entitled to legal, physical and goods security, but protections are few. Everything from forced regime change in the name of reinventing democracy, to the criminalization of citizen protests, points to the opposite of freedom and protection. Even at the highest levels, international mechanisms are manipulated in the name of security or democracy. Western powers have continuously employed so-called security to simply impose their will. The truth is purposefully never brought to light.

In this perpetual system of conflicts, the truth is obscured via a corrupted discourse. False narratives are spread in order to further agendas that either do not provide the people with more security, or worse, provide further instability. Using words like "intervention" instead of "invasion," or rationalizing aggression as protection of democracy, is all too common. There may indeed be conditions of insecurity, but instead of offering solutions to root out inequalities or precarious living conditions that affect so many populations, populist right wing movements and leaders engage in empty rhetoric in order to gain power. This pattern is spreading to all corners of the globe, as it has so far served as a successful strategy. Initiative is necessary in order to deploy a constructive counter-narrative. This requires going on the offensive, and identifying and holding abusers

accountable when language of security is misused and perverted for partisan interests.

The need for national, regional and global security is demanded time and time again, and used as a justification for aggression. As war and its construction has facilitated crimes against humanity and genocide with the world as a literal witness thanks to new technologies, the victims remain forgotten. Security can entail the security of the government in power, rather than its citizens. The protections that purportedly drive security measures do not manifest in a way that benefits the people. State actors and non-state actors are only held accountable at the international level symbolically, often charged with simply one transgression, without the victims in attendance when supposed justice is dealt. Moreover, throughout all of these offenses and the reasoning that drives them, human security is ultimately neglected. While humanitarian efforts are put forth in the guise of security, human rights are consistently compromised. The militarization of democracy takes place via states of emergency or when the military is unrightfully deployed to exercise control over the people. As global citizens, we fail to adequately denounce this, to support victims, and to demand accountability not only from perpetrators but also the institutions that are apathetic to both those perpetrators, and their victims.

These victims discussed may suffer physical harm, but they may also have been a casualty in the economic warfare taking place. Many actors who leverage the security to their advantage are doing so in order to obtain or retain their property, or resources. Ironically, at some point security meant more people having access to goods, rather than less. Now, public, national budgets are allocated to private security contractors. In the name of security technology and via financial transactions, states are able to force their agendas on other states.

While we have witnessed a failed war on organized crime, a failed war on drugs, and a failed war on terror, not only have we ignored the repeated unsuccessfulness of such warring as a response, but we have allowed entire economic ecosystems to increasingly consolidate and further unequal wealth distribution. In permitting the actors behind security narratives to continue to operate, goods are appropriated by a small elite.

### Security and the environment: a struggle for ownership

Privatization of security in geopolitics and ownership questions provided a fitting segue into how the environment becomes a space of contestation and objectified property. In an era of climate change, humanity must reconsider its former approach to ecological systems, world resources and ownership. In the struggle for control, a very real competition for resources has been influenced by a trajectory of capitalist and neoliberal trends. Debate regarding climate security encompasses access to food, water, livable environments and a host of resources that have always been grounds for contestation. Given how our shared resources have been commandeered and exhausted, bioeconomy offers a new way forward in seeking sustainable use of biological resources. This would build the networks in order to develop a new system that serves the commons, rather than the interests that exercise the most power and authority to the detriment of our planet.

When approaching this issue, however, the same traps outlined earlier with the geopolitics tug-of-war can also take place in the environmental domain. So many conflicts in Latin America and the Middle East in recent years have arisen from thinly veiled power struggles for natural resources like petroleum. In fact, it is worth considering whether future wars will be waged in the pursuit

of natural resources. Moreover, state actors are willing to make deals with other interest groups at the expense of their peoples. Another form of control is manifested in the way powerful lobbies influence public opinion and detract from the little momentum that environmental consciousness and movements have achieved. Throughout this, large groups of disenfranchised remain without access to the most essential of resources, like water. On the one hand, humanity is an unchecked threat to environmental security. On the other, a majority of humanity faces very little stability as they are increasingly barred from access to the natural resources of their own planet. For this very reason, it is important for us to reflect on how we can create laws and policies that protect and manage natural resources, so as to prevent the lack of these resources from triggering future conflict.

Natural resources in developing countries are exploited by developed countries, and wealth is thus sapped from entire populations. One can look to the examples of agriculturalism, mining and foresting that have been conducted in countries in the Global South at the expense of its inhabitants. Alternatively, many regions and nations do not have the resources to transition to renewable energy. When discussing how security and control affects resources across the globe, it is important to keep in mind that many regions and governments do not have the same social, political and economic agency as others. When there is human displacement due to climate change, it can often take the form of internal displacement within a country or region, and it never reaches international awareness. In this vein, climate migrations from South to North are often responded to with policymaking from the receiving, rather than sending countries. While a rapid and urgent transition to sustainability is necessary, it must also be accomplished in a just manner that respects the rights and interests of all groups, especially those most affected. Simultaneously, in

this change and policy formation, other groups that should be considered include future generations, as to date humanity has taken a short-term approach to stewardship of the environment and deprived them of so much already.

The Green New Deal, the title of which refers to Great Depression policies in the U.S. aimed at reform and public works, has served repeatedly been proposed as legislation over the years to ameliorate climate change and inequalities. The concept, its proponents and the various proposals that fall under it, however, are of course not limited to the North American continent. This type of reform requires ambition and the restructuring of international institutions, but its objectives are promising. It must be emphasized that global public goods benefit the entirety of the international community, precisely because their management supersedes state frameworks; for this reason and as part of this, global and coordinated management of such goods is absolutely essential. Especially given that no one country can solely tackle the ecological crisis, the old ways of addressing humanity's relationship with the natural environment must be reorganized. As we have continuously engaged in privatization and the seizing of resources, it has also resulted in the privatization of knowledge in a way that bars any progress in making an ecological transition. Moreover, it is evident that these old models of increasing consumption, with little regard for the consequences, have been exhausted.

The idea of the commons and the sharing of resources is not a revolutionary concept. Various cultures throughout human history have recognized the natural environment, whether ascribing to animism or incorporating nature into their belief systems. In fact, several indigenous peoples throughout the world have adopted world views that recognize the rights of nature, providing us with inspiration to move forward in

this direction. A culture of care is key in reversing the environmental destruction thus far. In addition to the legal, administrative or political measures necessary in order to protect and sustain the natural world, remembering the human element that forms part of it can help to orient a new ethics. A remedy involves working for a better equilibrium and harmony, perhaps through political or social restructuring, maintaining an emphasis on the collective and solidarity.

## Democracy and whistleblowing: confronting the era of security

It is important to examine how governments and private entities have been manipulating recent technological advances at the expense of human rights. While this has received some degree of public attention and has attracted controversy, there has not been sufficient activism to truly address the problem and violations. Monopolies are increasingly permitted, and corporations even align with government organizations in the name of security, eroding rights, privacy and freedoms purportedly guaranteed in liberal democracies. Whistleblowers attempt to flag these breaches, including those implemented under the guise of cybersecurity. The media's manipulation and role in this concern is also a key factor and bears consideration. Finally, this type of securitization translates to exclusion, in that extensive virtual and physical boundaries are created between communities, affecting how humans relate to one another in the new digital age.

84

Several poles of power are now in motion: large corporations, increasingly authoritarian governments and powerful financial institutions. They continue to grasp at more privilege, evading or eliminating democratic structures meant to ensure equal rights for all. Meanwhile, many do not enjoy rights as basic as food security and freedom from hunger. These powerful interests have been leveraging technology, as well as privatizing its use, in order to create divides and thus weaken the opposition, as evidenced by polarization via new media. Moreover, these actors are continuously concerned about maintaining their power, and consistently attempt to undermine anything, including democratic public institutions and systems, in order to preserve it. They often do so using illegal or alegal means. This escalates to an extreme degree, as those individuals and groups who attempt to prevent their actions, or demand

accountability for such actions, can end up jailed, tortured and even killed. Wealth is protected at all costs, and traded for freedom.

Whistleblowers alert the public about illegal activity, committed by everything from individuals, to corporations and government entities. The narrative regarding whistleblowing is contested, and even the media participates in manipulating it. In fact, whistleblowers are often publicly persecuted and criminalized with the assistance of media players. On the other hand, in many places, whistleblowing is still not even a practice that is recognized. Those who have acted, however, those that report the wrongdoings of both public and private authorities, must be supported in their efforts to protect the transparency that bastions democracy. Again, a long-term approach could assist: supporting networks and structures that protect and advance the work of whistleblowers. An example includes ensuring that legislation does not target whistleblowers. Another includes allowing whistleblowers refuge or enabling their transition to a new community when they are exiled for their actions. Civil society has an obligation to amplify the individual voices, and support these activists, academics, journalists and dissidents. They have demonstrated the courage to relay certain information they believe should be in the public domain, and they do so despite the consequences.

Public regulation and control are weak, while the private sphere has obtained more sophisticated strategies of control, or at least have adapted these strategies to the current reality. Inventing more avenues to public participation in keeping with technological advance and progress is key to including the people in societal governance. Transparency is of course fundamental to democratic societies, and citizen initiatives can demand more transparency, as well as organize ways of conducting and implementing it. Citizen-

led projects demanding accountability and pursuing justice are in motion, though further efforts and awareness is necessary. The technology that is used for control can also be used to gather and effect change. Discovering new ways of mapping and sharing resources is one possible way to accomplish this. Examples of how protests have spread via social media or via information sharing, demonstrate the potential of citizen movements in the digital era.

In seeking justice for all, the collective ultimately benefits, although it may not seem urgent or problematic at an individual level. Transparency and preserving democracy must be a joint effort. For example, in cases where an oppressive or authoritarian government is demanding unjustified extradition, there is a responsibility to stand up for rights and democratic systems. Now is time to no longer permit illegitimate interests, operations and organizations to feign legitimacy. Collaborating throughout the world to fight these multinational corporations and international financial networks is the only way to challenge these transgressions. Both state and non-state actors must be held to account for human rights violations. Building constructive networks and redeploying international organizations, via building alliances in education, technology and other domains, should be conducted not just as a reactive effort, but in a preemptive strike against the opponents and deterrents of rights and democracy.

## Digital inequalities, citizenship and security

As relates to the previous topic, questions arise about who truly benefits from transforming economic systems and technological advances. Continued exacerbation of inequalities result from current economic models of privatization; and, with the new tools of globalization in the hands

of a powerful few, access to natural and virtual resources, as well as mobility, become key issues. The welfare of populations is jeopardized. Citizens question how purchasing power parity is even a relevant measure of their own wellbeing. It is important to explore why we have come to use technology the way we do and how it affects us as individuals and a collective.

The negative consequences of technology are often the most visible, and elicit our initial reaction. This is justified; digital inequality propounds. Moreover, some of the most jarring examples of how technology and data can be misused include the oppression and corruption of democratic institutions and citizenship. By disseminating misinformation and aligning with other forces willing to employ their corresponding technologies, what were once inarguably democratic movements are now repressed in the name of public security. In looking to the past years' repeated protests in South America, security is cited to legitimize force and quashing the opposition. When citizens exercising their rights are dehumanized and not only physically harassed but also publicly persecuted in the invasive ways that technology can facilitate. Institutions, regimes and powerful factions can capitalize on the confluence of wealth and technology to control the public. Needless to say, the misuse of big data and the privacy violations committed by corporations and governments additionally facilitate unprecedented public control.

Working with new technologies to solve problems, rather than fearing the advance of progress, can offer remedies to the many challenges surrounding security discussed. Social participation has potential for transformation with the advent of these new technologies and the wealth of data they bring. Innovation can offer new forms of pursuing a sharing economy. Pooling our resources and talent, rather than competing to achieve advances

and thus gain wealth or exercise exclusive control, is the strategy that should be adopted if we are to remedy the current crises. New generations have tools and information build upon past human knowledge to reach a new level of creativity, intelligence and progress. This allows for us to create societies enabled to protect and provide security to more of our collective than ever before.

secured wellbeing, for all communities and the natural space they occupy. Again, collaborative effort and balance is required to ensure the collective good.

At the same time, access to technology and its benefits remains limited. While many have unprecedented access to information, a vast majority remain unconnected. Especially when contemplating rural areas, the North-South divide, the underprivileged, the inequalities are obvious. Data and technological advancement are crucial in health and medicine, for example, and all citizens should have access to the inroads that have been made. Technology also serves as a key vehicle for education, and many children are still left out of the equation; in fact, we could argue that the digital gap also signifies an economic gap. Trolling and fake news, alongside fascist movements that gain traction via the use of new media, is also drastically gendered. In short, many groups and populations do not reap the benefits of our collective human progress, and this reality is not challenged in the way it should be.

Understanding the epistemology behind technology and innovation should accompany its application. Why we have engaged with it, and how we relate to fellow members of society because of it, is an important question to guide our future action. A contextualized form of technology that has regard for the trajectory of human development and understanding, as well as works to improve this development, is possible. In achieving progress, respect and dignity must ground our work. In this, it is important to stress united effort, long-term intergenerational commitment and a mindset that embraces ideally equal participation and prosperity, or at least at the most basic level of





# Concluding thoughts

In closing, CAF remains conscious of the most pressing issues of our time, the trajectory that has informed them up until now, and the potential for future visionary thinking and active problem-solving. In looking back on the past five years, it has addressed a range of important topics and offered valuable insights and solutions alongside its collaborators, that provide the foundation, stimuli and motivation for continuing its work.

While each year of its first five years of existence presented various challenges, notable themes continued throughout. In particular, the exacerbation of inequalities in the wake of neoliberal globalization and asymmetry of global powers have deprived collective needs of both humans and the environment, prioritizing specialized interests instead. The interconnectedness of our global society became strikingly apparent, as each thought contribution noted the reality of a diverse world. In considering how to approach this from the local to the international level, and understanding the need for multilevel and multilateral cooperation, these realizations also noted how a long-term view is essential when providing radical solutions and change for the human and planetary common good.

In looking to the next five years, CAF is seeking to continue its intellectual conversation on a regular basis, in addition to the powerful exchanges held during events throughout the year like those previously described. New initiatives include the CAF Podcast, addressing global issues on a monthly basis, and the independent digital magazine **metapolis**. These, and our other projects, seminars, and collaborations described in the introduction can all be found on our website, which also provides the contact information of our staff who are happy to engage and provide even further detail.

Ultimately, together with its robust network including but not limited to intellectuals, activists, politicians, journalists and artists, CAF continues to strive for the wellbeing of global civil society, emphasizing that the collective is necessary in this dynamic, challenging and crucial effort.



Photo\_ **Valentín Charlier**\_ CC BY 4.0





[commonactionforum.net](http://commonactionforum.net)