



# 2019 Altius Conference at Oxford

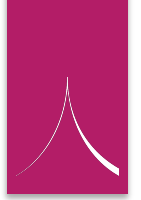
## *Organizing Society for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

*The Future of Democracy. Towards a New Social Contract  
in the Age of Cognitive Machines*

4-6 OCTOBER 2019

Oxford Union, Debating Chamber  
University of Oxford





# ***Organizing Society for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century The Future of Democracy. Towards a New Social Contract in the Age of Cognitive Machines***

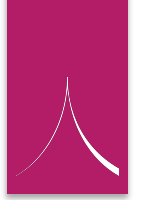
## **Introduction**

The Altius Society was founded in 2012 with the aim of becoming the global forum where senior practitioners, academics, and political leaders, as well as young promising thought leaders gather to discuss the most relevant strategic trends of the 21st century and their impact on the future of our societies and our economies.

The necessity to foster interdisciplinary dialogue between young professionals who have proven excellence in their respective domains (academia, economics and private enterprise, politics and public service, philanthropy, and cultural creativity) lies at the heart of Altius.

The velocity and complexity of social change, the need to encourage a deep reflection and understanding of future global trends, and the awareness that tackling challenges requires not only an interdisciplinary approach that draws from numerous fields of intellectual and social life, but also a broad international perspective, convinced a group of graduate students at Harvard University and the University of Oxford of the benefits of an organization like Altius.

As a catalyzer of this multidisciplinary debate, every year Altius selects a major *Theme* which is discussed from five diverse perspectives –Scientific, Social, Cultural, Economic and Political,– brought by Altius Members as well as prominent leaders in the field.



Building upon our three previous Altius Themes ([\*'The Brain of the Future: Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Automation, and Politics in the Age of Thinking Machines.'\*](#) [\*'The Future of Communication: An Opportunity for Humankind and a Challenge to Democratic Societies.'\*](#) and [\*'Educating for the Future'\*](#)), our debates in October 2019 will explore the future organization of society to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including the increasing need to establish a new social contract for the age of cognitive machines.

The rising strength of **populist movements** across Europe and the United States might be the early manifestation of a broader and more structural long-term transformation taking place within western democracies.

Two major forces seem to be catalysing this process. On the one hand, the **increasing pace of technological development** and adoption, including artificial intelligence technologies and widespread adoption of high-speed computing and automation, which are driving a major transformation of the model of economic growth, labour markets and wealth creation. While the overall level of economic prosperity has increased significantly over the last few decades, the level of inequality is reaching record levels in recent human history. On the other hand, the rapid expansion of **decentralized communication platforms**, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and WeChat, are posing significant pressure on the democratic political process and on the diffusion of ideas, with impact on the public perception of science and the debate on human values.

These trends highlight the importance of **empowering citizens** and enhancing critical thinking, but also the **potential reformulation of the models of democratic participation** and the redesign of the **social contract**. Both could become the most relevant levers to ensure viable **economic growth** while preserving social and political stability.

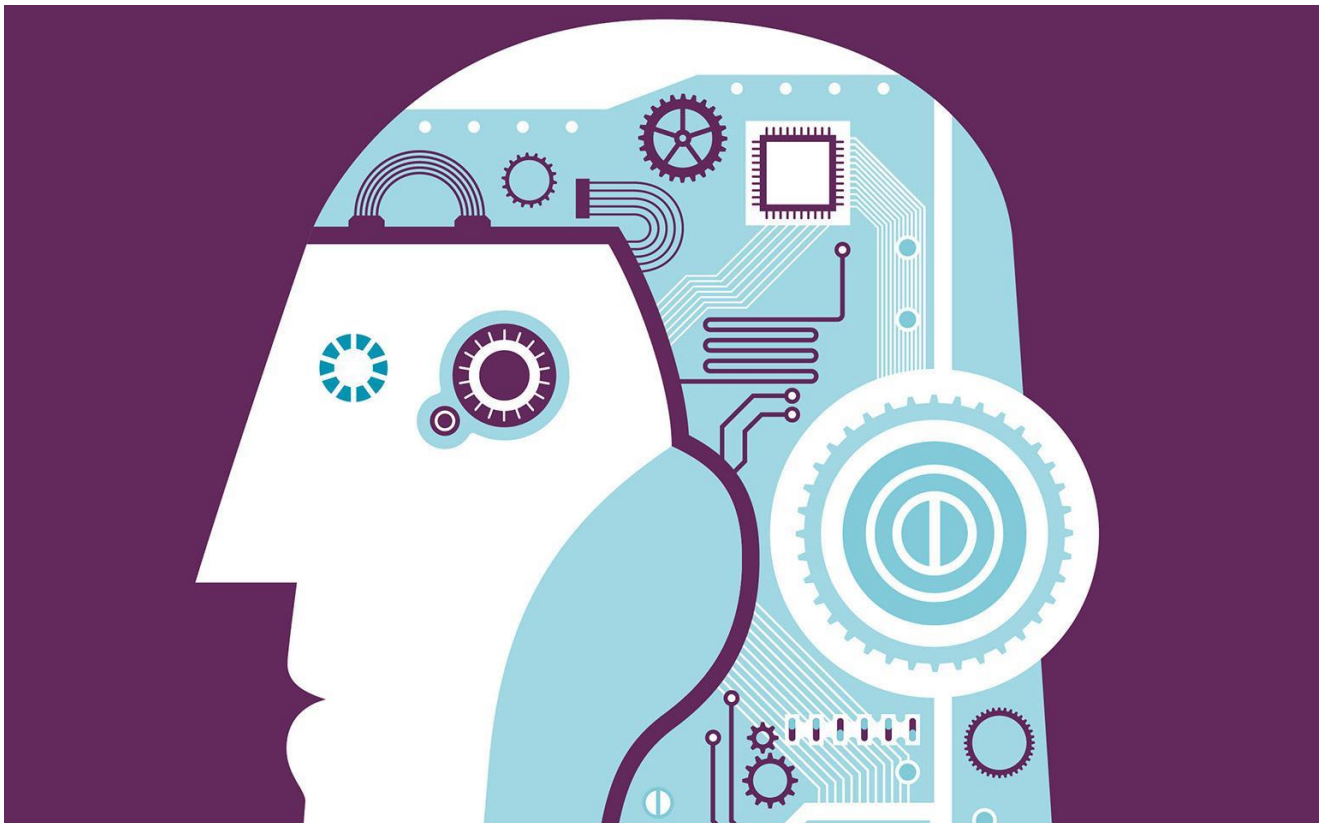
Many questions arise in light of this transformation. To what extent the current system of western democratic participation is suitable for coping with the aforementioned challenges? Will it require a radical redesign, or could a gradual improvement suffice? Is it possible to moderate extreme aberrations resulting from the misuse of *Social Power*? What fundamental changes are needed to develop more effective systems of governance capable of fully supporting the aspirations of humanity, maximizing the equity and effectiveness of social institutions and the future evolution of global society?

The Conference will take place at the Oxford Union Debating Chamber, one of the world's most prestigious debating venues, and it will be structured in six major lines of discussion:

1. **The State-of-the-Art Research** on the potential challenges, opportunities and applications of future AI-driven technologies
2. **The Short-Term Disruption:** The challenge to democratic societies by unsupervised communication platforms, and its role as a catalyzer of recent political uncertainty in western democracies
3. **The Medium-Term Implications:** Economic challenges and opportunities posed by the underlying economic transformation, the politics of wealth inequality, the future of capitalism, and the potential to craft a new social contract to address the rising inequality within countries



4. **The Long-Term View:** Philosophical and ethical debates on the future of social organization, human identity, the role of religion, and the potential for a '21<sup>st</sup>-century Enlightenment'
5. **The Global Perspective:** the impact on the *Global Geopolitical Architecture*, the future role of *Multilateralism* and *International Organizations*, and the *Global Balance of Power*
6. **The 'Local' Perspective & The Disruption of our Immediate Vicinity:** the Future of Cities and Social Organization





## Friday, October 4<sup>th</sup>

**15:00-15:30 Registration**, Oxford Union, Debating Chamber

**15:30-15:45 Welcome Remarks**, by Alexandre Pérez Casares, President of Altius

### **15:45-16:30 Opening Address**

*"Truth, Democracy and the Scientific Method"*

**A Keynote by David Gross**, 2004 Nobel laureate in Physics, Chancellor's Chair Professor of Theoretical Physics and former Director of the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara; key contributor to string theory and particle physics, and member of the US National Academy of Science, the American Philosophical Society and the Chinese Academy of Science.

*Introduced by Carlos Blanco*

### **Day 1 Opening Keynotes**

Format: Keynote presentations followed by a discussion, introducing four perspectives: political, scientific, economic and technological.

#### **16.30 'Quo Vadis Europe? The Advent of the Politics of Time'**

**Keynote by Kalypso Nicolaidis**, Professor of International Relations and former Director of the Centre for International Studies and the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, member of the Advisory Committee of the Weatherhead Centre of International Affairs at Harvard University. Author of *'Exodus, Reckoning, Sacrifice: Three Meanings of Brexit'*.

*Introduced by Marcin Kilanowski*



◆ **17.15 'Reflections of a Mathematician on Science, Data and Society'**

**Keynote by Sir John Ball**, Emeritus Professor, former Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Oxford, President of the International Mathematical Union, awarded 2018 King Faisal Prize for Science, Keith Prize, Sylvester Medal and John von Neumann Prize.

*Introduced by Alberto Coca*

◆ **18.00 'The Future of Capitalism'**

**Keynote by Sir Paul Collier**, Director of the International Growth Centre and Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, *Professeur invité* at Sciences Po, author of *'The Bottom Billion'*, awarded Lionel Gelber, Arthur Ross and Corine prizes.

*Introduced by Delia Rodríguez*

◆ **18.45 'Building the Brain of the Future: The Potential of Artificial Intelligence'**

**Keynote by Nigel Toon**, CEO and co-founder of Graphcore, a fast-growing silicon and systems company which has developed the "Intelligence Processing Unit" (IPU), a new processor for machine intelligence, backed with over \$300 million in funding by leading investors such as Sequoia Capital, Atomico, Samsung and Microsoft.

*Introduced by Ignacio Bachiller Ströhlein*



**19:40-21:30 Dinner & Dialogue** at Pembroke College Dining Hall

*"Plunder of the Commons: Responding with Basic Income"*

**Keynote by Guy Standing**

Professor of Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, co-President of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), former Director of the International Labour Organization, leading the Socio-Economic Security Programme; author of *'Basic Income: And How We Can Make it Happen'*, *'Why Rentiers Thrive and Work Does Not Pay'*, and *'The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class.'*

*Discussant: Thomas Dermine, Head of Delivery Unit, CATCH Charleroi, Belgium*





## Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>

**09:00-10:30 Section 1. *The Sociological & Philosophical Perspective:***

Format: Keynote presentations followed by a discussion.

### ***Opening Keynote***

*"The Two Faces of Modern Societies: Democracy and Power"*

**A Keynote by Alain Touraine**, Founder of the Centre for Analysis and Sociological Intervention (CADIS) and Research Director at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, at L'Université Paris Sciences et Lettres; among the most cited contemporary sociologists, originator of the term "Post-Industrial Society", author of 'Critique of Modernity' and 'What is Democracy.'

### ***'Enlightenment Past and Present'***

**Keynote by Clifford Siskin**, Henry W. and Alfred A. Berg Professor of English and American Literature at New York University and Director of The Re:Enlightenment Project and the North American Concept Lab. Co-editor of 'This is Enlightenment' a volume that offers an answer to the question Kant made famous: 'What is Enlightenment?'

*Chair: Roberto Foa, University Lecturer in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Cambridge*

**10:30-11:00 Group Photo and Coffee Break** at the Oxford Union Goodman Library



**11:00-12:45 Section 2. The Technological Perspective: The Role of Artificial Intelligence for the Future of Society**

Format: Keynote presentations followed by a discussion.

◆ **'AI: Hopes and Challenges'**

**Antoine Bordes**, Managing Director of Facebook Artificial Intelligence Research, former CNRS researcher in the Heudiasyc laboratory of the University of Technology of Compiègne, France.

◆ **'Artificial Intelligence and the Human Economy'**

**Joanna Bryson**, renowned expert on the ethics of Artificial Intelligence, Department of Computer Science, University of Bath, leading outreach for the UK's only Centre for Doctoral Training in AI ethics, the Accountable, Responsible and Transparent AI (ART-AI) Centre at Bath, author of *The Past Decade and Future of AI's Impact on Society*, *Robots Should be Slaves* and *Intelligence by Design* (MIT).

◆ **'The Role of Tech Start-Up Ecosystems and Entrepreneurship in Modern Societies'**

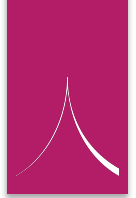
**Oussama Ammar**, Co-Founder of The Family, one of the best known European startup incubators, inspired by Y Combinator; member of the Global Tech Panel created by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini

*Chair: Maxime Parmentier, Chief Executive Officer and founder of Birdie, a digital care technology start-up*



**12:45-13:45 Lunch Break** at the Oxford Union Goodman Library





### 13:45-15:00 Section 3. *The Role of Ethics and Religion for the Future of Society*

Format: Moderated discussion.

Participants:

- **Sean Hinton**, CEO of the Soros Economic Development Fund and Director of the Economic Advancement Program, Open Society Foundations.
- **Peter Atkins**, Emeritus Professor of Chemistry at the University of Oxford, Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry, and author of a number of popular science books, including *Atkins' Molecules*, *Galileo's Finger: The Ten Great Ideas of Science* and *On Being*.
- **Sean Cleary**, Founder and Executive Vice Chair of the FutureWorld Foundation, Managing Director of the Centre for Advanced Governance, member of the Global Future Council on Geopolitics of the World Economic Forum and Executive Consultant to the UAE Prime Minister's Office.
- **Garry Jacobs**, Chief Executive Officer of the World Academy of Art and Science, Chariman of the Board & CEO of World University Consortium and Managing Editor of *Cadmus Journal*.

*Moderated by Elena Herrero-Beaumont, Director of the Vincennes Institute for Public Affairs*



### 15:00 Section 4. *The Future of our Political System*

Format: Keynote presentations, followed by discussion

#### **Opening Keynote by Javier Solana**

*"The Powerlessness of the Most Powerful. Winds of Change in Global Power"*

President of the ESADE Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics, Distinguished Fellow at the Brookings Institution, and President of the Board of Trustees of the Prado Museum, former Secretary-General of NATO, European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, and Secretary General of the Council of the European Union, Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Culture, Minister of Education and Science, and professor of solid-state physics.



◆ **'Where Do We Go From Here? Media, Politics, and Power in the Digital Age'**

**Keynote by Nicco Mele**, faculty co-chair of the Harvard Council on the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence, lecturer in Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and Director of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy (2016-2019), author of the international bestseller *The End of Big: How The Digital Revolution Makes David The New Goliath*.

◆ **'The Politics of Wealth Inequality'**

**Keynote by Ben Ansell**, Professor of Comparative Democratic Institutions, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, Profesorial Fellow, Nuffield College; author of *From the Ballot to the Blackboard: The Redistributive Politics of Education* awarded the William H. Riker prize for best book in political economy, and *Inequality and Democratization: An Elite-Competition Approach*.

Sub topics:

1. The Viability of Representative Democracies in Increasingly Connected while Unequal Societies
2. The 'War' on National Elections Integrity: A Challenge for Democracy. The Evolution of Soft-Power in the Post-Truth Era
3. Economic Policy, Governance and Institutions in the Age of Technological Disruption and the Fragmentation of Power
4. Promise and Peril of Globalization and the Digitization of the Market Economy
5. Nationalism vs. Globalism: The New Political Divide

Chair: Alexandre Pérez Casares, President of The Altius Society

**17:00-17:30 Coffee Break** at the Oxford Union Goodman Library

**17.30 Keynote and Dialogue**

*"Improving Democracy: A Bold Idea to Replace Politicians and Empower Citizens"*

**By César Hidalgo**, ANITI Chair at the University of Toulouse, Honorary Professor at the University of Manchester, Visiting Professor at Harvard's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, former director of the Collective Learning group at MIT, co-founder of Datawheel, co-author of *'The Atlas of Economic Complexity'* and *'The Observatory of Economic Complexity'* with over 20 million visualizations.

*Introduced by Thomas Dermine*



### 18.30-19.15 *"Disruption and War"*

**A Keynote by David Betz**, Professor of War in the Modern World at the Department of War Studies, King's College London, Deputy Director of King's Centre for Strategic Communications, Senior Fellow of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, author of *Carnage and Connectivity: Landmarks in the Decline of Conventional Military Power* and *Cyberspace and the State: Towards a Strategy for Cyber-Power*

*Introduced by Oscar Jonsson*

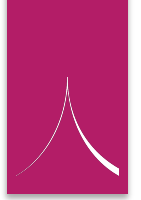


### 19:30-21:30 **Drinks Reception & Dinner** at Balliol College

*"The Potential of Multilateralism for Scientific Cooperation: the Example of CERN"*

**Keynote By Álvaro de Rújula**, former Director of the Theoretical Physics Division at CERN, Geneva; one of the most relevant theoretical physicists worldwide, with a key role in the development of the LHC (Large Hadron Collider), the world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator; member of the European Academy since 1991.

*Introduced by Tania Esparza*



**Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>**

**09:00-10:40 Section 5. Democracy and the Future of Planet Earth**

Format: Keynote presentations followed by a discussion.

**Opening Keynote by Sir Robert Watson**

*"Towards a Sustainable Future: Climate, Ecosystems, Biodiversity and Society"*

CMG FRS, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity Ecosystem Services (IPBES), among the most cited environmental scientists worldwide; former Chief Scientist and Director for Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development at the World Bank, and Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 1997-2002) which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007.

**‘Can Democracies handle the Climate Crisis?’**

**Ernst von Weizsäcker**, Chairman of the Club of Rome (2012-2018), founding President of the Wuppertal Institute, former Dean of the graduate School of Environmental Science and Management at the University of California.

**‘The Crisis of Globalization. A Bang or a Whimper? Now or Not Yet?’**

**Susan George**, President of the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam, American and French political and social scientist and writer on global social justice, including *The Lugano Report*, *Shadow Sovereigns: How Global Corporations are Seizing Power*, and *How the Other Half Dies*; honorary president of ATTAC France (Association for Taxation of (financial) Transactions to Aid Citizens)

Chair: Laura Birkman, Senior Strategic Analyst, The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS)



#### **10.40-11.20 “Post-Democracy after the Crisis”**

**A Keynote by Colin Crouch**, Emeritus Professor at the University of Warwick, member of the British Academy and the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, author of *Post-Democracy*, *The Strange Death of Neo-Liberalism*, and *The Globalization Backlash*.

*Introduced by Jacobo Roa Vicens*



**11:20 Coffee Break** at the Oxford Union Goodman Library



#### **11:40-13:00 Section 6. The Future of Cities and Social Organization**

Format: Keynote presentations followed by a discussion.

#### **Opening Keynote by Saskia Sassen**

*“The Global City: New Geographies of Power”*

Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology at Columbia University and Centennial visiting Professor at the London School of Economics, noted for her analysis of globalization and international human migration, awarded the 2013 Prince of Asturias Award in Social Sciences, member of the Royal Academy of the Sciences of The Netherlands, author of *The Global City*, *Cities in a World Economy*, and *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*

#### **◆ ‘Housing for All: Revisiting a Human Right in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’**

**Beatriz Corredor**, former Minister of Housing under the Government of President Rodríguez Zapatero in Spain. Member of Parliament for the socialist party, PSOE, and Secretary for Urban Planning & Public Housing Policies in the Executive Federal Committee of PSOE.



### ◆ 'Challenges of Cities in the Future'

**Luis Vidal**, international architect author of the new Heathrow Airport Terminal 2, "The Queen's Terminal", the world's first airport terminal to be awarded BREEAM Excellent rating for its sustainable design, and World's Best Airport Terminal in 2018; founder of luis vidal + arquitects, a global architecture practice with presence in Europe, Latin America and USA.

Chair: Hamouda Chekir, Director, Lazard Frères (Government Advisory Group)



#### 13.00-13:30 Closing Address

*"Democracy, Disruption and Existential Threat"*

**By Sheldon Glashow**, 1979 Nobel laureate in Physics, key contributor to the Standard Model of Physics, Higgins Professor of Physics Emeritus, Harvard University, Arthur Metcalf Professor of Science and Mathematics, Boston University

*Introduced by Kristin Hallstrom*



#### 13:30-13:45 Closing Remarks and Farewell

Acknowledgments:

