

HON. MARCELA X. ESCOBARI

MARCELA_ESCOBARI@POST.HARVARD.EDU

Senior leader with over two decades of experience building and leading academic, government and private sector organizations helping countries and institutions around the world chart a path towards prosperity. Worked with heads of state, regional policy makers and private sector leaders in over 20 countries and the U.S. to build inclusive growth policies and export competitiveness. Speak internationally and conduct research featured broadly, including in the [NYT](#), BBC, [Boston Globe](#), [Bloomberg](#) and LA Times.

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION WASHINGTON, D.C.

2018–PRESENT

Senior Fellow, Global Economy and Development program

- Created, led and funded the [Workforce of the Future](#) initiative to map the industrial development path of cities, and identify policies to help workers retool and re-enter labor markets in response to Covid-19's economic shock.
- Developed novel methods, data and [visualization](#) tools to help policy makers link growth and workforce policies. Launched [Growing Cities that Work for All: A capability based approach to regional economic competitiveness](#) and [Realism about Reskilling: Upgrading the career prospects of America's low-wage workers](#), featured in over 30 media outlets.
- Addressed foreign aid efficacy, immigration policy and how firms and regions can adapt to the future of work. Developed framework for companies to use Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) metrics that improve worker outcomes.

MASTERCARD CENTER FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH PURCHASE, NY

2017–2018

Senior Advisor. At this non-commercial, independent organization that promotes inclusive growth, advised on data philanthropy and research initiatives to support new, actionable insights on topics such as the effects of credit for small and medium sized enterprises, financial behavior and health of the poor, disbursements of social programs, and effective post disaster recovery efforts.

USAID, BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN WASHINGTON, D.C.

2016–2017

Assistant Administrator. Nominated by President Obama and [confirmed](#) by the U.S. Senate to lead LAC Bureau at USAID comprised of 17 regional missions, 900+ people and over \$1B of development funds, focused on promoting inclusive growth, human rights, democracy and governance, and citizen security.

- Advanced key regional priorities of the administration; led changes to strategy, organization and execution to respond to Congress' doubling of funding to Central America to combat root causes of poverty and migration, reinforced U.S. support for Peace Colombia, established a long-term development plan for Haiti post-hurricane, and prepared a proactive strategy to confront the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela.
- Worked with Vice President Joe Biden on accelerating efforts in Central America and implementing the \$750 million Alliance for Prosperity. Established a task force that investigated best practices in rapid ramp-ups of funding throughout the world and applied them to Central America. Deployed 70 new people in the field in two months, got Agency to prioritize hiring and procurement, and pushed in-depth analysis of opportunities for investments in each country. Briefed VP Biden at the White House on several occasions on spending and programmatic efforts in the region.
- Advocated and implemented a focus on outcome metrics of success (jobs, reduction of crime, governance) and the increased use of local organizations to implement programs to strengthen in-country institutional capacity.
- Testified and briefed Congress and other government agencies on regional priorities; including on [Nicaragua's](#) democratic backsliding, Venezuela's crisis and Central America's immigration crisis.
- Launched first external [research](#) initiative in the LAC bureau using Department of Homeland Security data, connecting development programs on violence reduction to lower immigration. Resulted in arguments to maintain root cause approach to managing migration in Central American as opposed to only border control.
- Worked with NSC Director of Western Hemisphere and interagency to proactively respond to Venezuela's deterioration.

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- Worked with the bureau of Disaster, Humanitarian and Conflict Assistance to place Venezuela on a watch list and present policy options. Efforts led to the House passing the [Venezuela Humanitarian Assistance and Defense of Democratic Governance Act of 2017](#), approving the flow of funds for the refugee crisis.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY., CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAMBRIDGE, MA 2007–2016

Executive Director. With 50 faculty associates and 80 staff and fellows, developed breakthrough research to eradicate poverty and increase the flow of insight to public and private sector leaders. Became a one of Top Five International Think Tanks in the World by UPenn ranking.

- Grew organization from 3 to 70 fellows and staff, and from \$2m to \$10m yearly budget, raising over \$20 million in new sources of revenue. Top performing center at the Harvard Kennedy School in managed funds per employee.
- Developed strategy and restructured organization to hone focus from over 20 projects to 3 major programs focused on growth, evidence-based policy making and governance.
- Launched three sub-national economic mapping projects in Colombia, Mexico and Peru, turning government data and new economic theories into online data visualization tools to aid investment decisions.
- Launched the Empowerment Lab, executive education programs, a yearly [global forum](#) and leveraged technology to reach broader audiences, including interactive online tools including [The Online Atlas](#) with over 1M unique views. Topics included growth, entrepreneurship, inclusive development and immigration.

OTF GROUP, FORMERLY MONITOR GROUP (DELOITTE), WATERTOWN, MA 2001–2007

Director. Advised countries on economic development, with a focus on improving their competitiveness in global markets. Led programs to strengthen the competitiveness of industry clusters and companies in countries in Africa and Latin America.

- Advised Dominican Republic President Fernandez on upgrading key industrial sectors; worked with manufacturing trade association to improve member firms' ability to compete.
- Advised the Colombian government on revitalizing the nation's tourism industry and drawing volume from higher-value, lower-impact market segments.
- Led 12 projects globally worth \$11 million; developed deep relationships with government leaders, foundations and donors such as the World Bank, USAID and the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB).

J.P. MORGAN, LATIN AMERICA MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS NEW YORK, NY 1996–1998

Financial Analyst. Performed financial and strategic analyses for mergers and acquisitions in consumer products, telecommunications and financial services. Identified buyers/sellers, conducted negotiations.

LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL, STRATEGY DEPARTMENT SAO PAULO & LONDON 1998–1999

Visiting Scholar. Authored and published two strategy business cases on innovative developing country companies with Professor Sumantra Goshal and Professor Donald Sull.

EDUCATION

HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL, MASTERS IN PUBLIC POLICY 1999-2001

Concentration in Science, Technology and Public Policy. Won Best Policy Application Exercise award of graduating class. Master's thesis topic: *Assessing Network Applications for Economic Development*.

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE, B.A. IN ECONOMICS 1992-1996

Languages: Spanish (native) — English (fluent) — Portuguese (proficient)

AWARDS, DISTINCTIONS AND BOARDS

- Board member of **Root Capital** Global nonprofit focused on financing rural development (2011-16)
- Named **Distinguished Judge of the St. Gallen Symposium** essay competition (2016-18)
- Selected as **Expert of the World Economic Forum Global Futures Council on Production** (2017)
- Named **Young Global Leader** by the World Economic Forum. (2013)
- Co-led the Development, Global Health and Refugee policy working group, the **Biden campaign** (2020)

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS AND REPORTS

- [Realism about Reskilling](#): Upgrading the career prospects of America's low wage workers, Washington D.C.; Brookings Institution, Co-authored with I. Seyal, J. Morales, C. Shearer (December 2019)
- [Growing cities that Work for All](#): A capability based approach to regional economic competitiveness. Washington D.C.; Brookings Institution, Co-authored with I. Seyal, M. Meaney (May 2019)
- [In the River they Swim: Essays from around the World on Enterprise Solutions to Poverty](#). Philadelphia; Templeton Press, Editor and author M. Escobari, Fairbanks, Fal & Hooper, (2009).
- Author of Chapter 13: Selling Culture without Selling Out, on the Jamaican music industry, Kingston, Jamaica, pg. 103-133, Chapter 22: Praying to the Virgin of Guadalupe, on competitiveness lessons for Mexico, Mexico City, pg 188- 195

JOURNAL ARTICLES, TESTIMONY AND OP-EDS, SELECTED:

- ["New but narrow job pathways for America's unemployed and low-wage workers"](#), Brookings Institution Up Front, with I. Seyal and C. Daboin, Nov 2020, covered in NYT.
- ["Dislocation of labor markets: What policies to mitigate the shock"](#), published with [VoxEU](#) and Brookings, co-authored with Eduardo Levy Yeyati, November 2020
- ["How the next recovery can revive upward mobility"](#), Harvard Business School Managing the Future of Work, Podcast, June 2020
- ["Reopening America & the World"](#), Brookings publication, Ch 7, "Three ways to preserve jobs", June 2020
- ["The Economy is growing and leaving low-wage workers behind"](#), Brookings Institution, December 2019
- ["Measuring the American Gig Workers is Difficult, but Essential"](#), Brookings Institution Up Front, co-authored with Sandy Fernandez, July 2018
- ["America needs a new game plan for Venezuela"](#) The National Interest, co-authored with Michael O-Hanlon, March 21, 2019
- [Made by Maduro: The Humanitarian Crisis in Venezuela and US Policy Responses](#), Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs on the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and options for the U.S. policy response follow. February, 2019
- ["How Foreign Aid helps Grand Rapids, Michigan"](#) Bloomberg View, July 2017
- ["Ukraine's real problem, in four graphs."](#) Boston Globe, Ideas section, 2014
- "A review of evidence on mobile use by micro and small enterprises in developing countries" *Journal of International Development*, Escobari, M. & Donner, J. (2010), 22, 641-658. doi: 10.1002/jid.1717

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- “For poor people a mobile can also mean a bank”, Parliamentary Brief, The Independent Commentary on Political Affairs, October 2008
- “Building Competitive Advantage”, *From Growth to Prosperity, Policy Perspective for Trinidad and Tobago*, IADB Special Publications on Development, M. Escobari, Fairbanks, Rabkin, Rodriguez, 2006, p. 187-258
- [Improving Competitiveness and Increasing Economic Diversification in the Caribbean: The Role of Information and Communication Technology \(ICT\)](#), M. Escobari, C. Rodriguez, D. Rabkin, InfoDev, 2005
- “Un Gigante Dormido: Cinco Opciones para La Competitividad en Mexico”, *PODER Magazine*, Mexico edition, May 2005
- *Assessing Network Applications for Economic Development*, co-author. Published at the Kennedy School of Government, Supported by the CID at Harvard and the Media Lab at MIT, received Best PAE Award, 2001
- “Governance for the XXI Century; The transition to E-government” in *Semana* magazine, Web Edition, 2000.
- “NATURA: The Magic Behind Brazil’s Most Admired Company”, Case Study, London Business School Press, 1999.
- “WEG: Internationalizing a Brazilian Company”, Case Study, London Business School Press, 1999.

CONFERENCES AND SPEAKER ENGAGEMENTS

Frequent speaker on issues of international development and competitiveness.

Representative examples:

- **The Atlantic Future of Work conference**, Interview with Google.org about recent publication, “Realism about Reskilling”, to audience of 500+ future of work experts. New York, NY, December 2019
- **St Gallen Symposium**, 48th annual conference, Topic leader for keynote panel “*Beyond the End of Work*” to audience of 800 European leaders of different generations. St Gallen, Switzerland, May 2018
- **World Economic Forum Regional Summit in Latin America**. Speaker in panel on “*Migration in Latin America: Between Economic Mobility and Humanitarian Displacement*”, Led interactive session on “*Promoting women entrepreneurs in Latin America*”, invited to participate in closed session with regional leaders on “*Developing a New Narrative for Latin America*”. Sao Paulo, Brazil, April 2018
- **FSG Shared Value Conference**, participated in *Better than Cash Alliance* to discuss case studies on the use of corporate data to get insights on improving the welfare of informal entrepreneurs in Kenya. NY, May 2018
- **Policy Link Equity Summit**, led panel on “*Inclusive Workplaces, Thriving Communities: Foundations for Economic Opportunity*” Chicago, April, 2018
- **Bruegel Conference**, panellist on “*People on the Move: Immigration and Integration in the European Union*” for European policy makers and press in advance of elections Rome, Italy, March 2018
- **Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)**, Speaker at event on the launch of the Report “[Achieving Growth & Security in the Northern Triangle of Central America](#)”, Session opened with Sen. Tim Kaine, Washington, DC, December, 2017
- **World Economic Forum**, Member of the Shaping the Future of Manufacturing and Production, participated in workshop on *Employment and Skills in the future of Production*, WEF Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, San Francisco, CA, December 2017. Annual Meeting of the Global Future Councils 2017 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, November, 2017
- **TrAD Works Forum**, speaker at “The Global Impact of TrAD workforce”, on the impact of remote and contract work on workforce stability and progress, Washington, DC, Oct, 2017
- **House Foreign Affairs Western Hemisphere Subcommittee Hearing** on “[Nicaragua’s Economic Collapse](#)”, with State Department. Washington, DC September, 2016
- **Senate Foreign Relations Committee**, [Testimony](#) as appointee for Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean before. Washington, February 2016

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- **World Economic Forum Annual Meeting**, led panel on “*Cross Sector Leadership*” with David Rubenstein and “*Designing out of Poverty*” with Google, Davos, Switzerland, 2015
- **Harvard’s Symposium on Inclusive Growth and Development**, moderated conference and presented on data-intensive solutions to drive inclusion. Cambridge, October 2015.
- **Atlantic Council**, Panel [speaker](#) on “Social Progress Reconsidered: What really is Success?” on new measures of social progress. Washington, DC October 2015.
- **Zermatt Summit Keynote Speaker**, “The courage to develop the world”, Zermatt, Switzerland 2014
- **Specialist Speaker at CLSA Investor Forum**, for 500 fund managers, on “New Theories on Growth” focused on Japan’s options for diversification. San Francisco, Hong Kong, March & Sept. 2010.
- **Keynote at “International Conference of Social Women Entrepreneurs”**, FONAES, Audience of over 1,000 women entrepreneurs, Mexico City, April 2006
- Led **World Bank Workshop** “*Growth, Competitiveness and the Role of Information and Communications Technologies in the Caribbean*”, World Bank InfoDev Group, Barbados, 2005
- **Social Entrepreneurship Conference**. “*Venture Capital and Entrepreneurship in Emerging Markets: An Engine for Innovation and Development*”, Harvard Business School and Kennedy School, March 7, 2004