

## WELL-INFORMED CITIZENS AS THE ENGINE OF THE PACT

LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS ENGAGE WITH  
THE MEDIA TO PROMOTE COLLECTIVE PROGRESS



A conversation among journalists and representatives of local and regional governments about their points of view to stimulate communication about urban development processes in communities took place on the fourth day of the 2023 UCLG Retreat.

The participants also discussed how to deliver effective messages about the positive impact of urban changes in local communities. This was the first session kicking off a series of public debates convened as part of the Media for

Cities campaign launched by the Urban Journalism Institute and OnCities2030 in collaboration with UCLG.

The Pact for the Future of Humanity reaffirms the importance of “free media, freedom of expression, agency and critical thinking in ensuring well-informed and empowered citizens”. It also defines free citizens as “the main engine of the social, political and economic changes” essential in realising the Pact.

The *Municipal Times* is a publication of the Urban Journalism Institute, an initiative of OnCities2030. For more information on the *Municipal Times*, contact the OnCities2030 team at [municipaltimes@oncities.org](mailto:municipaltimes@oncities.org)

## MEDIA AS PARTNERS TO ACHIEVE COMMON GOALS

The Mayor of Montevideo and UCLG President, Carolina Cosse, started the conversation by advocating for “local governments to work together with the media to tell local stories fairly, responding to the needs of the people.”

Carlos Martínez, Mayor of Soria, reminded that “UCLG’s goal is the capacity to influence international policies to solve citizens’ problems with better tools”. Taneen Rudyk, President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), explained her experience communicating with citizens and being ready to listen. She also expressed concerns about the rise of online harassment, violence and aggression cases in social media against elected officials, especially women.

José Manuel Ribeiro, Mayor of Valongo, pointed out that he is a citizen who happened to be a Mayor temporarily – and as he is expected to do his job well, he also expects journalists to do their job at the highest level. He further stressed that “it is necessary to explain that among one million elected officials in Europe, the vast majority are not corrupt. They are honest and hard-working people, and the media could support their efforts to empower communities.”

Emmanuel Carroz, Deputy Mayor of Grenoble, stressed that there is a lack of newspapers dedicated to local issues targeting the general public in France. He also expressed his opinion that currently there are fewer readers, less traditional media, fewer journalists and less time.

The Media for Cities debate also included a conversation among journalists covering urban issues. The session, moderated by urbanist and journalist Jessica Bridger, focused on constructing narratives that showcase the local approaches to global issues and the value of local storytelling.

Journalist Quynh Tran mentioned that it is important for local politicians to know which journalists to talk to if they want their specific urban projects and initiatives to be

covered in the media. Many big media houses have an economic reporter and foreign correspondent, but only a few have an urban expert writing on cities. She added that mayors looking for worldwide media coverage should ask themselves: “What my city does that can be a good example internationally”?

Pau Rodriguez, a correspondent from ElDiario.es, stressed that “local journalism” might sound like a romantic idea of journalism, but it is complex work that includes observing local realities and having multiple discussions with people. “Finding voices that do not belong to any organization and have bias is not easy”, he concluded.

Carlota Rebelo, a senior foreign correspondent in Monocle, praised the UCLG members, where mayors share information and learn from each other. She reminded that the voices, knowledge, and stories on the ground are crucial.

Jessica Bridger concluded the panel by highlighting that “there is a need to support professional journalists, telling well-research fact-checked stories about the things we all care about, about the things that advance sustainable development. It is how can we best work together to achieve common goals”.

UCLG and OnCities 2030, through the Urban Journalism Institute, joined efforts to increase the understanding and rigorous information about the local efforts towards achieving social, economic, and environmental sustainability as part of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the total commitment towards the climate action agenda.

A Media for Cities debate and an Urban Journalism Academy will be organized within the framework of the UCLG Executive Bureau in Brussels in June 2023.



## STRENGTHENING COALITIONS TO ACCELERATE ACTION



High-impact partnerships for transformation are a critical milestone to foster innovation and impact at the territorial and local levels. As the capacity of UCLG to amplify the voices of the membership deepens, renewed partnerships will be critical in forging far-reaching transformative visions reflected in The Pact for the Future.

Session moderator Bernadía Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary General, UCLG-ASPAC, mentioned common urban challenges that cities face regardless of size or location. She stressed that partnership and knowledge exchange is important.

The concept of a 15-minute city was first initiated at COP21. The urbanist Carlos Moreno referred to the idea of 15-min cities inspired by the humanistic action of finding a new balance of the territory in offering services in proximity and connected public space while generating jobs and economies, and partnerships, which contribute to relations. Still, this concept became more valid, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic or current issues with the energy that resulted from a war in Europe.

Pilar Conesa, Curator of the Smart City Expo World Congress mentioned that the congress was created in Barcelona to try to have various communities to collaborate and innovate for a shared vision of a better urban future.

Greg Munro, Director of Cities Alliance, reminded the members of 20 billion dollars invested in Haiti in 10 years, yet, as a partnership of organizations and agencies working in Haiti was not efficient, the recovery efforts could be considered as failed. He further emphasized that the local and regional governments constituency brings to the table the most important thing – working with and for the urban poor. Hence, for meaningful partnerships, the local government is at the centre. The partnership is about equality, he concluded.

Pablo Jurado, Prefect of Imbabura and President of CONGOPE, mentioned the work in his prefecture to support women to lead the business in tourism. Pascal Smet, State Secretary of the Brussels-Capital Region, stressed the importance of building partnerships where UCLG Members and partners can localize big ambitions. Membership and partners can localize big ambitions.

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS OPEN FOR THE GUANGZHOU AWARD

The 6th edition of the Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation is open and will accept submissions until 31 August 2023. The Award recognizes innovation in improving social, economic, and environmental sustainability and good urban governance in cities and regions. It is discerned to up to five cities, and over 1,300 initiatives worldwide entered their submissions in the five cycles already held.

The call is open to cities and local governments worldwide with ongoing or recently completed initiatives, including those implemented in collaboration with private and civil society partners.

The Guangzhou Deputy Director-General of Municipal Foreign Affairs Office, Deng Changxiong, launched the call for application submission during the 2023 UCLG

Retreat in Barcelona. Deng stressed the commitment of the Chinese government and the City of Guangzhou to sustainable development and economy. He mentioned that the Global Mayor's Forum and the Award are opportunities for innovation and contributing to peace. He called on the attendants to submit their proposals and, through this participation, implement the agenda on inclusive and sustainable cities.

This biennial award is co-sponsored by the City of Guangzhou of the People's Republic of China, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the World Association of the Major Metropolises (Metropolis). It has become a global platform for city-to-city learning and the documentation, dissemination, and analysis of the local implementation of global agendas, including SDGs and the New Urban Agenda (NUA).

More information is available here:  
[www.guangzhouaward.org](http://www.guangzhouaward.org)



## SOLUTIONS FOR REVI'S QUIZ

In yesterday's Municipal Times Journal edition, a quiz based on Aromar Revi's intervention was published on Tuesday, 21 February. These are the answers:

### 1. What is the size of the global economy (in USD)?

Around \$100 Trillion. According to the International Monetary Fund, it was \$106 Trillion in October 2022.

### 2. What is the yearly added value of the global economy (in percentage)

Around 2%. According to the International Monetary Fund, it was 2.7% in October 2022.

### 3. How much of that yearly added value is produced by local governments?

Around 70-80% of the added value of the world comes from cities, towns and urban areas.

### 4. Where does that added value go?

It goes to less than ten countries and probably less than 20 cities

## “FEMINISMS ARE THE HOPE OF THE WORLD”

**CAROLINA COSSE**, MAYOR OF MONTEVIDEO AND CURRENT PRESIDENT OF UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (UCLG)

### Why is it important for cities to talk about the future?

It is very important that cities organically come together. In general, I think that the problems one mayor faces might be similar to what their other colleagues face. This happened to me when I talked to mayors from diverse places like the United States, Europe, Africa, and Latin America. This shows that we are all in the same place at the end of the day. So, there is an issue of proximity that the work imposes on us, and there is an issue of responding to the needs of the grouping of people. It is very important that cities have many areas where we can share experiences, collaborate and be productive.

**UCLG adopted the Pact for the Future of Humanity in October last year. It is the first time the organisation has presented itself as a feminist organisation. And in this collective of which you spoke, what value would we place on feminisms for a Pact for the Future for Humanity?**

Feminisms are the world's hope, and I recommend reading this Pact. You must read it because it is not a very long document but is deep, dense, and well done. It has three main axes around a core, which is care, which is deployed in three main areas: caring for people, caring for the planet, and caring for democracy.

**You mentioned now that feminisms are hope, and we read that you also said cities are continents of hope. But is there hope? If yes, what do cities contribute to this collective hope?**

Yes, there is hope. And to find it, you don't have to look far away, you have to look close to you, very close. We are talking about politics, and those of us who are part of it, who exercise collective responsibilities, we are obliged to follow a course in honour of the sacrifice that everyone else makes every day of life, which is very hard. This is what we are part of. There is hope, and we have to give it a place.

**What do you imagine these cities of the future to be like for the people you serve?**



The city I would want is a city where you can always find your place. There is a place for you in the city of the future. There is no hunger. There is no cold. There are many meetings, there are discussions, and there is a commitment to life.

**If we were to do an exercise where we could transport you forward in time to the future and we could talk to future generations, what would you tell them?**

I would ask them what I should have done differently.

**What would the international-national system of the future have to look like in order to facilitate this very special city that you mention?**

Courageously frank, honest and people driven. I sometimes feel that, in the collective imagination of human beings, governments rule, and in reality, governments have to be ruled. That would be a sound democracy.

**How do you imagine a future United Nations that can respond to this? Maybe it doesn't have to be just countries.**

Maybe not. It would have to be countries, cities, civil society, and everybody.

## **What does it mean to bring people to the centre and put them at the centre of deciding the global? And how do we make the international discussion relevant for people?**

I think what we have to think about is that people become interested in politics, people become interested in the issues of reality, and that is why social, feminist, workers', professional and neighbourhood organisations are working more and more, and that is very good because organised people are always better than isolated people.

Things that the political system must do is to be brave and give space to young people. Be braver and listen to the older people in society, not the older people in the political system, whom I love very much. But the older people in society, who have been there for a lifetime and who learned during the pandemic how we need each other. We all have to make an effort, politics has to open up much more to take a bath of humility every day, and society has to start asking itself: is politics really that bad?

## **And if organised society is better than isolated society, is organised local government better than disorganised local government?**

Absolutely. Yes, of course. It all leads us to UCLG.

## **What can be done to change our relationship with the planet, and how do we imagine our new relationship with the planet?**

Well, maybe that's where we're missing layers of information. There is a world there that we don't know about that we participate in, yes, but it's like the tip of an iceberg where we participate. Underneath is a whole other world managed by, I don't know, 200 people, half a million, a million. That's why politics is so important, because the more we get involved in the decision-making loop, maybe those who are running the world have a little problem and can start to listen a little bit more.

## **What is the value of public services in restoring faith in politics and those who govern it?**

I am fortunate because my country has historically valued the public sector since its beginning, I would say, and fundamentally from the first half of the 20th century onwards. The electricity company is public; the water company is public, owned by the State. When everybody was selling their public companies, Uruguay had a plebiscite

and decided not to sell them. My children went to the same public school I went to. I was educated at a public university.

Now, as mayor, I am fortunate to discover the marvellous potential of public spaces, which all human beings revisited during the pandemic and started to value them more again. The public space that is not yours is not mine and yet belongs to everyone. And this cannot be confused with "it belongs to no one" because if it does not belong to anyone, I do not take care of it. It belongs to everyone; I have to look after it because tomorrow, someone else will come along and sit in the same place as me. We, mayors, should take care of it in that sense.

## **What do you think should be the roadmap for bringing the commons into the discussion of the future?**

The products that the commons provide are the material basis for building any future. Telecommunications, water, energy, culture, public space? Without these it is very difficult to build a future.

## **In the complex international system, we are in, what will it be like to lead a purely global organisation from your position?**

For me, it is a huge challenge. Nothing starts with you. UCLG does not start with you. It is an organisation that is already many years old. It is a long-lived organisation with a great team that manages it well. Without getting into the complication of international politics, it is right to be an example, with the defence of peace, of democracy. The Pact says democracy. We are not indifferent to whether a regime is democratic or not.

I don't know what party or orientation the mayors with me are from, nor do I care. What we have in common is our day-to-day work and that, at the end of the day, we have very similar problems and similar, if not the same, experiences.



## THE MUNICIPAL FORECAST 2023 IS OUT!

The first number of the Municipal Forecast was launched on Thursday, 23 February, within the framework of the UCLG 2023 Retreat. An initiative of the Urban Journalism Institute in collaboration with UCLG, the Municipal Forecast 2023 is a publication that presents a glimpse at the trends and important topics related to cities and territories in 2023.

Starting from the discussion about multilateralism and the upcoming major events where local government can show the 'Power of We' to the review of the local elections and women's leadership, the report also covers specific topics, including urban resilience, climate change, accessibility and tourism, public transport, and housing.

Ana Moreno, President of OnCities2030 and Director of the Urban Journalism Institute, stressed that the Forecast "is a humble approach to analyzing global trends from the local perspective. There are a lot of local trends happening that we are not always aware of, and maybe we should start deeper conversations about these topics."

The Municipal Forecast 2023 is available here: <https://urbanjournalism.institute/forecast/>



## LISTEN TO THE RETREAT PLAYLIST AT HOME!

Wherever you are from and whatever you listen to, you will find a space in the 2023 UCLG Retreat playlist created with songs selected by all participants. A list of the most intercultural, with rock, pop, ska, hip-hop, soul or indie songs from all over the world represented in the playlist, there is no lack of genres or messages. Don't miss the opportunity to check it out: <https://spoti.fi/3lod7Gz>

## THE MARKETPLACE

The Marketplace of the UCLG Retreat took place on Thursday, 23 February, as an interactive space for partners to present an "elevator pitch" of their organization, initiative or tool. Over 19 partners have presented their projects at the marketplace. After the presentations, all participants had an opportunity to network and hear more about the project they were interested in. The information is demand-driven, and participants were able to collect the basket filled with different initiatives that are interesting to them.



## URBAN WALK IN 22@BCN

Once the UCLG Retreat is over, and for those staying in Barcelona for the weekend, we propose to have a walk around to discover the 22@ district and its unique combination of the past, present and future.

1. **Glòries Tower.** Formerly known as the Agbar Tower, it has become an indispensable element of Barcelona's skyline and gateway to the 22@ district (Diagonal Avenue #211).
2. **Disseny Hub Barcelona.** A space to visit the Barcelona Design Museum collections, the Design Museum's Documentation Centre, the El Clot-Josep Benet Library, and various temporary exhibitions. (Plaza de les Glories Catalanes, #37-38).
3. **Mediapro Tower.** It hosts the most important company production in the country with the same name (Diagonal Avenue #177).
4. **UPF Communication Campus.** The Pompeu Fabra University campus includes Ca l'Aranyó, considered one of the most representative constructions of the Catalan industrial heritage. (Roc Boronat Street #138).
5. **Media-TIC building.** An incubator for IT companies, which hosts the Digital Cibernàrium (Roc Boronat Street #117).
6. **Superblock.** The so-called superblock is a space that drastically reduces the area's motor traffic and creates a greener space, without noise and with sites dedicated to citizens' recreation. The superblock embraces the streets of Almogàvers, Badajoz, Pallars, de la Llacuna, Roc Boronat, Ciutat de Granada and Tanger.
7. **Can Ricart.** It is one of the three large industrial complexes of the 19th century that remain in Barcelona (Emília Corantý Street #5).
8. **Ca l'Alíer.** An old factory from the 19th century where Cisco and Schneider Electric have their research centers. You can stroll along the central street of the grounds, which connects Pere IV with Cristóbal de Moura and is for public use. (Pere IV Street #362).
9. **Parc del Centre.** Over five hectares of greenery were designed by the French architect Jean Nouvel in 2008. Nouvel is also the architect of the first stop of the urban walk, Torre Glòries. (Avinguda Diagonal #130).
10. **Can Recasens Restaurant.** Located in an emblematic modernist building of the Poblenou neighbourhood, it was founded at the beginning of the 20th century (Rambla del Poblenou #102).



## TWITTER SAYS!

**#MediaforCities, #MunicipalForecast and #LocalGov** are the Twitter highlights of the fourth day of the UCLG Retreat that saw the presence of journalists in the morning session.

The UCLG Retreat at @PaloAltoBcn, surprises in its final stretch with a marketplace full of exciting initiatives and a conversation between local governments and the media, which will feed the next debate held, as part of the UCLG Executive Bureau, in June 2023 in Brussels.

Mayors and elected officials from #Spain, #CostaRica, #Iran, #Ecuador and more gathered "to reflect about media" and the role they play in understanding how cities are built and managed. "The role of the media is essential for the achievement of the #Agenda2030", affirms a tweet, because "access to information, knowledge and culture are key to sustainable development". Users of social networks all agree that well-informed citizens make their own decisions.

The day was marked by commitment and collective action. Messages that stress the need for high-impact partnerships to accelerate action and mitigate the issues of most significant concern that our cities face. In the words of Greg Munro, director of @CitiesAlliance, "relief and rebuilding programs have failed in the past due to a lack of meaningful partnerships. Local and regional governments have to be at the center".

Clearly, we need committed media and partnerships that respond to communities' needs, making global agendas tangible.