

POLICY COUNCILS  TOWNHALLS

# FUTURE ENVISIONING EXERCISES

BRIEFING NOTE

*Regaining Trust*

## FUTURE ENVISIONING EXERCISES

The Future Envisioning Exercises, mandated by the UCLG Policy Councils, are a mechanism to **unfold the Pact for the Future**. They are the common point of arrival of the present Policy Councils and Town Halls, building up on the outputs and outcomes of both processes, the UCLG World Congress and the 2023 Retreat. While, simultaneously, they are **a common point of departure**: they are a space of dialogue and co-creation in which the UCLG political leadership, together with organized civil society and partners articulated in the UCLG Town Halls, will aim to reach real and tangible conclusions through forward-looking consultations around 4 Entry Points to unfold the Pact for the Future: **Reclaiming the Commons, Redefining Finances, Regaining Trust** and **Rebuilding Governance Architecture**.

The conclusions reached will inform the deliberations of UCLG's statutory bodies, thus contributing to the political mandate of the Pact and the roadmap of our world organization. These deliberations will also inform how the Pact for the Future contributes to the UN General Assembly's revision of the 2030 Agenda at the SDG Summit, as well as to the 2023 Summit of the Future, which will build on and contribute to the Secretary General's "Our Common Agenda".

Kindly access the meeting [by clicking here](#).

Meeting ID: 861 4613 3882

Passcode 531971

## 1. SETTING THE SCENE

The UN Secretary General's Common Agenda calls for the need to renew the social contract between Governments and their people and within societies, so as to rebuild trust and embrace a comprehensive vision of human rights."

This Future Envisioning Exercise understands **trust as an essential element for the healthy functioning of complex societies**. Trust is the belief in the ability, reliability or truth of other people or institutions. As human beings, we need trust in our peers to survive and in other people to thrive and live in community. Likewise, in the complex and diverse societies that make up the world in the 21st century, trust is necessary to maintain peace, solidarity, trade, and other scientific, economic, and social institutions. Unfortunately, in many areas—politics, media, science, or academia—distrust is increasing in a polarized world divided into bubbles of values and information.

We understand that **regaining trust is an enabler for the global agenda's implementation and is very related to the success of the commons agenda and the governance architecture to be implemented**. Trust, based on greater transparency and co-creation of institutions, is an opportunity to strengthen a more sustainable and fairer economy.

In its wake-up call, "Our Common Agenda" cites building trust as one of the key recommendations. Proposing new spaces for dialogue, guaranteeing rigorous channels of information, and devising new tools for participatory democracy and transparency are lines of work that we must promote in order to begin to regain confidence in the functioning of our societies.

As mentioned by Katy Rubin, facilitator of Legislative Theatre and winner of the IOPD 2022 Award Best Practice in Citizen Participation, at the UCLG Retreat in February 2023:

Based on the example of the Legislature Theater, in order to regain confidence we must start with "a **shared understanding** of the problem, not just from a white paper or a news article, but from a theatrical, emotional, and human-centered articulation in a communal space; through a **shared experience** of working to solve the problem together, via live, improvisational testing; and through **shared risk-taking** or vulnerability, from approaching a participatory policymaking without predefined outcomes, via a (fun!) process designed to challenge and redistribute power. **Shared understanding; shared experience; and shared risk.**"

*POLITICAL STATEMENT: PACT FOR THE FUTURE AND OUR COMMON AGENDA.*

*"At all levels, building trust between citizens, institutions and communities, as well as protecting human rights and democratic values are an essential precondition to boost our democracies and build a fairer, more inclusive and effective international system. The Pact for Government places local democracy at the heart of action, stressing the importance of representation and participation; inclusivity and empowerment in decision making instances, the urgent need to restore transparency, honesty and accountability at all levels of government as a means to rebuild a more representative, inclusive and efficient multilateral system."*

*"Acknowledge the lack of trust between citizens and institutions called to serve them and guarantee their rights, which negatively impacts both governance and mainstream institutions alike. That there is a profound need to creatively renew democratic practices, systems and institutions to foster co-responsibility, social control over public decisions, so they are better equipped to respond to the needs and aspirations of citizens. That, in this foundational moment, renewing democracy and citizenship largely depends on the impartial and consistent application of the rule of law."*

*"Environments that are healthy, accessible, and institutions that serve all impartially will restore trust and boost hope, solidarity and optimism, liberating our collective imaginations, and instilling a new sense of what is possible at home and for the world."*

*"Now is the time to renew the social contract between Governments and their people and within societies, so as to rebuild trust and embrace a comprehensive vision of human rights."*

*"There is a growing disconnect between people and the institutions that serve them, with many feeling left behind and no longer confident that the system is working for them, an increase in social movements and protests and an ever deeper crisis of trust fomented by a loss of shared truth and understanding. There has been questioning of how we share our societies and this fragile planet, of the fundamental ties that connect us, and of how we engage with those who disagree, who feel unjustly treated or who feel excluded."*

## 2. KEY FACTS AND CHALLENGES

### Facts:

- **None of the societal leaders tracked by the 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer –government leaders, CEOs, journalists and even religious leaders—are trusted to do what is right**, with drops in trust scores for all. Trust rates stand respectively at 41%, 42%, 45% and 48% among surveyed respondents for each leadership type.<sup>1</sup>
- **Without a trusted leadership source to look to, people don't know where or who to get reliable information.** The same study shows that the global infodemic has driven trust in all news sources to record lows with social media (35%) and owned media (41%) the least trusted; traditional media (53%) saw the largest drop in trust at eight points globally between 2020 and 2021.
- **Social structure overlooks youth participation.** A lack of inclusive platforms for engagement, political participation and advocacy reflects the distrust in youth's capacity for meaningful contribution embedded in the existing social structure<sup>2</sup>
- **Building trust through local participation.** A 2020 study queried whether participatory budgeting increased voter participation in 48 Czech municipalities, to find it did increase voting in municipal elections more than in national contests. The study also found that the higher the total budget allocated to participatory decision-making and the size of the city were also critical factors in the increase.<sup>3</sup>

### Challenges

- Progress in information and communication technologies, as well as artificial intelligence, are ahead of regulation and understanding on the part of society.
- How to gain trust when societies are increasingly unequal, and with the prospect of looming crises: climate, technological, more tense international relations?
- Tension between the short and long term of some proposals to regain trust. In the short term, more transparency and freedom of expression may lead to the emergence of cases of corruption and greater criticism

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer Insights

<sup>2</sup> UCLG, 2022 Policy Paper of the UCLG Youth Caucus.

<sup>3</sup> 'Does Participatory Budgeting Bolster Voter Turnout in Elections? The Case of the Czech Republic', Soňa Kukučková, Eduard Bakoš

of institutions, and may increase distrust. In the long term it should have a positive effect.

- There are and there will be tensions and unexpected consequences and critical limitations, including the manufactured polarization and the growing powers of international corporations, but also our own social and institutional skills to manage trust.
- Government censorship and limits to freedom of expression are a human violation that continuously erodes the relationship between communities and institutions.
- Tied to this, the proliferation of fake news is also a factor in the growing crisis of trust, which is itself tied to the eroding relationship between communities and their governments.
- Human rights violations occur at the digital level, and technology is often seen as a barrier to the enjoyment of full human rights for all people.

### 3. GENERAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What actions can our constituency in alliance with civil society take to promote trust through education, culture, more open and transparent institutions and community life based on respect for human rights?
- What support and transformations should we demand from the international system in areas such as the regulation of major media, social media platforms, AI development companies?
- How should we address the debate on rebuilding trust in societies that are increasingly polarized, divided and with the rise of extremism?

## 4. AGENDA

### SETTING THE SCENE

By UCLG World Secretariat

### INTERACTIVE CONSULTATION

By UCLG World Secretariat

### ENTRY POINT

Introductory comments by **Jessica Bridger**

*A proximity case of freedom of speech and polarization: the 15 minutes' city proposal and conspiracy theories*

by **Carlos Moreno**, University Professor, cities expert, territories of tomorrow, specialist in intelligent control of complex systems.

### CONTRIBUTIONS

**Emilio Jatón**, Mayor of Santa Fe

**Katy Rubin**, Legislative Theatre

**Carola Gunnarson**, Councillor of Sala, UCLG Special Envoy for Freedom, Solidarity and Fighting Violence against Local Political Leaders, UCLG Vice-President for Europe

### IN FOCUS

**José Maria Martin**, Open Government Partnership

### AGORA

Facilitated by **Barbara Holtman**, Fixed Africa

## 5. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- UCLG (2022). Pact for the Future of Humanity. [https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclgpactforthe\\_future.pdf](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclgpactforthe_future.pdf)
- United Nations. (2021). The UN's Secretary General's "Our Common Agenda." [https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common\\_Agenda\\_Report\\_English.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf)
- Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization. GOLD VI report; Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. <https://www.goldvi.uclg.org/en>
- Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization. GOLD VI Governance and human rights chapter. <https://www.goldvi.uclg.org/en/governance-and-pathways>
  - Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization. GOLD VI Democratizing chapter. <https://www.goldvi.uclg.org/en/democratizing>
- Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization. (2020). Emergency Governance Initiative for Cities and Regions. <https://www.gold.uclg.org/report/emergency-governance-initiative-cities-and-regions>
- Policy paper prepared by the Trust and Government Town Hall: Time for a New Social Contract: Rebuilding Trust in Local Government. [https://decidim-uclg.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/decidim/attachment/file/4288/TH\\_P\\_Trust\\_Government.pdf](https://decidim-uclg.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/decidim/attachment/file/4288/TH_P_Trust_Government.pdf)