

# A Love Letter to Our World – Challenging notions and establishing connection

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What comes next? We are one of the most privileged generations to ever walk on this planet. Yet, we feel unheard and that our impact could be greater if we were entrusted with more responsibility. It is odd how, at the same time, we face one of the greatest challenges to humankind and also inherit one of the most divided political and social environments. It seems like, in the history of humankind, we have never been as divided on an individual level as we are today.

We share the idea that true change cannot be brought about by individuals actions. The interconnectedness of the world that we grew up in has shown us that the challenges of our time are not met in isolation but through cooperation and on global scale. The harder it is to see the ways in which people grow apart. To face the challenges that lay ahead, every generation has to find ways to come together. We face the reality of climate change and we strive for solutions. We see the division that is reinforced by social media but also the hopes, ideas, best practices, and support that it helps us share.

There is more press given to the division on social media but when interacting on different digital space, we see people from across all different backgrounds in their attempts to build bridges. Social media is a tool, that our generation deploys to amplify ideas instead and generate solutions to shared problems and enables us to find like-minded people to act on them. We relate to one another but also often feel disconnected and sorely miss the feeling of belonging.

While we as society have taken democratic systems for granted, the rising distrust in government and democracy has the potential to undermine any collective effort to curb the problems ahead. To find solutions for global problems on a global scale and implement them locally, communication is key. Democracy, with its embedded values and consequences for collective responsibility, is not viewed as positive as it has been – and that might be a good thing. To rearrange and reevaluate democratic rule under the new-found possibilities of digitalization, inter-connectedness and globalization, protectionism in politics and trade of individual states and countries frequently fails to deliver on sustainable solutions. Finding different ways to balance interest and needs, while managing fears and hopes that are connected to sharing responsibility and authority, remains a challenge for all of us.

Among the many risks that lay in front of us, one is that we live in a time-period in which everything is fast-changing. Today's trend is gone by tomorrow. Just a few hundred years ago it was crucial to preserve, to maintain, what had been established. Today, our influence as a species demands that we face and welcome change. We need to lose our fear of change. Having grown up in the age of rapid digitalization, our generation has been socialized by a global community of interaction. Borders are of little relevance since friendships formed in the digital realm or during exchange programs and travel transcend human-made restrictions. While movements in recent years have been lobbying for the return to "golden ages", "the old time", or "tried methods" there is no way to go back. Solutions from yesterday are not fit for today's challenges and will not be so at all in tomorrow's world.

Because of our adaptation to change, many of us have been described as “quitters”. Quitters for changing studies, for ending relationships, for moving away. It is time that we change the notion of quitting. Quitting things that are not fitting for one’s life (like the wrong course of study) helps us to find what we are truly good at. Welcoming complexity, understanding and managing change: these are the competencies that an upbringing in globalized and digitalized environments fosters. While it often feels like we need to pick sides and judge what is right or wrong, our diversity of thought and life teaches us better. The complexity of even individual lives allows us to see that a multitude of approaches and solutions bear validity. Reflection on what suits us and what is important to us is a process that we all go through.

The deep understanding of a dire need for new solutions and the courage to try new approaches to innovate is part of our willingness to break with established notions and dogmas. While we need new solutions, their acceptance and implementation needs to build on solid foundations. Finding new definitions for terms such as growth, wealth, and success can not only help to shape discourse about the defining aspects of our century but also reframe and reshape our collective understanding towards a shared future.

In its core, the questions of our time boil down to “how do we communicate?” Discourse is, more often than not, lost in details and division by perceived differences. These alleged points of contention quickly divide and lead away from the underlying issues that should be in the center of attention. Our ability to listen and to judge the argument that is made instead of the person that states it might foster understanding. It might enable us to communicate differently because it will be crucial that future disagreements are not ending in division but in synthesis. Restructuring established organizations, reorganizing responsibility, and reshaping existing processes throughout all aspects of society can lay the foundation for learning democracy from the ground up. It would be fatal to expect that children that had to obey authority in schools and their upbringing could participate in and understand democracy by nature. Rebuilding understanding and therefore trust in democratic processes will not start at the ballot box but in the very fabric of all organizations in our society.

Communication opens the question of how we relate to one another. How can we bring back the we, the collective, instead of the I? Since notions of belonging like nationality, religion, or party affiliation, tools that provided stability and connection, are quickly losing their importance we tread aside unknown paths in finding shared identity. Our challenge as a generation is finding things that give us connection, that provide inner peace, that provide perspective. The broad willingness to share advice, as portrayed on social media and social gatherings, is accompanied by honesty and openness in allowing vulnerability and risking pain for the prospect of growth. Coming together and establishing newfound connections will enable us to cooperate on solving the challenges of our time. Furthermore, it can help us to heal open wounds of division and exclusion. Seeing diversity as a key resource instead of an obstructive or even destructive problem reframes the view that we share on our collective reality. We learned that building a common future cannot happen in isolation and division, which makes our principle to include everyone all the more important.

Our generation faces a lot of uncertainty, with established structures and norms unfit to provide frameworks for new solutions. In essence, simple solutions are a thing of the past. Yet judging in terms of right or wrong still prevails. It is hard to let go of long-established notions. The dogmas of our collective story are standing strong. But we are not afraid to challenge them. Within that lays our strength: to propose new solutions, to try uncertain ideals, to believe in unproven hopes. Not being afraid by complexity, welcoming change, and enduring uncertainty are abilities that prepare for the globalized challenges of our generation. Maybe it is the task of every young generation to challenge what came before them and find new ways of living together. Nevertheless, the interconnectedness challenges us to think broader. Having reinterpreted failure as a chance and learning opportunity and

not as something that defines you as a person, we are poised to learn and try out. While our approaches to learning are decentralized and detached from confined structures, this seems threatening to old systems of evaluation and standardization. Yet, it is our creativity and thinking outside of the box that we believe is vital in shaping the coming decades.

Still, there is a frustration when it comes to shaping future policy. Instead of being handed problems, our generation needs to be given the competencies and decisive powers to challenge established notions and find different solutions for a world that is our future. The feeling of standing on the sideline and having no influence on our development as society breeds frustration and apathy towards the very systems that we will have to inherit. Making democracy and participation available to everyone in society will be one of the great challenges we face.

Why would this be a love letter, as indicated in the title? Love is not about being perfect, it is not about conditions. You love something or someone because you choose to. It is an attitude. It is a commitment, a promise, to work together towards a better future. We love this world because we dare to believe. Out there is full of solutions. We will find them together.