Children of Utopia

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Historic events of recent times have shown that youths no longer avoid problems regretfully but demand and promote changes in society so that it evolves towards peaceful coexistence and in harmony with the environment. Therefore, young people who are between two cultures play a fundamental role, since their experience enables them to create synergies against polarisation and find outlets for dialogue and lucid reflection. In this process, technology can be a very useful tool for generating more open ecosystems where international cooperation is a priority for different countries. Similarly, these young people of diverse origin need to be able to exercise healthy, empathetic and transversal social leadership that helps us move towards a more inclusive, just and peaceful Mediterranean and world.

They say that language creates realities, and this is absolutely true. The strength of a word is capable of striking souls, transforming people, and even shaping worlds. Human beings have always shown an obsession with defining their environment through often pre-manufactured labels and concepts. It may seem anecdotal but for people who have always lived between two worlds, exposed to multiple differences and identities, the power of vocabulary is decisive. The clearest example comes when talking about young people of migrant parents using expressions such as "second generation migrants", coined with good intentions, but that actually sentence the migrant status to a chronic state. One day, our grandparents and parents had to leave their country of origin in search of new opportunities beyond their borders and, over time, they settled in other places where they raised their families. Today, we inherit this label of migrants without ever having been in transit, condemned by appearances and prejudices to live eternally in a delocalised and ethereal limbo, while being proud of an origin that, when we understand it, makes us better.

The paths of this first immigration of the 1970s, trodden by men and women who underwent an arduous process full of life experiences marked by giving up their everyday worlds in exchange for new opportunities in other more distant places, now fork in the pathways of their children, who were born in the host land and have had to learn to grow and live loving the complexity of their diversity.

"Oh immigrant, where are you going? Sooner or later you will tire and end up coming back," sang the missed Rachid Taha in one of his legendary songs, *The Emigrant*. In the song, he interestingly reflects on that disturbing moment when someone decides to leave in the hope of returning one day with the fleetingness of time, when they achieve their mission of carving out a better life. In the same song or, rather, in what is already a hymn to the people who one day left everything behind, the singer

himself laments and recognises that the journey is irreversible and will forever mark those who take it. It is something like a fatality of time and the circumstances that are accepted as the experience progresses, and that ends up dissipating along with guilt, fragility, uncertainty and fear of having left.

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The children of immigration naturally adopt the new paradigm and acquire the values and ways of understanding life in their place of birth along with those of their family origin. We young people who are part of this reality constantly "sprout our roots and spread our wings" to connect with ourselves and fly into the unknown through freedom and empathy. We live a constant struggle between what is established by imposition and the dreams of what we want to become. It is a process of building an identity that flows between different worlds and realities, and is carved out in the midst of constant internal struggles to prolong, expand, and become even more complex with the passage of time.

Keys for an Inclusive Mediterranean

We young Mediterranean people share much more than we think. The way we understand the world and the values that our generation embodies represents a hope that must prevail over chronic pessimism. We are united by the search for horizons committed to universality, beyond the evils of globalisation. We believe in a society capable of being malleable and flexible in the face of adversity, but at the same time upright and faithful to democratic

commitment and human progress, which understands equality and social justice as fundamental and inalienable pillars of society. The multitude of social movements and the creation of civic and social organisations that enrich the different regions on both shores are a clear example of these beliefs.

Perhaps the great challenges of recent times have forced this process of organisation and pro-activeness to accelerate: from the serious economic crisis of 2008, through various mobilisations and social demands, to the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 virus. There are many barriers that have been imposed and are already part of a turbulent past, an unstable present and an uncertain future. To deal with this context, it is vital to believe in youths beyond appearances, politically-speaking. It is important to focus on five essential aspects that, in my humble opinion, should constitute the roadmap for the coming years:

New Leaderships, New Voices

Within the reality we are describing, we need young people of diverse origin capable of exercising healthy, empathetic and transversal leadership. The youths of the Mediterranean must connect with their respective communities to undertake new collective initiatives that work through pragmatism and a constructive spirit, without falling into victimism and with the intention of influencing change by personal example, inclusiveness and communication skills. Fortunately, many people are already playing that role: throughout the world, there are many community leaders who, at the local level, influence the global level. The key is to generate synergies that allow them to make themselves known to the public as social agents with authority, in the best sense of the word, and decision-making power. These inspiring benchmarks are a fundamental tool for social cohesion.

Solidarity and International Cooperation

If the Covid-19 pandemic has shown us anything, it is the strong interconnection and interdependencies that exist between states. Indeed, the fragility of our systems has been exposed, and the artificiality and inoperability of what is pre-established by inertia have been revealed. This is the time to question everything and turn the situation around to generate more open ecosystems, where international cooperation between the different countries is the maxim. We need more cooperation and less competition, less duplication and more shared strengths and resources. As part of the citizenry, we must demand from our political leaders a change of model to transfer to everyday life, to organisations and companies, a philosophy that reviews the scale of collective values, which can and should be transformative. When uncertainty is the new norm, isolation and inaction should never be the answer. At the same time, we must act with solidarity between peoples, understanding, for example, that there are aspects as important as the management of diversity and the drama of migration and refugees, which are humanitarian matters, and do not only and exclusively concern the borders between states.

Equality, Social Justice and Environmental Awareness

We cannot envisage a future Mediterranean without equality and social justice. Equality between men and women, equality of opportunities for people at risk of social exclusion and who are part of vulnerable groups, freedom for each person to be who they want to be and believe in themselves, equality in access to universal rights, such as education and health. Social justice to guarantee equality and access to resources without distinction of race, religion, colour, nationality or sex. All these factors are decisive for societies to advance in peace and harmony, since there is no peace without social justice. Moving towards this desired scenario involves recognising mistakes and being critical of the current status, which requires a redistribution of wealth and new production models that involve greater investment in the social and sharing economy. Similarly, we must not forget the environmental emergency, since measures are needed to slow down the devastating blow that we are dealing to the planet with climate change. Movements like Fridays for Future or Me Too have shown young people's deep social awareness and have managed to embarrass the great leaders of the planet by putting them before the mirror of reality, without losing their non-conformity and with a smile.

Innovation and Digitalisation

The technological revolution is bringing about great changes in the way people must understand the current panorama. Digitalisation has brought us important advances thanks to new tools such as macro data, artificial intelligence, 3D printing, virtual and augmented reality, the 5G connection revolution, drones, robotics, the Internet of Things and e-learning, among many others. All of them are scientific achievements that allow us to advance in solving endemic problems. Modernising and digitalising our organisations and entities will guarantee us more prosperity, although we must be clear that there is no technological and digital future without ethical and moral reflection. We young people do not understand the world without technology, which has impregnated not only communications but how we understand religion or intercultural exchange. It is a new language and it is time to do things differently to how they have been done so far,

to find new solutions to old problems based on social innovation.

Democratic Participation and Vocation

The more connected we are, the more individualist we are, which is a paradox. Media noise is generating important echo chambers that lead us towards social polarisation, where the space for dialogue and lucid reflection is reduced. We must educate the youngest so that they can develop a critical attitude and prepare them for a world marked by post-truths and fake news. Given the danger of the extinction of meeting spaces, we must create ways of bringing people closer. It is time to turn to our democratic values and forcefully vindicate them, faced with the threats of populism and demagoguery, which only produce pain.

Towards an Intercultural Society

The latest events help us guess at where this new decade is heading. A broken, flimsy, disturbing world is coming, in which we will have to pave over the cracks and fractures with passion and determination. Weariness with politics and the gloom of harsh reality should not cloud our eyes. As young people who live between two waters and two cultures, let us put our reality and diversity at the service of people. Intercultural societies are more essential than ever.

The historic events of this last year have shown that young people no longer avoid problems regretfully but demand and promote changes. One of the hardest moments and that has caused the most tension, as well as having a profound impact on everyone's conscience, has been the murder of George Floyd in the United States at the hands of the Minneapolis police, an event that has undoubtedly unleashed rage and marked a turning point. Millions of young people are fed up and now seek a way to assert justice once and for all and eliminate racism and xenophobia from institutions. It is a demand that goes beyond American borders and that many young people from the Mediterranean have already endorsed, since the causes and circumstances of George Floyd's death resemble many of their realities, marked by injustice and hatred. It would be wrong to turn a deaf ear to this event and regard it as something far away, as if it had nothing to do with us, because it concerns us more than we believe. It is the moment to analyse with calm and common sense the inclusion and host systems of our countries, beyond the good intentions, which end up as superficial words.

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Young people, inheritors of the utopia of their parents and grandparents, which pushed them to seek out and create a better world, are already changing the direction of history.