



ROMAN GERODIMOS

“Global Challenges, Democratic Solutions”

One of the most important issues highlighted by the global financial crisis is the democratic deficit of existing decision-making structures at the international level. The current crisis could easily turn into fear, reaction, isolation and exclusion, leading to the repetition of past mistakes. We are already witnessing the rise of far right parties in Europe, as well as the challenging of traditional policy-making institutions.

Individual governments often do not have the means, the “know-how” or even the political capital to tackle a series of key global problems that affect our daily lives. However, political leaders could certainly demonstrate the interdependence between global affairs and citizens’ lifeworld (and vice versa, the effects that civic action can have on a global scale). Governments could also ensure that global decision-making bodies adequately represent the diverse constituencies of citizens.

A government has the responsibility to put forward a coherent vision, a long-term strategic plan that can be tactically adjusted to short-term developments, rather than react to headlines and events in a confused and jumbled way. It is also vital that the government should identify forthcoming challenges before they become unmanageable crises, as well as educating the public about the measures needed to address these challenges.

The agenda of the 21st century features a series of increasingly pressing challenges: climate change, energy dependence, water shortages, poverty, pandemics, human rights, immigration, international terrorism, organised crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nanotechnology, bioethics etc. These affairs may appear somewhat irrelevant to Greek everyday life, especially considering that Greek society has not yet tackled more fundamental problems, such as Church and State separation.

However, as can be seen in the case of the global credit crisis, the distance between the local and the global has collapsed. Environmental affairs, international security and trafficking have direct consequences for our daily lives. The competitiveness of Greek tourism, the living conditions of asylum seekers in Patras, the recent developments in cancer research and the re-emergence of terrorism and urban guerrillas in Athens are all examples of the interdependence between the global and the local.

The forthcoming European Parliament elections are the ideal opportunity for a substantive debate on this agenda, both through the choice of candidates for the EP, and through the actual campaign. It should be noted, however, that the quality of political debate on previous occasions does not allow for high expectations.

One way or another, with or without our participation, decisions will be made and solutions will be found – at least at the international and European levels. Greek citizens, both as consumers and as voters, have a say and a role to play; they have rights and responsibilities. Their active participation in the global debates currently taking place would be to the country’s interests.

The Greek political parties, which during the last few months have been consumed with tactical manoeuvres, should bring these issues into the public sphere and inform citizens; otherwise they are in imminent danger of becoming irrelevant and losing any legitimacy that they still have.

Greece does not have the luxury of living on its own planet, however convenient and scenic that may be.

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