



10 Minutes For The Planet
Environmental Protection...
Presidential Candidates Disinterest! ©

by Valentine Rinner

Hello everyone and welcome to this week's episode of 10 Minutes for the Planet. During the last few weeks we began a closer look at the presidential candidates' environmental programmes, and more specifically, from the aspect of energy and agriculture, following the first television debate.

From the beginning, I had planned on writing a whole piece around environmental issues brought up in the second presidential debate on April 4th. However, this was put aside, as environmental issues were even more inexistent than during the March debate. So, in the end, this edition is more about what wasn't mentioned.

The issues that were evoked during the 17 minutes per candidate second pre-election debate can be summed up to a few points:

- Jean-Luc Mélenchon brought up the question of job creation through energy transition and agricultural reform twice.
- Emmanuel Macron whispered the idea of investing in the environmental sector to create more jobs.
- Philippe Poutou mentioned the environmental benefits of free public transportation.
- And Mélenchon and Benoît Hamon stated the importance of an environmental transition.

The blatant omission of the environment is surprising, given the fact that most of the eleven candidates have indeed included environmental issues in their official programmes. However, it is clear after watching the debate that for most of the candidates, the issue has been deemed less worthy, and has been wiped away for more "serious" problems.

For example, when the question of "protecting the French people" is on the table, the response is solely around fighting terrorism, and while terrorism is quite certainly an issue to be taken very seriously, it is not the only, nor the largest threat today for lives of French citizens. In the last two years' terrorism has killed around 200 people, while work incidents kill 500 people annually, and pollution, tens of thousands. It is worrying that the election discourse is mainly built around external fear. Fear of other individuals, foreign

individuals, who are invading our economy, our job market, our territory, our culture, our safety.

Challenging our own systems and practices that have been impeding our system, our territory, and populations has been left out of the debate, and that is mainly what environmental politics are about today. The issues at stake range from air pollution to soil erosion, from energy independence to waste management, and can only be tackled through challenges to our current practices as individuals and as a society. Not surprisingly this is a debate that few candidates are willing to get to grips with seriously.

Marine Le Pen does call for radical reform in agriculture as we discussed in a previous episode, but she is coming from a nationalist perspective. The only real potential for important environmental progress comes from Benoît Hamon and Philippe Poutou. And as of today, the most developed environmental agenda comes from Jean-Luc Mélenchon. His party “La France Insoumise” edited a significant number of documents on the current situation, preparing propositions to include the protection of our planet and the French territory. Mélenchon’s propositions are focused mainly around giving up a productivity approach toward nature and putting in place plans for the re-appropriation of our country’s nature, while at the same time, increasing well-being as well as encouraging new forms of innovation.

That’s it for the presidential candidates’ environmental programmes with 10 Minutes for the Planet. Now it’s your turn to dig a little deeper in the candidates’ programmes before Sunday. Happy voting!