

(See also the thread on the nettime-l list where this report was posted on Friday February 12, 2016, which caused a lot of interesting responses: <https://nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-1602/threads.html#00014>).

Notes about the DIEM25 Launch in Volksbühne/Berlin, February 9, 2016 by Geert Lovink

Last weekend I paid a visit to Berlin where I combined my participation in the Transmediale festival (with workshops the Snowden archive and MoneyLab related issues) with the launch of the Democracy in Europe Movement (DIEM25), initiated by the ex-Greek finance minister & Sydney sider Yanis Varoufakis. The day was divided in three parts: a press conference (an old school format with weird criteria who was entitled to attend, and as I am 100% not press, I left), a closed meeting divided in three parts (general diagnosis, economics and strategy) and a theatre show in the large auditorium of the Volksbühne (see links below for the entire stream and selected presentations).

DIEM25 should be seen as contemporary version of 1930s 'popular front', a meta-party that presents itself a broad coalition, a historical block Gramsci-style, consisting of old and new leftist parties, the Greens, Podemos, Die Linke, independent candidates and scattered members of social-democratic parties and progressive liberals. The key word here was the 'multi-level logic' of the DIEM25 circles. There was consensus that is no longer sufficient to have the right arguments to counter the powers-to-be. We need to do something. Time is running out for Europe. That's the essence of the DIEM slogan: if Europe does not democratize, it will disintegrate.

From the social movement side it was Blockupy that had the most visibility. Yanis attended a European coordination meeting of Blockupy last weekend, where Toni Negri, amongst others, was also present. Needless to say that many are involved in refugee/migrant support work, mostly on the local level. On the economic level peer-to-peer initiatives have clearly gained influence and visibility. The critique that the DIEM was a consumerist event (entrance: 12 euro) was in fact predictable and should be countered with demand that we need much more spectacle with the inclusion of Berlin DJs, theatre performances, much more video screens and up-to-date integration of digital tools in the overall presentation. There is more than Skype. Rightly so, the unity of politics and the arts was demanded and practiced—if in a rudimentary way.

Vital European energies are coming from Spain, and in particular Barcelona. The program centered around Spain. Remarkably not Italy. Where are the Italian (autonomous) movements? In a similar way Greece was the absent object, with Syriza being the absent political party. The reason for this was clear because of the recent direction of the DIEM founder but nonetheless a pity. If one reconstructs the emergence of DIEM Greece is its birth place, and for many of us, a place where a multitude of alternative best practices are coming from. Hopefully these lacks and imbalances will be corrected as time goes by.

Obviously countries from Central and Eastern Europe were represented: Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland. However, the great absent player in the room was Russia. The war in Ukraine was not even mentioned once. Traditionally, critical analyses of the situation in Russia do not come from the left. This leaves open space for analysis for players like George Soros (whose Russian NGOs were recently closed by Putin): <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/11/putin-threat-europe-islamic-state>. At the same time traditional anti-Americanism was prevented as well. The USA was rarely mentioned. Europe is not seen a victim of imperialism. The often discussed TTIP trade treaty is, rightly so, seen as a European problem.

The real challenge DIEM has to tackle is the question of organization. It is called a movement, but is it really? Someone mentioned that one cannot 'found' a movement. They emerge, bottom up. What will happen over the next weeks, and perhaps months, are local DIEM events to start with Madrid, Amsterdam and for sure more that I do not know about. This is the age of the internet so how about some internet coordination? I counted around six 'people from the internet' at the founding meeting, amongst them Jacob Appelbaum, who argued for a secure way to organize internal communication through crypto tools. Funny enough it was the use of Facebook that caused the only open controversy during the meeting. Whereas some favored the use of Facebook, others made it clear that it is impossible 'to take over Facebook'. How can a movement like DIEM have ownership over their communication destiny?

Another term someone dropped was 'think tank'. There is something to be said for that. Why not create a 'thought collective' that can do political coordination on a meta level, behind the scenes, while organizing local and regional assemblies and festivals at the same time? We arguably need more

meta coordination as there are already so much local initiative. In the end, it is about democracy on a European level. However, DIEM cannot only be only concept and policy development, discourse making and strategizing in the background. In this media age, it's all about visibility through celebrities. The internet easily replicates the celebs memes but the hard work of designing internal democracy has yet to begin.

If there is going to be a 'unity of thinking and acting' we need spectacles like the ones on Tuesday night. We're all convinced of the urgency of the situation throughout Europe—and beyond. Realtime politics of today requires an 'open conspiracy model' consisting of 'organized networks' (a concept that I am co-developing with Ned Rossiter). There are already enough ways to do outreach via 'weak links'. The main communication platforms of DIEM right now seems to be Twitter (plus some email in the background). Videos play an important role, but so could info visualizations and animations. There are powerful campaign tools and platforms available (such as Avaaz) that were used in recent resistance (such as climate change and TTIP). DIEM's meta level is an ideal context to try out new, secure tools and platforms to show that another internet is possible!

Selected links:

Official DIEM25 agit prop video trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJyju_tHS8k (3:25 min.)

Report by Marco Bascetta and Sandro Mezzadra in Il Manifesto:

<http://ilmanifesto.global/varoufakis-appeals-for-democratic-awakening/>

Julian Assange's video message to the DIEM25 launch in Berlin:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HanqooWCVsU>

Brian Eno @ DIEM25: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34Pz_OIclmc.