

# Getting Prepped! Collective Introduction to Selby Goldemacher, James Bryan Graves, and Anja Groten (Hackers Designers)

In 2017, Hackers & Designers investigated forms of dependence and obedience to technologies embedded in our daily working and living environments. In developing an elaborate hands-on program throughout the year, which peaks around July and August during the H&D Summer Academy (HDSA2017), we posed

questions such as: How can we, as

modern nomadic workers who often do not differentiate between work and private life, look critically at infrastructure, networks, and systems that we rely on? Are we, as steadily connected (net)workers, capable of disconnecting from existing grids? Can we rethink and build self-sustaining environments that shape our future practices in unexpected ways?

Hackers & Designers reflects on their activities in 2017 in this publication. In particular, we consider the learnings and questions raised during the investigation of processes of going on and off the grid. Taking this publication as an opportunity to reach out to the amazing beings who have collaborated with H&D in 2017, we aim to push forward self-initiation and hands-on and self-directed approaches to research – and to open up insights and discussions with other individuals and collectives.

As Hackers & Designers bridges disciplines and cultures, we are always looking for metaphors and concepts that address technology critically yet leave space for engagement on different levels. We approach the notion of the grid quite openly – for instance, as a metaphor for social connectivity as well as in the context of straightforward energy grids and information networks. Some of our participants are not experienced with the hands-on hacking approach. We notice that relatable topics and humorous means help lower the barrier to understanding technology as potentially transformable. By adding an accessible yet critical component, makers and thinkers get a chance to meet, work together, and confront each other. The common theme

of investigating means of going on and off the grid functioned as a form of glue in that context, holding together approaches and ways of thinking that would usually conflict or disregard each other. The starting point for developing a

program around the notion of getting prepped came about during quite a cliché outdoor experience in California. Cutting costs via camping but not being particularly outdoor-types, we were confronted by our lack of survival skills. This experience spurred some of the following reasons to go off the grid (in no particular order):

- \*To practice independence
- \*To self control
- \*To detect alternatives
- \*To research alternatives
- \*To use alternatives
- \*To train consciousness
- \*To become comfortable in less comfortable environments
- \*To change the pace
- \*To count our blessings
- \*To save money
- \*To spend money
- \*To break free from money
- \*To be agile
- \*To meet like-minded people
- \*To eat differently
- \*To spark curiosity
- \*To be assertive
- \*To be responsive
- \*To change perspective
- \*To be free
- \*To be flexible

As a result of the efforts to consciously and critically connect and disconnect, H&D has started questioning some of its own habits as an organization including micro-economies and dependencies. H&D is yet another organization engaging in now-arcaic processes, such as writing long funding applications. More developed means of communication have resulted in the perception of H&D as a professionalized or institutionalized collective. H&D is often approached as if it has structural means and steady staff. Furthermore, H&D is expected to grow as an organization. But, what do we want H&D to actually grow into? Is H&D

trying to be an educational institution, an agency, a think-tank? And what are the consequences?

This collection of texts addresses the often conflicting routes that influence the questions, actions, and future structure of Hackers & Designers.