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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.

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 cliche 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-
arcane 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.

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