INFRASTRUCTURES FOR TROUBLING TIMES
REPORT OF 2021 ACTIVITIES

HDSA2021 Philo Workshop

The H&D activity program for 2021 Infrastructures for Troubling Times was dedicated to further exploring open-source tools and infrastructures that cater to collective organizing such as document writing, messaging, server building and maintenance, spreadsheet making and streaming. The approach of bringing together artistic, programmatic and designerly methods of exploration invited our audience to critically assess such tools in terms of their durability, accessibility, openness and creative output, and to question the level of agency and ownership granted to so-called users.

The objective to focus on tools for collective organizing was two-fold: first, H&D wanted to offer an environment to learn from, experiment with and co-develop approaches to cultural organization and community building as mediated by free, libre and open source tools and technical infrastructures that are reflective of the economies and politics they are entangled with. And second, we wanted to reflect on our own internal organizational formats, their dependency on technological tools and infrastructures, and the ways by which these tools inform our day-to-day creative and techno-political practices.

Our activity program for 2022 is informed by our learnings and critical reflection of the 2021 program, and is therefore a logical continuation.
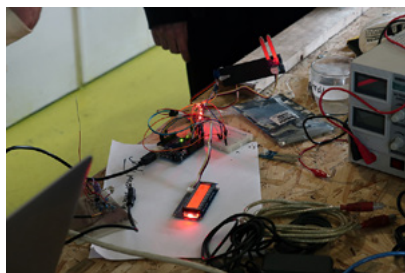
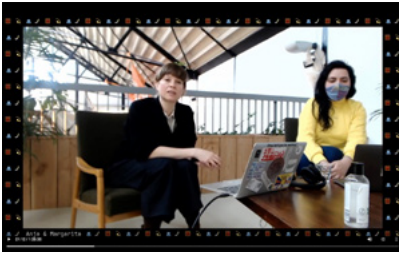Below are our most crucial points of reflection:

HDSA2021 Radio Workshop

- The 'distributed' format aligns as the best 'hybrid' model for H&D activities: A configuration of smaller, geographically distributed workshop 'nodes' are connected and coordinated by H&D yields better inter-connectivity between participants than for instance larger, online-only groups. The collaborative process of developing 'workshop scripts' allowed for independence of the individual as well as coherence in the overall structure and approach of our activities program.

- Workshop scripts are tremendously powerful and flexible documentation formats that cater well to hybrid workshop formats and the diverging needs and skills of workshop participants. Their agency is constantly questioned and redefined by the different locations they travel to and the communities that engage with them.

- Accessibility should not be an afterthought: we must start (planning a summer academy, developing a platform, or curating a symposium) by defining clear points of public access.

- Developing for accessibility means developing with accessibility: what matters most is who is centered during conversations and processes of decision-making when it comes to defining different points of access.

HDSA2021 ChattyPub Introduction Talk

- The processes and outcomes of our creative, technological, political, collaborative, administrative and maker practices are strongly defined by the tools we use, and too often, these definitions are delegated to the proprietary software companies (zoom, adobe, google, etc...)

- Free, libre, and open source software can be ugly, messy, inconvenient, and create some discomfort, but have a lot to 'tell' us about our learned habits and prevailing methods of creative practice. We choose to use the activities of H&D as potential spaces to stay with this discomfort and develop formats and attitudes which allow us to consider new socio-technological habits.

- Creating, writing, re-appropriating, self-hosting, maintaining and contributing to open-source software can be a creative and socio-technologically emancipatory act. We can contribute to and change the tools we use and the practices they yield, and build communities around such practices

HDSA2021 Water Solutions Workshop

- A small organization such as H&D does not need to install and maintain a full suite of collaborative online services; this is a laborious and un-economic task. We can rely on (and support!) other local organizations by using and contributing to their services.

- Audio-only live-streams and live-transcription of physical events are two examples of methods that allow for more ecological, lower-bandwidth and lower-barrier access to online participation. There are many more to explore.

- Translation of public-facing texts and accommodation for bi/multilingual conversations is a difficult and laborious task, but

Meetup 1: Algorithmic Consensus

Meetup 2: Feminist Search Tools

Meetup 3: Filesha

Meetup 4: Roleplaying in the Open Source

is essential for situating an organization in its local context and diversifying the community that it supports.

· During the course of 2021 we engaged in a number of activities that led us to these conclusions. This document expands on the above points by outlining the activities in chronological order, as they unfolded over the course of the year.

H&D Meetups

In 2021, we created space to sequentially develop the annual summer academy program by hosting shorter meet-ups with the H&D community and to develop the research threads with them. These shorter events, each consisting of a talk and a short activity or workshop were envisioned as a way to gradually develop the theme throughout the year, and build some momentum for exchanging knowledge, mapping out tools, practices, questions and dilemmas with the H&D community, partner alliances and the wider public. At the time of writing, we hosted Meetup 1: Algorithmic Consensus with Angela Jerardi and WINWIN to explore the potentials of consensus practices on digital platforms. Meetup 2: Feminist Search Tools with Read-in, Alice Strete and Angeliki Diakrousi to further our ongoing collaborative exploration on intersectional search in queer and trans archives. Meetup 3: Filesha focused on different methods of file-sharing in the context of collective organizing. Meetup 4: Role-playing in the Open-source World made use of open-source collaborative document-editing and spreadsheet-making to facilitate a role-playing game.
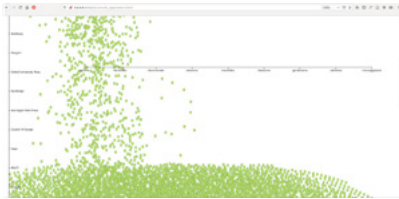
These meetups acted as a testing ground for the year's research threads and enabled us to set up partnerships, and better prepare the summer academy. The meetups help H&D keep momentum in ongoing projects and tool-building experiments and open up research interests and processes to a wider audience. Events are meaningful moments of exchange. While the attendance of meetups fluctuated, we are generally satisfied with the turn-up. The group sizes enabled meaningful, long-term and decentralized exchanges. We noticed that active and personal invitations are most successful regarding turnout but also results in most active participation and exchange. It has been rewarding to distribute the responsibility of developing and hosting meetups within the H&D organization. However, in the coming year we would like to streamline some communication workflows and PR efforts to reach audiences actively and to ensure equal attention and exposure for each meetup. Moreover, our future meetups will be developed closely with international collaborators and with more clearly defined responsibilities in preparation for the ensuing summer academy that will lead to a natural continuation and development of these collaborations.
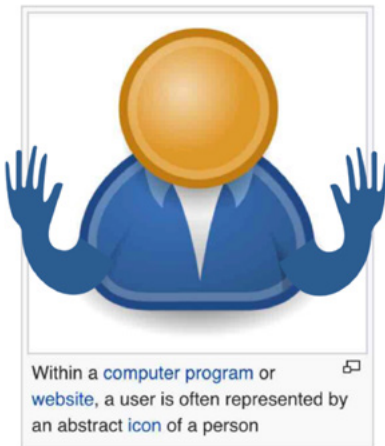
H&D Summer Academy

Quotes from Summer Academy participant:
Sandy:"I am impressed how fast a community can developed"
Stefan: "It was a very well balanced program, intensive but not overwhelming."
Siwar:"I was maybe a bit intimidated by the idea of coding at first. I am a Graphic Designer. But in the end it was totally smooth. I could ask anyone anything."
Jordy: "It was great to find people who are interested in the same things"

HDSA2021 Program

HDSA2021 Workshop with Gabriel Fontana

HDSA2021 Listening Session
with Aimée Theriot-Ramos

A 'closed call' for collaboration on the 2021 Summer Academy resulted in a distributed summer workshop program taking place in Amsterdam as well as three additional locations. Instead of doing online-only workshops with remote participants like we did in 2020, we developed a hybrid program consisting of four geographically distributed local nodes: Bongani Ricky Masuku in Harare (Zimbabwe), Mz* Baltazar's Laboratory in Vienna (Austria), and Prototype PGH in Pittsburgh (U.S.A.).

These nodes were inter-dependent: they shared a central timetable and repository of workshop scripts, but were free to organize their spaces, participants, and logistics as their conditions allowed them. At the core of this configuration were workshop scripts – detailed documents that could be 'executed' in different places synchronously and asynchronously. Each node contributed one of those workshop scripts toward the summer academy, which then would be executed in each location. The process of working with the workshop scripts was supplemented with occasional meeting moments online (either in a video call or playfully hanging out in an online spreadsheet).

In addition to the workshops from the four nodes, Relearn and Varia from Rotterdam contributed a workshop (and script) on reading food networks. In Amsterdam a local closing activity took place including a Listening as Channeling exercise by Gabriel Fontana, and a Sonic Trip facilitated by Aimée Theriot-Ramos. The full program is available on the H&D website.

The distributed-hybrid format was a response to our own former online-only workshop format, which we explored in the 2020 summer academy, in the context of global COVID-19 lockdowns. Although interesting modes of being together online were explored, face-to-face and embodied interactions with participants were sorely missed. Invoking workshop scripts brought back a level of on-site, personal interaction while keeping some of the hybrid aspects that allowed exchange between the different nodes and have people join who could not travel. Considerable amount of time and conference calls were dedicated to developing workshop concepts and scripts together with the international partners.

For partner nodes, it was challenging to commit to this format. Despite several feedback sessions to discuss the drafted workshop scripts, some of the workshops were defined rather loosely and left a lot of things up to interpretation of the on-site hosts and participants. This put additional pressure on local hosts/facilitators to actively make the workshops a success together with the participants. The evaluation showed that this hybrid format made participants and the organization feel less connected to the remote nodes and the workshop contributors. However, participants were highly positive about the on-site interaction with others. Some said that the open formats encouraged them to be actively involved in shaping the workshop processes together, leveling out hierarchies between facilitators/hosts and participants, which is a main objective H&D tries to achieve.

Building stronger alliances with international partners was one of our key objectives this year. Taking the feedback and learnings of this year

HDSA2021 Radio Workshop

HDSA2021 ChattyPub Printed Zine

H&D Fall Talks: Presentation
by Lucas LaRochelle

H&D Fall Talks

into consideration we want to further explore and improve the format of the workshop script as a key tool in facilitating hybrid-distributed workshops in 2022. We also reflect this in our financial planning for the year, dedicating a considerably larger amount of resources and time to develop these alliances. We saw tremendous value in learning from different organizations and their local particularities, as well as reducing the need for participants to travel regarding carbon emission and more sustainable models for cultural and hands-on exchanges.

A point of feedback that we received from participants was that although they felt tightly connected to each other in their local nodes, it was hard to connect to participants and activities in other nodes. Timezone differences, disparities in connectivity conditions, and differences in participants' capabilities and access to resources played a big role in this. Some considerations we have for the coming summer academy is to define a more flexible timetable, allowing the nodes to conduct workshops at more convenient times and a pace that suits their needs. We furthermore want to allocate more time to developing workshop scripts together with the nodes and testing them during the preceding meetups. The objective of this is that a workshop script defines instructions for its respective workshop strictly enough that similar learning goals can be achieved, methods applied, and themes explored, but also loosely enough that the workshop can travel: it is well situated in the context where it takes place, is informed by the needs and urgencies of the socio-political conditions of this context, can cater to different abilities and resources of its diverse participants, learns what it can from these conditions and continuously mutates as it travels.

Another point of reflection of the HDSA 2021 was that more context and input about the underlying theme of the hands-on workshop program could be useful. We will therefore reintroduce the H&D Summer Talks next year and furthermore will send out preparatory materials, for instance a reader, prior to the H&D Summer Academy.

H&D Fall Talks: Public program

H&D's fall symposium, [Open* tools for collective organizing](#), took place at the end of November at AHK Culture Club and was intended to wrap up the research threads, collaborations and projects of the year by opening up their outcomes to a wider public. The event included public talks and workshops around the themes of self-hosted organizational tools, alternative distribution economies, and mapping as (dis)-orientation strategies. This was also the occasion for the launch of our annual publication 'Network Imaginaries'.

Guests such as Lucas LaRochelle, Kate Rich, Yara Said, Varia and Majd Al-Shihabi, were invited to speak about their ongoing projects and practices, and shed light on the emancipatory value of creating and using open-source tools. This was also an occasion that presented new iterations of the research threads developed throughout the year, in the form of short workshops, that were facilitated by guests as well as members of H&D themselves.

In alignment with our plans for the coming year for expanding our conversations on exploring and creative alternative modes of access, we took

this public moment as an opportunity to experiment with different ways that public access to this event could be facilitated:

- we alleviated differences in participants' financial capabilities by offering 3 options for tickets to the physical event: a full priced ticket, a discounted student ticket, and a free solidarity ticket.
- the event was physically hosted at AHK, which was wheelchair-accessible
- the event was publicly accessible online through our website as a live-audio stream, which was facilitated by Radio-EE to allow for a more ecological, lower-barrier, and lower bandwidth online participation (as opposed to full video livestream)
- a live transcription was manually produced during the event in a collaborative text document, where online participants could follow the stream, chat and even contribute to the notes.
- audio-recordings, notes, transcript, chat, and speaker's presentations' were packaged into a .zip file that could later be revisited or accessed by people that could not join.
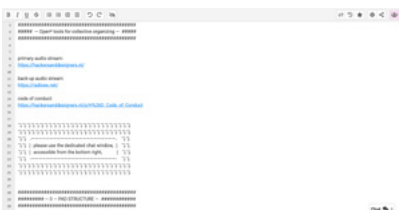

H&D Fall Talks

We take these small experiments as fruitful starting points to think further and implement different ways of creating multiple points of access; but, in retrospect, these represent H&D's own perspectives, ideas and assumptions around accessibility and are only informed by our own experiences of navigating the world of cultural activities through a predominantly abled-bodied lens. These perspectives are in many ways still narrow and do not represent the H&D community (and those who were not able to participate in it yet) in its full spectrum. Developing practices, activities, and technologies for accessibility means developing with accessibility. What matters most is who is centered in conversations and processes of decision-making when it comes to defining points of access. In our plans for the coming year, we have allocated resources and attention to including these voices in our processes of producing cultural events, organizing workshops, and developing tools and technical infrastructure

H&D Fall Talks: ChattyPub Workshop

Tool building and publication

As a continuation of our explorations of experimental modes of publishing, and taking inspiration from some of the workshops conducted in HDSA2020, H&D have been developing ChattyPub, a tool that leverages a self-hosted messaging service to collaboratively write and design publications by appropriating an existing chat interface, its embedded emoji reactions, and simple CSS syntax.

This initiative also marked a shift in H&D's internal organization structure: we are officially moving all of our internal communications to Zulip, a free and open-source messaging service that we host and maintain on our own server. This shift is coupled with experiments in changing and reconfiguring the internal code of this software in ways that cater to our organization and its community in our immediate environments. ChattyPub, acting as another interface layer for Zulip, is one of these experiments.

H&D Fall Talks: Etherpad live transcription

ChattyPub is in continuous sequential development through its activation at different public moments with interested external parties: it was first tested, forked, and even changed with and by the participants of the H&D Summer Academy 2021. Later in August, it was presented, discussed and workshopped in Leipzig, at the GfZK 's DigIt festival. During the H&D fall symposium, and on the occasion of the book launch we hosted another Chattypub workshop with symposium visitors, who were able to produce small publications based on the topics breached at the symposium.

ChattyPub: Network Imaginaries

These public encounters not only involve our community in the actual development of this tool, but also inform the processes of producing our own publication using this tool in a distributed manner: the process of making a publication, as well as the process of developing the tool to make it becomes a community effort, and occasion to learn-by-doing.

The code for ChattyPub has been published as an open-source repository and can be copied, appropriated and reused by the community in different contexts.

The H&D Publication: Network Imaginaries was designed with ChattyPub, and contains a series of contributions in the form of text, images and ASCII art reflecting on and reimagining distributed practices. The contributors span a wide range of practices and reflect about network technologies in experimental and hands-on ways. They push the boundaries of existing technology and programming platforms (webware, hardware, software), online/offline networks, high and low tech (internet, IPFS, darknet, peer2peer, blockchain, bot networks, radio), and user experience — in a practical manner and while addressing the ethical implications of the proposed technologies and processes.

ChattyPub: HDSA2021 Workshop result

With contributions by: Anja Groten, Juliette Lizotte, Iridescent Institute of Desire, Maya Ober, Xin Xin & Lark Alder, Nazanin Karimi, Ilona Puskas, Danae Tapia & Annika Kappner, Char Stiles & Sol Sarratea, Lucas LaRochelle, Radio Espacio Estacion / radioee.net (Agustina Woodgate, Stephanie Sherman, Hernan Woodgate), Wendy Plas, Angelo Custodio, Anja Kaiser & Rebecca Stephanie, Tom Milnes, Inte Gloerich & Gabriele Ferri, Salvatore Iaconesi & Oriana Persico co-founders of HER: she Loves Data and Nuovo Abitare Foundation, Proof of Consensus Mario Romera, Temporary Riparian Zone Angeliki Diakrousi & Cristina Cochior, Karen Abadie & Molly McAndrews & Laura Rosser, Nicha Keeratiphanthawong & Tabea Nixdorff, dianaband

Network Imaginaries Publication

In alignment with the themes, ideas, and contributions that co-constituted this publication and inspired by peer-to-peer networking technologies, we decided to experiment with modes of distribution by restricting the purchase to either 2 or 10 copies at a time, encouraging the re-distribution and stimulating the widening of the reach of the publication to peers, friends, family and colleagues in and out of the community.

General Accessibility of Activities and Website

In 2020, H&D had received some feedback about the general accessibility of our online and offline activities as well as information we present digitally (such as our website).


H&D Fall Talks

The formats of our activity programs, especially that of the summer academy, often demand a large time commitment from participants (a full week of full days of participation), which makes participation less feasible for instance for people with children to take care of, people with disabilities, and people who simply cannot afford to commit to such a large chunk of time. Although we generally believe that a commitment and certain intensity is a key value of our activities, in 2021, we configured our schedule in such a way that some activities demand less time, could take place in the evenings, and are easier to access asynchronously, such as through video and audio documentation of events, text transcriptions, etc... In the coming year, as described earlier in this document and in our application, we plan on exploring more flexible scheduling approaches and alternative online connectivity formats that enable a wider audience to participate in our activities.

We have also received feedback regarding the accessibility of our website, whereby it is not screen-reader-friendly, is at times complicated to navigate, and too often loads very slowly. Taking these points into account, in 2021, H&D started developing efforts to better understand how accessibility of their online information could be improved: We conducted a creative and practical research around accessibility practices, planned an accessibility audit of our website, as well as an ensuing redesign that better caters to multiple points of access. Moreover, H&D was invited to develop a platform for the 3rd Workshop on Obfuscation, where an accessibility audit of the platform was conducted, and knowledge around standard accessibility practices was gained. This project is detailed in the following section of this report. H&D continues and expands on this work in our 2022 plans, with more detailed strategies for complying with ARIA standards for web accessibility, a formal invitation of professional auditors and creative practitioners for regular check-ins, and plans for translation and internationalization of web-content. Creative explorations and experiments in accessibility practices is also one of the leading themes of the coming year's activities, which opens up these internal infrastructural ongoings to the H&D community.

H&D Fall Talks Visual Communication
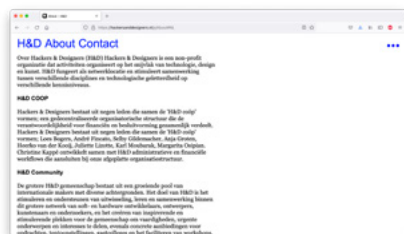
H&D Website: Dutch Translation

Up to this point, the most recurring point of feedback regarding accessibility over the years is the use of the English language alone in our website as well as our activities. Although half of the H&D cooperative is Dutch-speaking and engages with their cultural practices and creative education in Dutch, most of our activities take place in English, to cater for the international community. In 2021, we managed to translate some important texts on our website to Dutch. However, In 2022, we would like to continue improving our ways of addressing more local audiences of Dutch speakers with our activities, as well as further situate our practices in the local context of Amsterdam. More specifically we will: (1) translate our website and it's underlying MediaWiki content editor and (2) develop a sequential workflow with a translator to translate our newsletters, open-calls, and all other text-based communications.

# Additional commissioned collaborations and activities

Obfuscation Platform
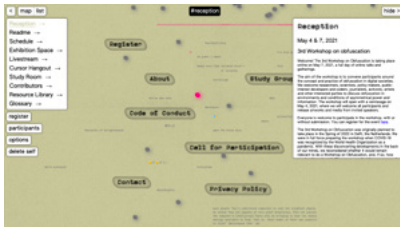
3rd Workshop on Obfuscation

This year, we took on the task of creating an online platform for the 3rd Workshop on Obfuscation, a conference convened by the TU Delft and Cornell Tech. This so-called "platframe" was a convergence of multiple tools and was facilitated by the sensitivities of free, libre, and open source software.

Artist and researcher Loren Britton was invited to perform an accessibility audit of the platframe and helped us gain new understandings of designing and developing while taking disability into consideration. We realized that accessibility is an important and interesting lens through which technical infrastructures as well as social conduct can be viewed, and should not come as an afterthought. Considering different points of access has to be inherently part in design, software development, and organizational processes.. Developing tools and (online) events from the perspective of multiple points of access then becomes a process informed by continuous conversation with the multiplicity of people that the tool in question serves or fails to serve.

Obfuscation Platform

In the coming year we want to take further the ongoing challenge of creating inclusive and inspiring tools and formats for every body by taking a different approach. Rather than imagining accessibility as a checklist of things that need fixing we will develop alternative routes to complicate our understandings of accessibility, and the partiality of our perspectives, and ask how we can challenge ourselves as makers to shift and orient towards other perspectives and more critically reflect on who we center in conversations about building and using tools.
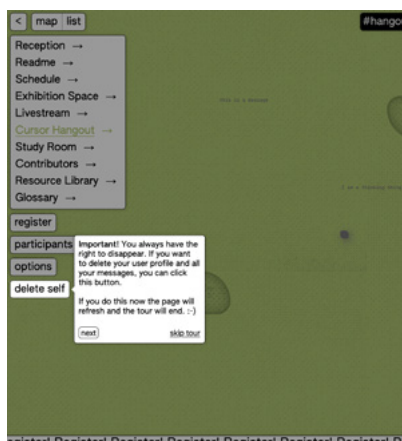
Bergen Art Book Fair

This year, we have been in conversation with the Bergen Art Book Fair and were invited to give a talk about our experimental publishing practice(s) back in June, which we convened in our own self-built livestreaming platform. This conversation will continue (after several COVID related postponements) in April with a workshop around ChattyPub, which will take place in Bergen, and will help create new insights and understandings of "design as a conversation" to develop the project further in conversations with different communities and contexts.

Workshop in Leipzig

Bergen Art Book Fair Online Talk

The GfZK in Leipzig invited H&D as 'critical friends', into their processes of digitization of the museum (both internally, in terms of their own organizational digital infrastructures, as well as in relation to their collection in Leipzig). Through digital and physical encounters, we met artists and cultural producers, who all worked with and for GfZK in different ways, on developing approaches for the museum to incorporate digital tools in ethical as well as artistically meaningful ways.

We were able to conduct fruitful exchanges of knowledge, experiments,

and perspectives around the role(s) of technology, and especially digital tools and infrastructures, in organizational structures, social mediation, political/activist engagement as well as the climate crisis. H&D's visit entailed 4 days of close encounters with the organization of GfZK, discussions, presentations, testing of prototypes. We were closely introduced to the digital micro-experiments of artist and educator Tristan Schulze, the designed-by-children Flippo Magazine, the Code Girls initiative and many more. Most striking was to gain insights into GfZK's ; approach to critically and practically questioning digital processes within their own organizational functioning. Questions they focussed on were for instance how the GfZK and the community around could be made more environmentally sustainable. Their approach to those questions took playful, experimental and creative approaches – such as logging emails to become more aware of their carbon footprint, prototypes for bicycle-powered audio-tours of the museum, and reading sessions centered around emotional entanglements with personal computing devices. The visit concluded with the 5-day DigIt festival, to which H&D contributed with a talk and workshop on experimental publishing tools. It has been incredibly inspiring to connect with a like-minded initiative – and connect with makers across the border: the critical conversations with GfZK have informed H&D's thematic positioning for the coming year – particularly when it comes to matters of sustainability.

H&D at GfZK

H&D at GfZK

Solarpunks / Who owns the Web - Fonds Cultuurparticipatie

The project Solarpunk – Who runs the web? is an international collaborative project with a focus on developing a series of intergenerational online and offline workshop formats. Next to H&D involved partners are: Mz* Baltazar's Laboratory in Vienna (Austria) and Prototype PGH in Pittsburgh (USA). All collaborating initiatives work at the intersection of art, design, technology and education, and share an interest in community organization, and facilitate participant-empowering hands-on workshops. Our initial starting point for the exchange was to develop artistic and participatory formats together that deal with the question: "How does the internet actually work?".

Along with the development of a series of solar punk workshops, the aim was to creatively and critically explore the contemporary challenges that come with collaborating in remote contexts. It was important to us to question common reliances on platforms such as Zoom, Teams and Google and explore open source alternatives in that context.

The project was set out to take place in 2021, and to be partially funded by Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie. Our first application was rejected, in the second attempt we received positive advice. The first rejection of the funds as well as COVID-related postponements of other projects of the partners caused some need for adjustment of the project in terms of timelines, and structure. Yet, we were able to meet our goals and embarked on the collaboration in the context of the H&D Summer Academy.

HDSA2021 with Prototype PGH

A positive side-effect of the postponement of the project was furthermore that it led us to weave some of the plans into different parts of our program and contributed to our general objective of investing in longer-term international partnerships with like-minded initiatives and institutions that work at the intersection of art, design, technology and education.

We could learn from working with these organizations and from some of the challenges we encountered together leading up to the HDSA2021. Contact with these initiatives has continued and matured, and will contribute to further exploration into intergenerational, artistic and educative formats that critically and openly address network infrastructures in 2022. The collaboration and more specifically the networks of these partner initiatives furthermore help H&D to position itself in international contexts and draw attention to other activities such as the H&D Summer Academy within different international communities of makers.

HDSA2021 with Mz* Baltazar

All our projects and activities can be found on the [H&D Website](#).

Note on the Financial Report

The adjustments to the proposed budget have been explained per activity in the previous sections and in addition comments on deviations to the budget have been added to the financial overview. Overall H&D has been able to adapt financially to unexpected events. We have tried to minimize overhead costs ('beheerslasten') as much as possible to preserve proportionality to the activity costs ('activiteitslasten').

HDSA2021 Radio Workshop

The indirect income consists of the rental of desks in the studio to members of the coop and others. All members have agreed to contribute to the co-op by working for a reduced hourly rate of € 40. In the financial report, these hours are valued at the more applicable rate of € 65, with the difference being allocated to income. In case members have an assignment (for example a teaching assignment, a workshop or participation in a panel) received through Hackers & Designers, 5% of the fee is paid to the foundation. Some members who receive funding for their own academic work decide to invest hours in working for Hackers & Designers.