We Break Things Film Discussion Questions

1. What are the various leadership styles we see throughout the film? How do those leadership styles affect the hierarchy (or lack of) in the three groups?
2. Throughout the film, it seems that there are many overlaps with people who participate in both the Telecomix and Pirate Party communities. What differences do we see between those two groups and Anonymous (other than geographic location)? What accounts for those differences? How do we see these three groups working towards the same objective(s)?
3. How do ideas and perceptions of "hackers" get overturned in this film? What does centering the narrative on Meredith do to change perceptions on who does hacking?
4. While the main character of this film is a technically sophisticated female hacker (Meredith), how does the film confirm white western perceptions on who a hacker can be? Who is missing from these conversations and do they have the space to have a voice in the various groups shown in the film?
5. The film begins with someone saying that "We break things to understand them." How do we see Stephan, Meredith, and Gregg breaking "things"? What are those things? What do they gain by breaking these "things"? What do these three build after they've broken that thing?
6. *We Break Things* focuses on three political strategies used by hackers – we break things, we build things, and we work together (within existing political structure). In your opinion, what do you think is most effective political strategy? How do you see Meredith, Stephen, Gregg, and Chris using or working against these strategies?
7. Traditionally, Anonymous has been seen as a nebulous group, often with varying interests and goals, but who as a united mass participate in digital activism under the protection of anonymous. However, how does Gregg and Chris complicate this idea of Anonymous? Or what do they gain or lose by taking a visible leadership role in this organization?
8. The film ends with Stephan talking about having a voice. He says that people can have a voice on the Internet, but the barrier to having that voice is access. Additionally, in order for that voice to be heard, the Internet has to be free. What do you think of that statement and how close do you think we are to having our voices heard on the Internet? Who or what restricts us? Whose voices are missing?
9. How does this film change our perception of the surveillance in the United States (and across the world)? Do we believe that in the United States, we have free information? If not, where do we most strongly feel those restrictions? And how do you create tension with those restrictions in your every day life?
10. The issue of "free speech" is raised within Telecomix and the Pirate Party. For example, in Syria, Telecomix is deciding what counts as "free speech." Why are they the ones in charge of making that decision? How does this view of "free speech" contrast with how the Pirate Party thinks and deals with free speech? At the end of the film, we see the Pirate Party, restrict free speech in order to eliminate Nazi hate speech that had entered the party. This complicates the Pirate Party, who are proud of their strong free speech values. Do you think Stephen made the right choice? Why or why not?