

# Preface: Everyday Technology Press

What you are holding in your hands or browsing on your screen is the first book published by the Everyday Technology Press, an imprint run by the Rotterdam-based collective space *Varia*. Everyday technology is not just a moniker for the tools and devices we use on a daily basis, but a formula that identifies a perspective on technical artefacts and a programmatic goal. Everyday technology means that a sewing machine is no less important than a laptop, that a seamstress's work is by no means less meaningful than that of a computer scientist. Focusing on everyday technology means questioning the hierarchies that surround technical objects and therefore the valorisation of skills needed to design or use them. Everyday technology means also reconsidering the hegemony of high tech: with our publications, we try to show that low-tech approaches can be complex, inventive, and joyful.

At Everyday Technology Press, we believe that not only experts should have access and decisive power in regards to how things should work. This is why our publications show and document convivial tools; tools that guarantee a certain degree of autonomy to their users. We understand autonomy in Ivan Illich's terms, namely, the possibility for each and everyone to use a tool in order to realise their own intentions and create meaning by leaving a mark, however small, in the world.<sup>1</sup> We strive to include multiple and entangled perspectives, needs, and aspirations that are at play when it comes to technology. We think of theory as a practice and practice as a form of knowledge production. True to this belief, in our publications we complement analyses with instructions and code; tutorials and methods with essays. Here, the *know what* goes hand in hand with the *know how*.

Through its engagement with vernacular languages, *VLTK* suggests another meaning of everyday technology. Technology is often not recognised as such. Language, for example, is something that many take for granted and deem and call "natural." However, a variety of technical procedures, rules, and constraints operate on top of its roots, which are, according to Jorge Luis Borges, "irrational and magical."<sup>2</sup> This is how language becomes a technology. The technologisation of language tends to be a singular, reductive operation that produces a language with a capital "L" as a technology with a capital "T." *VLTK* counterbalances that: this

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<sup>1</sup> Ivan Illich, *Tools for conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, *El otro, el mismo* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2005).

book does not only show that a wealth of linguistic modes of being exist, but also that they can thrive, given enough space and the proper amount of attention.

Silvio Lorusso