



THE IMAGINARY APP

A Collection of Essays + Art on Apps
and How They've Changed Everything

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The Book Prospectus

Apps are pieces of application software designed to apply the power of a computing system for a particular purpose. An “app” is an abbreviated version of “application” - figuratively and literally, linguistically and technically. As a slang term, it has been in use since 2009, after Apple’s iPhone ad campaign that coined the slogan “There’s an app for that.” In other words they are programs, re-branded as “apps” by Apple. Ironically, the App Store, launched on July 10, 2008, was simply meant to be a “wow factor” to compensate for the lack of hardware upgrades of the 2nd generation iPhone 3G released a month earlier. The App Store allowed users to install custom applications without jailbreaking, which resulted in the huge growth of the app market. *The Imaginary App* addresses the ways mobile apps are being used in everyday practices. This collection employs different philosophical and critical approaches from affect theory or network theory, to object oriented ontology and psychoanalysis. Our anthology will offer theoretical readings of an app as *technique* and *imaginary tool* by focusing on affective, aesthetic, technical, social, and economical aspects of computing by using mobile apps. Our authors discuss the techniques of ubiquitous computing with apps through the frameworks Marx, Freud, Whitehead, Simondon, Deleuze, Flusser, Virilio, Lefebvre, McLuhan, Siegart, and Zielinski in order to offer a series of multidisciplinary readings of mobile apps, the ways we imagine their purpose or function and the ways we actually use them.

The book will look at apps through several metaphorical (substitutional) and metonymical (displacing) descriptions. On the one hand, apps have become a major technique to operate our mobile devices. At the same time, the practicality of many apps is limited. Often they sit on our touch-screens, handy and cute, without ever being used. These apps are charming *junk* (Bardini) - useless stuff that we keep just in case. Apps are *lures*: they draw the user’s attention to the screen as a surface during computational practices, making computation even more seamless and the media environment even more subliminal. Apps offer themselves as *channels* that orient our ways with/in the topology of the media environment. They are *short-cuts* that guarantee direct and immediate access to what is beyond the screen. With a smart phone, iPhone, iPad or tablet a screen comes to a user instead of a user going to her PC, and therefore larger technology is put in service of tiny apps that regulate the consumer’s choice of a platform. As such, an app becomes a connector between different techno-ecosystems: the media environment is not a container, but a process where interconnected objects manifest their relations not so much as a network but as a mesh, where the existing connections lead us to discover previously unknown objects (Morton). The mesh is uncanny as we never know where it leads us and what we can discover through its fiber optics. The new media, McLuhan warned us, “are not bridges between man and nature, they are nature.” By reading the App Store as a *technique*, our anthology will envision the extent to which this cultural technique conflicts with culture - subverting its own function as *organizer* and *domesticator* in order to carry itself (and us) towards the techno-wilderness.

