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### **From mobile phones to nanotechnology: Is there a need for pattern recognition?**

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#### *Abstract*

The starting point of this paper is to consider whether the mobile phone is a scapegoat for changing social interaction or rather an “inspired human technology” (Nokia). Related to such a consideration has been the so-called “ambient intelligence”, representing a vision where we will be surrounded by sensitive and responsive technological environments. Even though this vision was scarcely noticed by sociologists, two similar topics are becoming increasingly meaningful for society and sociology: whereas pervasive computing refers to the integration of computers in everyday objects and social networks, nanotechnology leads into the realm of molecular and atomic dimensions. This raises the following questions: what are the implications of nanotechnology for social interaction, and how do they differ from those of mobile phones and pervasive computing? In order to answer these questions, it seems necessary to assess the social connections in a world defined by an increasing “invisibility” of technological artefacts. Therefore, this paper introduces William Gibson’s concepts of the “nodal point” and of “pattern recognition”. These concepts of cyberpunk literature inherently address invisibilities and may prove useful to understand the transition from mobile phones to nanotechnology. The paper concludes by discussing their ability to recognise patterns invisible to the sociological eye and to explain the emerging social realities.

#### *Keywords*

Nanotechnology, cyberpunk, social patterns