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The Phoneur: Mobile Commerce and the Digital Pedagogies of the Wireless Web

Freedom—that's the promise of mobile phones. Already in Europe and Japan and set to hit the North American market next year, m-commerce phones let users surf the web, send email and pay for stuff all from the palm of their hand. A convenience you can't do without? Perhaps. But subscribing to the next generation of mobile services makes you an unwitting participant in an experiment that eavesdrops on everything you do. It may seem like a great deal, but there's a hidden cost to living in the wireless world.¹

> > introduction: the habit@

Corporate data collectors track every move you make on the electronic landscape, recording your m-commerce phone habits only to sell them back to you through advertising that entices you to spend more. Think of these phones as a kind of remote-controlled radio collar—like the ones scientists use to monitor the behaviour of the animals they study.

The move towards mobile commerce, or m-commerce, still nascent in North America, is an attempt to create a world-wide datastructure built on the premise of consumption. The habit@ is the electronic environment—and the socio-cultural conditions—of the wireless and world wide webs (W4 and W3). Within it, "The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment ... produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1977, 72;

Bourdieu 1990). These structures are the invisible data collection mechanisms that track user habits through the data flows of electronic identity formation, and sell these habits back to the user in the form of “push” advertising.² “There is no fixed self, only the habit of looking for one” (Wise 2000, 303), and this habit of looking is our habit@online (Luke 2002). The wireless habit@ is constituted in the patterns of our mobile browsing behaviour, which is in turn repackaged and re-presented as a demographic representation of how we will engage the spending process, how we will actualize ourselves as desiring-machines (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). The habit@ is becoming the marker of social distinction. Where once social difference was measured by the possession of a cell phone, the ubiquity of these devices now means that there is no distinction in having one. Social difference is now measured by the *type* of mobile phone service a person consumes.

These commodified network relationships represent the transformation of commodity and capital into the realm of the purely symbolic: information about users in the habit@ becomes a way to track as well as lure the user within the commercial datastructure of online shopping. The Internet is a medium by which symbolic capital is at home: “In the vectorial space of the Internet the special quality of both information and money—that unlike other commodities they have no use value in their own right but only as items of exchange—is naturalized” (Stratton 1996, 259). Information about users in the habit@ is an item of exchange; the collection of personal information enabled by phones

equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) software becomes the locus of identity formation within the vectors of mobile commerce. Users exchange personal information for the commercial privilege of using the networks, information that is then used to sell other commodities to the user even while this information becomes an object of exchange in the market(ing) of demographic information. The ephemeral flow of production/ consumption within the habit@online is one digit of the invisible hand of capitalism, serving our commodities in exchange for an identity-as-consumer capitulation.

With the new mobile phone service my-iD.com (my-id.com 2001), Rogers Wireless seeks to create a culture of its user base. Rogers would enculturate users into its phone service habit@ as a site of social difference, a place to be heard, to participate, to belong. The my-iD.com service offers an avenue of self expression and concomitant control over the presentation of digital identity, but it does so under very strict controls that are really limiting parameters on just what constitutes this identity in the first place. This sense of belonging and identity is based on the panoptic surveillance of movement through the dataflows. The digital pedagogy of the wireless world teaches consumption and commodification: the location of W4 culture as the home of capital construes the digital citizen as consumer. The postmodern city, punctuated by the peremptory sounds of cell phones ringing, now has its own home. The habit@ is the location marked by the territorializing impulse of the postmodern primitive who dances to the tribal sounds of the McLuhanesque mantra of media saturation. The

affective investment in the desire to own a cell phone and, now, to participate in a culture of *phonerie* (Morgan 2000),³ is a pedagogy of liberation (from landlines) concurrently caught in the mobile Net.

> > from the flâneur to the phoneur: the mobile (s)talker

Our wily e-urbanite emerges from his lair and makes his way to the local coffee shop. On the way, he pre-orders his latte with his cell phone. The venti-sized beverage with a sprinkle of chocolate is waiting for him when he arrives. Payment is automatically processed from his m-commerce phone, scanned as he walks in the door.

The phoneur is the postmodern flâneur: a mobile phone user strolling the cityscape. The flâneur, implicated within modernist scopophilia (Benjamin 1999; Ferguson 1994; Frisby 1994; Mazlish 1994; Shields 1994), is “the spectator of the modern world” (Mazlish 1994, 43). Likewise, the phoneur is a commentator on the postmodern world, speaking from the mobile phone’s commercial capabilities. Ursula Kelly, in outlining the differing concepts of literacy that punctuate the postmodern age, says

The directive question in this relationship [between literacy and cultural forms] is how cultural practices of representation and meaning court desires and mobilize identities: in other words, are pedagogical. Of particular importance in addressing this question is the cultural work of the popular, the site on which dominant habits of desire are circulated, reiterated, and challenged. (Kelly 1997, 69)

This site is the postmodern habit@ of the phoneur, the cell phone sporting, incessantly talking, e-urbanite whose identity is articulated within the mediated

space of the mobile phone and the ensuing enculturation processes of the wireless web.

Just as “the flâneur’s vision of life, based on his peripatetic observations, creates reality” (Mazlish 1994, 53), so too do the commercial grids and communication vectors (the sociotechnical constructs of communication) create the reality for the phoneur. An identity is mobilized as the phoneur wanders, observed while (s)talking the city streets. Kelly reminds us that as we engage in reading the sites of popular culture, we must pay particular attention to “the lived engagements of media and meaning through how desires, dreams, identities, and social relations are shaped” (Kelly 1997, 70-71). These engagements constitute the enculturation into telephonerie, or simply phonerie, within the digital networks and virtual terrain of information.

If “space is composed of intersections of mobile elements” (de Certeau 1984, 117), then these mobile elements are the composite parts that overlay the real with the logic of mobile capital. Castells tells us that we live in an informational era wherein “the emphasis on interactivity between places breaks up spatial patterns of behaviour into a fluid network of exchanges that underlies the emergence of a new kind of space, the space of flows” (Castells 1996, 398). For Castells, this space of flows is the larger geo-political dimensions of capital movements: interconnected globalized manufacturing and distribution systems all contained within a network of production and consumption. The micro version of this space of flows is refracted in the logic of the phoneur, to whom “The

phone is an object and a technology. But it is also part of a system of ideas, even a way of looking at everyday life" (Myerson 2001, 9). Examining this way of life and the affective investment into which users are enticed through this phonerie enculturation reveals a digital pedagogy of consumption, and an identity made up of assemblages of commodities that flow through the ether into handheld market proxies.

The mass "mobilization" of desire and affect (Myerson 2001) is the *vox populi* of the phoneur punctuating the post-metropolis. Benjamin tells us that "the colportage phenomenon of space' is the flâneur's basic experience" (1999, 418), and this is an apt descriptor of the phoneur's relationship to the mediated commercial grid. Colportage, "to hawk, carry for sale" (OED), is the basic experience of the phoneur in the habit@online, where "Communication is being increasingly measured in terms of money, becoming 'metered'" (Myerson 2001, 60). The phoneur is the mobile tele-talker, stalked by corporate hunters who datamine the habit@ and place the social relations of phonerie amidst flows of commodity and desire.

> > portals, panoptics, and personalized information space

While at work, he "accidentally" surfs onto a porn site. It takes his cookie and processes his ID. "Enlarge your penis" spam begins to fill his email inbox which is synchronized to his phone. A call to the service provider and payment of a "nominal" fee means the spam is successfully filtered.

Web portals are web sites that enable users to personalize or customize a public site based on personal preferences.⁴ Users log on and create the datastructure that will be presented to them according to the preferences registered in their "user profile." Portals such as America Online (AOL), CompuServe (CompuServe), Traffick (Traffick), Yahoo! (Yahoo), Netscape (Netscape), Excite (Excite), and Microsoft (Microsoft; Microsoft) offer users the ability to personalize their own portal datastructure in exchange for submitting personal information. The next generation of web portals are auspiciously labelled with the first person possessive pronoun "My" (myTO; My Yahoo!; My Netscape; Microsoft Passport). Users are encouraged to "become" their portal identity and to identify directly with the information presented within these pockets of data.

Wireless portal providers seek to bring the portal directly to the user with WWW-enabled mobile phones, deploying rhetorical strategies that encourage users to develop proprietary feelings towards their mobile portal identity. This is especially true of the wireless portal my-ID.com (my-id.com 2001). Another mobile phone service provider, Bell Mobility, offers a service called "My Time," which is a personalized phone payment plan based on user preference ("some restrictions apply," of course). Bell is currently running a series of advertisements in support of this program that uses a glib humour to inspire an individualist ethos within the "My Time" service. Using slogans such as "Make as many 3 am 'I love you' calls as you feel like," Bell attempts to appeal to a self-

deprecating sense of observational humour. Other slogans, including “Careful. You could sprain a lip” and “Doing our part to support gossip everywhere,” encourage the consumer to identify with the “My Time” service as one that is in keeping with a popular conception of human nature: a contrived recognition of what we have in common that can best be served with a personalized phone service such as “My Time.”

Users submit to the subtle collection of data in order to personalize a portal page or to participate in the ebb and flow of m-commerce, resulting in a data collection and target marketing according to registered and observed preferences. M-commerce phone users are seduced into complicity with the desiring-machine of capitalism and its concomitant surveillance of the activity of commercial networks. This desiring-machine thus constitutes its own panoptic as the mobile phone is insinuated and interpolated into everyday life. The mobile phone as desiring machine—if not a desired machine—takes this surveillance into the streets with the advent of GPS-enabled phones that literally track user movements through the informational city. The mobile phone becomes a “panoptic mechanism . . . a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations function in a function, and of making a function function through these power relations” (Foucault 1997, 365). The functional power relations of capitalist production and consumption are articulated by the wilful submission to panoptic surveillance of activities within the wired and the wireless network, as well as the desire to

possess the technology of mobile commerce and communication. This “desire is a process, a synthesis of machines, a machinic arrangement—desiring machines. The order of desire is the order of *production*; all production is at once desiring-production and social production” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 296). Within the logic of m-commerce, the phoneur is attached to a machine (the cell phone) which is in turn attached to other machines (the networked datastructure) in a machinic arrangement that produces social relations based on commodity production and consumption. This “machinic arrangement” is a social process (Wise 1997; Agre 1994; Clarke 1994): “The mobilization of the phone isn’t really a technological process—it’s cultural. The problem isn’t to *invent* the machine, but to get us all to *adopt* it, to feel we need it” (Myerson 2001, 7). To produce desire is to produce consumption, of capital flows, of information, of communication as commodity. The social relations of desire and affect are the effects of phonerie.

Mobile phone-enabled consumption renders the sites of consumerism as polymorphous, ubiquitous, and pervasive. W4 portal providers seek to be the point of access for the mobile crowd, the hinge between the commercial datastructure of the habit@ and the lived environment of social relations, the milieu of the phoneur. Web portals are the fortified enclaves of the Internet and the WWW (Luke 2002), and the logic of the online fortified enclave is now being extended to the mobile phone: “the mobile phone promotes a verbal gated community; you can shut out everyone around you. It’s become a personal

accessory that allows the oblivious to live in their own world." (Goodman 1999). But this obliviousness extends to the invisible data collection of the habit@, as it is based on the sophisticated move towards an invisible and participatory panopticism enabled by the "trace technologies of the habit@online" (Luke In Press). The citizen-consumer is seduced into partaking of these flows by the emancipatory promise of new technologies: the wireless web and the promise of a digital citizenry. This notion of citizenship is predicated on an ability to covertly trace the datatrails of the digital individual (here the phoneur):

Technological developments linking surveillance with societal simulation [m-commerce phones as the latest and greatest gadget, for example], and the increasing horizontal co-ordination between 'dossiers' and sites of surveillance (credit bureaus, banks, retailers, utilities, media firms, transport operators, state and correctional agencies), seem likely to prefigure a rapid intensification of co-ordinated, comprehensive surveillance. (Graham 1999, 142)

With the addition of m-commerce GPS-enabled phones, these "geographies of surveillant simulation" (Graham 1999) are part of the collection and collation of habit@ data that operates within a panoptic paradigm of consensual surveillance. The "cultural technologies" (Giroux 2000, 123) of media and the iconography of culture affect the ways in which people are encouraged to use cell phones within the learned behaviour of phonerie.

> > my id:entity

He punches in a GPS request for that new restaurant he read about in yesterday's userNews feature. He finds out it is within walking distance and gets a 10% discount coupon sent to him as he heads there. As he strolls through the shopping strip on his way back from lunch, each store he passes sends an e-coupon to his phone. Communications jam up until he gets through the shopping district.

Digital citizenship is more and more being articulated within the rubric of consumption and commodity. As Kelly says, "desire and difference intersect in identity" (Kelly 1997, 105). This is especially so within my-iD.com. This service seeks to be both a marker of social difference with the participation in its service (vis-à-vis other phone service providers), as well as within its service, with respect to constructing your personal identity within its portal's pages for others to see. "It is difference that makes identity possible" (Kelly 1997, 108), and the markers of difference within my-iD.com constitute the phoneur's entity. Within online or cybernetic grammar, an entity is a stand-in or representation. For example, "A character entity reference is an SGML [Standard Generalized Markup Language] construct that references a character of the document character set" (World Wide Web Consortium). That is, an entity is a representation in code of a particular sign or symbol. It is a way to represent certain signs and/or symbols that do not have a corresponding key on a standard keyboard (for example, Latin, mathematical symbols, and Greek letters, markup-significant and international characters). With respect to my-iD.com, a user's id:entity is the representation of that user within the network. It is the user's ID—an identifying mark or proxy of identification. It can also be said to be a representation of the id, or underlying psychological profile of desire, as per the psychoanalytic use of the Latin term for "id": "The inherited instinctive impulses of the individual, forming part of the unconscious and, in Freudian theory, interacting in the

psyche with the ego and the super-ego" (OED). If we accept that the id is the wellspring of the subconscious and individual desire, then this is an appropriate rendering of the way in which my-iD.com is seeking to operate within the enculturation of the phoneur's identity:

The fluid nature of the habit@id:entity is a functional representation of online market proxies in constant renegotiation and informational articulation. It is an additive function in which our presence is deferred insofar as we are always mediated and represented by our id:entity, which stands in for our sense of self within online environments. (Luke In Press)

The id:entity, as the stand-in for the person, is a portal proxy and the representation of desire, "a tool for your self-expression and an outlet for your thoughts. It's everything you need to make yourself heard" (my-id.com 2001).

The id:entity is the mediator—both literally and figuratively—between the ego and the super-ego, the individual and the network configuration(s) of desire and commodity exchange: the way to broadcast your self into the ether of the wireless web.⁵

The my-iD.com mobile phone service offers users an enculturation into the experience of participating within a userCulture of like-minded people. Advertising for this new breed of mobile phone asks "What's your iD?," implying that, like your real identity which is unique and particular to you and only you, this new phone service offers a personalized place or space for the creation, maintenance and cultivation of your own iD within the constraints of a liberatory capitalism. The my-iD service is the wireless extension of the construction of the online persona, itself an essential part of the postmodern consciousness of the

Internet generation. Within the habit@ you need a digital tool—a veritable digital soapbox—upon which to stage your “self-expression,” and “iD . . . acts as a tool for your self-expression and an outlet for your thoughts. It’s everything you need to make yourself heard.” Your thoughts can be broadcast throughout the userCulture with your new mobile phone. my-iD.com turns phones from basic senders and receivers into more robust broadcast devices. Transmuted from basic communication devices, these phones allow you to hear and be heard above and beyond the din of all the other cell phones ringing. The iD phone, as “everything you need to make yourself heard,” is the ultimate accoutrement of the digital citizen that will make you stand above the crowd.

Turning the simple handset into a multimedia broadcast device⁶—or at least selling it with this appearance and cachet—means that the personalized space of web portals (as a place to broadcast your personal tastes and desires) now resides with you at all times. No longer attached to the wires of the web, the wireless revolution pushes the information datastructure out into the streets of the mediated city. New media are being designed to “hear” your phone as you pass by, and send you e-coupons to use in an effort to entice you into stores you encounter as you stroll the city streets (Haskins 2001). This city—territorialized within the rubric of capital and commodity flows—now reaches out to you as you pass by, interpolating consciousness with every step you take. The construction of the consuming consciousness is reconstituted within the

online shopping mall of the future (Stratton 1996, 257), now the mobile mall that follows the phoneur through the city street.

The my-iD.com service takes the web portal and makes it portable. This new emergence of the phone portal is advertised as offering the following features: “Exclusive contests, polls, and iVent information; Personalize content and have it sent to your phone; An ongoing, ever growing interactive member area” (my-id.com 2001). In addition to voice, these phones also offer “2-way Email and Text Messaging.” iVents are “events” that only subscribers will be privy to. The locus of network identity is the location of the “I” in an ego-centric habit@id:entity. Access to special deals and discounts are intended to entice users to subscribe to the iD service and relinquish their privacy. And this is where the real problem lies. A close reading of the privacy and security regulations reveals a disturbing trend toward corporate ownership of personal data. This data is sold—or rather, the rights to it are—all in the name of consumption within the increasingly over-commodified and corporatized space of network capital.

The Privacy policy of the my-iD service acknowledges the tech-savviness of their potential customer base. This policy seeks to circumvent privacy concerns by tackling head-on issues surrounding the use of cookies to track user habits:

How does Rogers/my-id.com use information it gathers about me?

Rogers/my-id.com collects and uses your name, email address and other personal information, for example, to provide you with product and other

information that you requested, to respond to your questions, to enter you in and to administer contests, to email you updates and news and to contact you respecting polls and surveys. Rogers/my-id.com will not use any personally-identifiable information, other than contact information, obtained in member polls or surveys without your prior express consent. This information also enables Rogers to develop and customize products or services to better meet your needs and preferences and to offer you products and services from Rogers, any of its affiliated companies within the Rogers group of companies and other companies with whom we have marketing (my-id.com 2001, /Privacy.jsp).

The language used here is designed to create the illusion of empowerment.

Rogers will collect private and personal data “to provide you with product and other information that you requested, to respond to your questions, to enter you in and to administer contests, to email you updates and news and to contact you respecting polls and surveys.” The provision of service in return for users’ personal data is meant to ameliorate the fact that users do lose privacy within the service. Users are told that they can give up their personal information in order to get something that they may want. The premise and the promise of this push advertising rely on a sense of proprietary consumption—the idea that you will want to partake of future commodities produced with “you” in mind. This further plays on the “unique iD”—the id:entity—angle that uses the idea of individuality even as it marshalls the technology to produce an individual profile based on past habits and inputted personal data. “At heart, the mobile concept is about being in control—as a separate and distinct individual” (Myerson 2001, 20). The irony is that this individual uniqueness is only made possible by the collection of the habits of mass consumption, as “Countless—but counted—

individuals are seeking their desires separately, and yet unknowingly they are caught up in a huge system" (Myerson 2001, 21).

What gets really disturbing is the trend towards actual ownership of data that is moved across the service. Rogers assumes all control over anything that is moved over its service:

You hereby grant to Rogers a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and license to use, reproduce, modify, adapt, publish, translate, distribute and sublicense, and hereby agree to waive in favour of Rogers all of your moral rights in, any and all material, information or content submitted by you to the my-id.com web site and/or to incorporate it in other works regardless of form, medium or technology, without compensation. (my-id.com 2001, /Privacy.jsp)

Users have no rights to their personal data within the my-iD dataspace.

Anything they upload or transfer over the network becomes the sole property of Rogers, who can then resell this content for profit with no remuneration to the person(s) who actually created it. The Terms And Conditions Of Membership for my-iD.com further stipulates that by signing up for their service users agree to all terms and conditions, even if these get changed:

By registering as a member of my-id.com you acknowledge and agree to comply with these terms and conditions and all policies and notices on this site (collectively the "Terms and Conditions"). We reserve the right, at our sole discretion, to modify the Terms and Conditions at any time, and such modifications shall be effective immediately upon posting of the modified Terms and Conditions. You agree to review the Terms and Conditions periodically to be aware of such modifications and your continued use of the my-id.com web site shall be deemed your conclusive acceptance of the modified Terms and Conditions. Registration by any person under age 16 requires consent and agreement by a parent or guardian including without restriction their agreement to comply with the Terms and Conditions. (my-id.com 2001, /Privacy.jsp)

The assumption is that the user will periodically check back with the terms and conditions (the users agrees “to review the Terms and Conditions periodically to be aware of such modifications” to the rules). Thus Rogers has no obligation to inform users if terms change. How many people will actually re-read the Terms and Conditions, and more to the point, how many are going to read these closely the first time? Most people give these kinds of policies a cursory read at best, as they are more concerned with signing up for and on to the system in order to reap the “benefits” of membership.

Within the my-iD.com habit@, service is tailored to the individual – it’s a new individualism, a new frontier to be tamed by the reaches of capitalism. The my-iD.com logo (my-id.com 2001) is an approximation or hybrid of the @ symbol but with the “i” in the centre. And this is perhaps the point, for within the habit@ the virtual “I” is the most important entity. This is my iD: my identity and my id:entity that seeks a home of and for self-expression within the wireless web offered by the my-iD.com network. Within the habit@, “we no longer have roots we have aeri-als” (Wark 1994, 64). My entity on the network becomes me, as I become data. I am where it’s @.



> > you say you want a ®evolution™

He sends an email to a friend suggesting they meet at the movies to catch the latest feature flick. The e-phone’s mailer scans the outgoing text, picks up the film’s keyword, and sends back a coupon for free Coke with purchase of a super-size popcorn. The cinema emails him to say he can reserve his tickets (paid for electronically). By accepting the push advertising, no ticket is necessary—just show the e-coupon to the usher.

The search for meaning in the postmodern world sees the endless repetition and regurgitation of past forms pressed into the service of the present. The enculturation process of the my-iD.com service—this “new kind of wireless service” which is in fact a new way of being in the city—reconfigures the lived experience (or more to the point, the shopping experience, which is now conflated with the lived experience) within “another type of consumption: consumption of the very process of consumption itself, above and beyond its content and the immediate commercial products” (Jameson 1991, 276). Jameson notes that in society, “What is wanted is a great collective project in which an active majority of the population participates, as something belonging to it and constructed by its own energies” (Jameson 1991, 278). But what is happening within Rogers’ advertisements for its new wireless services is the total evacuation of this sense of a collective project, as well as the commodification of revolution itself as another rubric under which to sell commodities. This is the ®evolution™.

Rogers’ ads play on a complex sense of revolution, belonging and the iconography of fandom and bring it under the economic alary of mobile networks. A recent Rogers advertising campaign for its mobile phone service featured people holding what appear to be protest signs and smiling as they anticipate the next generation of wireless services. This is the digital citizenry advocating for their consumer empowerment, and getting fulfillment within “Unlimited evening and weekend calling.” Another advertisement for limitless

evening and weekend calling, free voicemail and text messaging states "This could be the closest thing to free speech." The use of the rhetoric of ®evolution reterritorializes the revolutionary stance within the logic of the mobile market. This is further suggested with another Rogers advertisement that sells the idea of working anywhere—home, office, train, canoe, chair lift, or even the "top of a flagpole." This last point of access alludes to protest and/or "college kid" enthusiasm for antics designed to draw attention (to a cause, etc.). Rogers could be capitalizing on the well-known fact that protesters at the anti-free trade demonstrations in Seattle, Washington *et al* have all used wireless communication devices to organize and mobilize protest vis-à-vis police actions. The use of the protest semiotic thus reduces it to another aspect of consumption within Rogers' wireless web.

In early 2001 Rogers also ran a series of television ads that use black and white footage of a Beatles-esque foursome, running from a hoard of screaming fans, with which to sell the message of "Imagine a better wireless world." Rogers seeks to capture and capitalize on the popular conception of the fifties and sixties' explosion of mass (consumer and/or political) consciousness and channel this into their new wireless service, which includes my-iD.com. Both the print and television advertisements evacuate the sense of revolution concomitant with this era of popular culture. Rogers uses leftist rhetoric of revolution (which was hailed as protest anthems by groups such as the Beatles), perverting the Jamesonian notion of "a great collective project in which an active majority of

the population participates." Rogers wishes this project to be their wireless network. More to the point, this network will be "something belonging to it [the active majority] and constructed by its own energies," in that within my-iD.com, users are given the "ability" to construct their own culture, their own sense of collective identity—their id:entity—within the network habit@ itself.

Users' own energies are channelled into creating a mobile room of their own, "something" they can belong to, identify with and create. The trouble with this is that their demographic data is collected within this habit@ and sold back at them as they are enticed to spend as part of their identity formation. The cachet of rebellion is successfully co-opted under capitalist market(ing) flows, just as Giroux diagnoses a cultural shift "As the interface between global capital and new electronic technologies refigure and reshape the face of culture" (Giroux 2000, 8).

> > the space of flows and the logic of mobile capital

As the credits roll, an exit survey of the film is emailed. Our e-urbanite is asked to vote on the movie's merits; his esteemed opinion will be published in tomorrow's user survey and shared with the service provider's customer base.

The .commodity-ready mobile phones constitute the new, mobile panoptic, perhaps best rendered as the pan*info*con. Within this habit@, the collection of "transaction-generated information (TGI) . . . is increasingly collected and used to predict and modify consumer behavior" (Samarajiva 1998, 277). The key here is "predict and modify," and digital consumers, stalked in

their habit@, are seduced into a commercial web or “new economy based on mass customization” (Samarajiva 1998, 278). The phoneur embodies the acme of individualism within a limited conception of “digital democracy” because “choosing” one’s media becomes a way to register voice, albeit within the confines of consumption. The phoneur is a citizen of the digital world, the netizen having personal access to only that which s/he desires to see. The personalized web creates the “Daily Me” that filters out undesirable or unfavourable opinions, making it easier to see and hear only that which accords to your own personal point of view (Sunstein 2001).⁷ This is a danger to democracy and free speech, in that it advocates a kind of myopia that can lead to narrow-minded thinking and the growth of intolerance for social difference (Sunstein 2001).

This “Daily Me” is the portal logic of personalization which is sold as an avenue of empowerment, though empowerment as defined as the ability to consume that which is presented within the flows of information capital. This definition becomes a restricted habit@, wherein the phoneur is a protected species. A Now Magazine advertisement exhorts users to become “Cell Mates” and “Get Now movie times, restaurant and live music listings on you dot.com ready ClearNet and Bell Mobility phones.” This advertisement plays on this paradigm of privilege even as it uses the rhetoric of prisons to mask its panoptic impulse. As Baudrillard says, “prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral” (Baudrillard

1984, 25). The “Cell Mates” advertisement alludes to the fortified enclave of phonerie, and in fact sells itself with this as a virtue, repurposing the rhetoric of incarceration under the rubric of free access to information (only insofar as the information itself is free; the access is not, strictly speaking, since users pay for the phone service). If digital pedagogies are implicated within notions of citizenship based on consumption, then the learned behaviour within digital networks is limited first to that which is broadcast over the media networks themselves, and second by the process of choosing which version of information (news, stock tips, horoscopes, etc.) in which to invest.

The phoneur constructs id:entity as part of the flows of mobile capital. Thus, media vectors—trajectories of media that “can connect enormously vast and vaguely defined spaces together and move images, and sounds, words, and furies, between them” (Wark 1994, 11-12)—are automatically absorbed into consciousness, not necessarily with any attendant critical analysis. As Wark reminds us,

The question for vectoral analysis is not what is your identity but where is your nonidentity? What points does it lie between? Along which lines does it oscillate? This is not an abstract question, but a very concrete one: what are the channels, what are the frequencies, what are the sources at your disposal to orient you to the world? What the vector does is make identity oscillate between more and more points. (Wark 1994, 59)⁸

Mobile phones are vectors of capital flows moving in fluid and constant (re)negotiation as per the needs of individual users. The phoneur’s place in the habit@ is marked by consumption—the locations of spending habits that are

tracked and sold back in an endless cycle of consumption. This is the informational city—the city as information within the logic of mobile market capitalism. To paraphrase Baudrillard, the mobile mall exists to distract us from the fact that the whole world is a mall.

The citizen as consumer construct disrupts the conception of digital citizenry, in that this form of citizenship is (re)constituted solely under the rubric of consumption. As Jameson says, “market as a concept rarely has anything to do with choice or freedom, since those are all determined for us in advance, whether we are talking about new model cars, toys, or television programs: we select among those, no doubt, but we can scarcely be said to have a say in actually choosing any of them” (Jameson 1991, 266). That is to say, we can choose only from that which is offered for us; we cannot choose what is (not) offered. Within the space of flows of postmodern, mobile capital, we consume our identity from a menu of predetermined choices: “Coupled with the general public’s increasing loss of faith in public government, public institutions, and the democratic process, the only form of agency or civic participation offered to the American people is consumerism as opposed to substantive forms of citizenship” (Giroux 2000, 3). This conception of citizen is entirely predicated upon our ability to access the technologies that mediate these choices as much as it is dependant also on the ability to pay for this access and the commodities themselves.

To consume our identities such, to be the phoneur within the habit@ of the *homo digitalis*, is to realize the ephemeral flows of mobile capital and to reify

the instantiation of capital and consumption itself. We consume to consume, to be consumed, for “in the postmodern, indeed, it is the very idea of the market that is consumed with the most prodigious gratification; as it were, a bonus or surplus of the commodification process” (Jameson 1991, 269). Within this conception of digital literacy, and the digital pedagogy of phonerie in particular, we learn to consume as part of the conception of digital citizenship. A recent press release for an electronic device marketed by Accenture unabashedly uses the rhetoric of empowerment to situate new wireless technologies at the fore of an enlightened digital citizen:

Score one for Pocket Bargain Finder, a project developed by the Accenture Technology Research and Innovation team. By enabling an intelligent agent to search online stores for the lowest prices, Pocket Bargain Finder is redefining “consumer empowerment”—while vividly demonstrating how technology is changing the relationship between buyers and sellers. (Accenture 2001)

Our choice is limited to that which is offered on the market: “The force, then, of the concept of the market lies in its ‘totalizing’ structure, as they say nowadays; that is, in its capacity to afford a model of a social totality” (Jameson 1991, 272). The my-iD phone is this totality: “everything you need to make yourself heard” above the crowds of the urban e-scape. The economic imperative that is the driving force behind technological innovation is affecting the manner in which we conceive of communications within the new, networked reality (Dickson 2000, 120). This imperative has transmogrified the Internet from a communication medium to one of commercial concerns (Rheingold 1993, 285-286). More and more, media define our conception of “social agency” (Giroux 2000, 109), and

this agency is increasingly determined by media manipulation—the ability to have and control the medium and its message. This endless media manipulation and programmatic citizenry operates under “the logic of consumerism” (Giroux 2000, 116). Within this logic, the digital citizen is the phoneur, left to wander the habit@ in search of meaning within the flows of commodity production and consumption.

Within the networked space of flows and the information city we now have the ability to always be in contact with the market economy. Watching the market by way of stock quotes and tips coming over the wireless web is one of the enticements mobile phone service providers offer to potential users. But as these phones become GPS-enabled and track movements through the market(place), the phoneur becomes the market, surveilled by the pan/infocon apparatus of market(ing) media that watches or listens for the trace through the habit@.

> > digital literacy, digital pedagogy, and the self *in formation*

Having contributed his movie review to the userCulture, our e-urbanite feels important and involved. Not everyone gets to participate within this digital democracy—membership does have its privileges. But while he sleeps, corporate “scientists” compile his demographic data. When he awakens, a new set of coupons and commercial enticements greet him as he checks his messages. Where does he want to go today? His handlers have laid a trail of cheese through the city’s commercial maze.

Identity formation is a socially determined process rather than a definitive product (Miedema and Wardekker 1999; Castells 1997). This is especially so of the habit@id:entity which is a constant and consistent mediated representation of the digital self *in formation*. This self is formed through a "pedagogy of the supplement" (Trifonas 2000) that has a double nature. The trace technologies of the habit@online continually supplement the id:entity profile of the individual user, and in effect "learn" about individual user preferences in order to serve a market logic. But just as "*Identity is not a given, but an activity, the result of which is always only a local stability*" (Miedema and Wardekker 1999, 79), we continue to learn as part of the larger process(es) of living in general. The local stability of identity is continually negotiated and supplemented in dialogic relationship to the mediated environment (Miedema and Wardekker 1999; Bakhtin 1996). Education as process produces an interactive pedagogy that represents the constituent and iterative local adaptations and informal learning situations that punctuate daily life. If the digital citizen is constructed as the phoneur without any attendant critical awareness, the key pedagogical question to ask is to what extent are we aware of our habit@online? Are we cognizant of the fact that our movements of and in consumption are being sold back at us? Are we comfortable living a life lived in formation, as lived information? What strategies for awareness can we cultivate to combat the appropriation of our communication as linked to consumption?

The danger of constituting a digital literacy (a term that encompasses the critical skills needed to decode and work within the networked, digital environment) within consumerism means that we do not teach people how to critically analyze the mediated world around us.⁹ Digital literacy encompasses teaching the “multiple, critical literacies” that encourage critical reflection on all aspects of culture (Kellner 2000; Luke 2000; Giroux 2000). Being digitally literate means having the skills required to access the technology, but also the skills required to decode the cultural apparatuses of power that form the subsurface of this technology as it is put into practice within everyday contexts. We must read—and be able to read—all sites of cultural production within our mediated habit@: “A healthy suspicion of all media, including print, is essential in the development of a critically literate populace. A critical popular literacy involves reading vigilantly the sociocultural and economic dimensions of our engagements with culture” (Kelly 1997, 82). At issue here is being able to render the cultural contexts within which we live transparent to true democracy, and the democratization of knowledge. “A politician is now a commodity, citizens are consumers, and issues are decided via sound-bites and staged events” (Rheingold 1993, 285), as digital citizenship is more and more being articulated within the rubric of consumption and commodity (Kelly 1997; Rheingold 1993).

Within the capitalist gestalt, the icons of capitalist desire constitute and refer to commodities as being that which brings completion. These commodity forms are aggregates, conglomerates of a unity that is constantly deferred; “a

structural unity is imposed on the desiring-machines that joins them together in a molar aggregate; the partial objects are referred to a totality that can appear only as that which the partial objects lack, and as that which is lacking unto itself while being lacking in them" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 306). This molar aggregate (a supplemental pedagogy) is the demographic data collected in the habit@ that marks our place within the flows of capital. The phoneur lives a life in formation, as lived information, never complete, always deferred. The danger is that users are being seduced into thinking they have democratic access to knowledge when in fact they are passive consumers and collectors of "points of view" within the political and commodity landscape (Appadurai 1996, 42).

New, digital media change our conception of our relationship to information (The New London Group 2000), and the wireless web and the logic of mobile commerce teach consumption as a basic component of literacy and agency within the digital world. This digital pedagogy of desire and affect is not imbued with a critical component; rather, "Both subjectivity and agency are wrapped up (knotted) in technological systems. To have 'power' and 'prestige' is to possess or to be able to possess the most advanced of technological systems (whether a private jet, CD player, or laptop)" (Menser and Aronowitz 1996, 21). Those who desire to possess the technology learn to do so as consumers, and not producers, even though they are producers of demographic data that they then re-consume in a kind of coprophagic discourse uroboros that feeds on the materiality of itself in an *ex stasis* cycle of desiring machine production and

consumption: "Producing is always something 'grafted onto' the product; and for that reason desiring-production is production of production, just as every machine is a machine connected to another machine" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 6). For the phoneur, entangled in a machinic arrangement of desire and affect, consumption and commodity are grafted onto communication (Myerson 2001).

The prescriptive digital pedagogies of phonerie seduce the user into a kind of "direct democracy" that allows him/her to vote on what s/he likes to see presented within the online space. But this digital democracy is itself caught up within the politics of consumption. This conception of the digital citizen reinforces the concept that "We are who we are, not through an essence that underlies all our motions and thoughts, but through the habitual repetition of those motions and thoughts" (Wise 2000, 303). The phoneur becomes a moving point on a commercial grid, articulating a habit@id:entity within the commercial network. And it is this commercial grid that thus defines the concept of the digital citizen. Phonerie becomes the "common culture" (Willis 1990) of which those who are not desire to be like, to become the phoneur. These digital pedagogies and conceptions of digital citizenry affect a "purchasing ideology" (Luke 2002); that is, an ideology based on what is purchased, even as these habits of consumption are collated and purchased anew within a cycle of endless consumption. Within the purchasing ideology, a cultural narrative of consumption is written onto the body politic. In the culture of phonerie, this narrative is based on the flows and

practices within the habit@: those practises that partake of commercial enterprise, at the same time as they constitute this enterprise.

With the increased homogenization of media—increasingly in the hands of a few conglomerates (Giroux 2000, 108)—and with the ubiquity of mobile phone growing daily, it becomes important to ask where social difference lies in the face of the globalized mobilization. “Beyond the democratic ideal of diversity, the Internet enforces uniformity” (Interrogate the Internet 1996, 127), and this applies equally to W4 environments like my-iD.com. Where resides social difference if we only learn to be consumers? The eradication of social difference and the construction of the digital citizen as a consumer of multinational capital are exacted in the face of the personalization of the online, W3 and W4 portalized worlds. Thus while consumer-citizens are given the opportunity to personalize their dataspace, they may fail to question the homogenization this really entails. The danger is that “Public spheres are replaced by commercial spheres as the substance of critical democracy is emptied out and replaced by a democracy of goods, consumer lifestyles, shopping malls, and the increasing expansion of the cultural and political power of corporations throughout the world” (Giroux 2000, 41). This democracy of goods is the individualization of the mediascape, personalized on your portal, preconfigured and packaged to your personal digital assistant (PDA) or mobile phone. This is a democratization marked by the power to be all for everyone, the demarcation of the Daily Me

that belies a dangerous myopia to the world as constructed of capital and commodity flows.

> > **conclusion: response ability and the digital citizen**

The wireless web has evolved as a subset of capitalism. It is a datastructural extension of the media-dominated space of flows that pushes e-advertising through data portals (phones, PDAs). The act of "voting" on a favourite movie, restaurant, etc, assumes the guise of democratic voice but under the rubric of consumption, and evacuates the rhetoric of voting by "Reformulating social issues as strictly individual or economic issues, corporate culture functions largely to cancel out the democratic impulses and practices of civil society by either devaluing them or absorbing such impulses within a market logic" (Giroux 2000, 41). Recent fears over globalization and free trade (the 20-22 April 2001 Quebec City Summit of the Americas protest is just one example; Seattle, Washington, Windsor being others) are congruent with the narrow conception of digital citizenry outlined above.

If our choices as digital citizens are limited to what we can purchase on the dot.com horizon, then our roles as citizens are severely limited, curtailed and reduced to a progressive paternoster of consumer goods. "Democracy is not synonymous with capitalism, and critical citizenship is not limited to being a literate consumer" (Giroux 2000, 59-60), but as US President George W. Bush remarked during the Quebec trade summit, "Trade brings freedom," illustrating

clearly that the US government, for one, sees its citizens as consumers. In the aftermath of September 11, Bush acknowledged openly that the US considers its citizens as consumers when he exhorted Americans to “go out and shop” as a way to do their part for America during its time of crisis.¹⁰ The equating of citizenship with consumerism is not new, but if “communications technologies . . . become such a part of our functioning that they disappear from active view, from critical consideration, they disappear into their content and into our communicative habits” (Wise 1997, 188). Because these technologies are relatively new, we have a unique opportunity to intervene at a critical juncture in their codification into the *habitus* and the habit@online.

When we desire *to be like* (c.f. Friere 1970)—to assume uncritically the trappings of the dominant digital culture—we may fail to see the ideology that lurks beneath the surface of contemporary electronic practices. If we do not question the relinquishment of private data, then control over the personal is abrogated in favour of corporate control over identity formation itself. Cultivating a critical, digital literacy and pedagogy means examining the technologies that punctuate our daily lives, and reading these critically in order “to urge redefinition of the world rather than mere participation in it as it is now structured. Such objectives demand the examination of how culture is engaged and how literacies are practiced in specific contexts and for specific purposes” (Kelly 1997, 77). By examining how the habit@id:entity is constructed amidst the imbrications of desire and affect, we can expose what Kelly calls “the pedagogies

of persuasion and the persuasions of pedagogy" (Kelly 1997, 74). These persuasions undergird the media available for consumption, and the politics and processes of consumption (Kelly 1997, 76).

Using ubiquitous media in education enlivens debate about its use (Kress 2000). Ignoring the pedagogical contexts of popular media forms (and the mechanisms for access) is an abrogation of responsibility. Rather, we have a response ability—an ability to respond to how technologies are used in everyday contexts. The symbiotic relationship between the habit@id:entity and consumption will not easily be disrupted. Rather, the issue is how to use this id:entity as part of the pedagogic process of engaging popular culture.¹¹ By exposing the "the logic of consumerism" (Giroux 2000, 116) latent in electronic discourses of desire and the economy of affect wherein those without the technology simply desire to possess it, we can illustrate how we become informed by media representation, encourage critical reflection and promote digital literacies. More importantly, we can fashion an interactive pedagogy that does not simply react to media and new technology, but rather acts within its lived relations and directs the appropriate use of technology with attendant critical awareness. This interactive pedagogy is education *in formation*: a foundation of active and engaged digital citizenship.

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Notes

¹ Italicized excerpts from (Luke 2001).

² For an overview of these data tracking mechanisms, see (Peters 1999).

³ I am indebted to Robert Morgan for the term "phonerie" and its connection to the flâneur and flânerie.

⁴ See (Luke 2002) for a discussion about the habit@online and its relation to web portals.

⁵ The id:entity is currently being taken to a new level with the introduction of Intelligent Agents (IA). An IA is a sophisticated software program that acts as a proxy for a user under set parameters. The latest advances in the IA field are in Japan (where technology is a full three years ahead of North America). NTT (Japan's National Telephone Service) offers the popular i-mode DoCoMo service, which now includes i-chara, interactive characters that literally stand in for users. I-chara find information and shopping deals based on consumption habits, and even go out and meet other i-chara agents: "Living in mobile devices, i-chara are highly evolved, highly personalized digital agents, guiding their owners through an electronic social and informational matrix" (Galloway 2001, 39). This matrix is the habit@, and in Japan, mobile phones are integral parts of identity formation and "rank second only to a wallet in things a person will not leave behind" (Binsted 2001). The i-chara act as "social filters," preventing user-user interaction (by interacting only with other i-chara) so that personal information and privacy is protected from other users; this makes people more comfortable about entering risky social situations (meeting new people, etc.) (Binsted 2001). However, "as agents become more efficient and fade into the woodwork, we will lose the opportunity to interrogate some of the social actors making the greatest impact on our lives" (Wise 1998, 423). While Wise is speaking specifically of intelligent agents with respect to W3 portals, his analysis is particularly trenchant as agents enter W4 environments and more and more people sign up for a habit@id:entity (see also (Wise 1997, 156-157)).

⁶ So-called 3G (Third Generation) phones will offer high-bandwidth connections over the W4 network, allowing for streaming video and other high-capacity data to be sent and received from mobile handsets. That GPS-enabled handsets also broadcast datatrails is a hidden form of broadcasting enabled by these devices.

⁷ Sunstein borrows the term "Daily Me" from Nicholas Negroponte. But where the latter extols the Daily Me as a virtue of the online future, Sunstein raises a caution to critically engage this concept as to what it might mean for the development (or lack thereof) of democratic discourse and the engagement of social difference.

⁸ Wark borrows the term "vector" from Paul Virilio: "It is a term from geometry meaning a line of fixed length and direction but having no fixed position. Virilio employs it to mean any trajectory along which

bodies, information, or warheads can potentially pass. . . . Media vectors have fixed properties . . . [but] no necessary position: it can link almost any points together” (Wark 1994, 11).

⁹ In many respects there is no clear distinction between online and offline activities (Burbules 2000, 340): all form part of the context of daily life in a postmodern world (this does, of course, presuppose familiarity with and access to these cultural notions of meaning).

¹⁰ Reported 27 September 2001 on CNN (<http://cnn.com>).

¹¹ It should be pointed out that online learning platforms (integrated courseware systems) use id:entity structures and surveillance mechanisms extensively. This is one aspect of online surveillance that is both necessary and positive, as it allows for different kinds of pedagogies to be implemented within online learning (tracking cognitive paths through curricular material, for example).