

Our living knowledge, skills, and abilities are in the process of being recognized as the primary source of all other wealth. What then will our new communication tools be used for? The most socially useful goal will no doubt be to supply ourselves with the instruments for sharing our mental abilities in the construction of collective intellect or imagination. Internetworked data would then provide the technical infrastructure for the collective brain or *hypercortex*³ of living communities. The role of information technology and digital communications is not to “replace mankind” but to promote the construction of intelligent communities in which our social and cognitive potential can be mutually developed and enhanced. Based on this approach, the major architectural project of the twenty-first century will be to imagine, build, and enhance an interactive and ever changing cyberspace. Perhaps it will then be possible to move beyond the society of the spectacle and enter a post-media era in which communications technologies will serve to filter and help us navigate knowledge, and enable us to think collectively rather than simply haul masses of information around with us. Unfortunately, although the promoters of the information highway may be aware of the problem, they remain mired in discussions about bandwidth. Fortunately, at present only a small minority considers the global system for delivering video on demand to be the *nec plus ultra* of imaginative thought concerning the art and architecture of cyberspace.

Notes

- 1 This hypothesis was inspired by the work of Bernard Perret. See *L'Economie contre la société. Affronter la crise de l'intégration culturelle et sociale*, by Bernard Perret and Guy Roustang (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993).
- 2 This long-range approach to the “end of employment” was suggested by Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: Random House, 1991).
- 3 The word was coined by Roy Ascott during the “Telenonia” conference held in Toulouse in 1992 as part of the FAUST project. See also, “Telenonia” in *Interactive Art, Intercommunication*, 7 (1994), pp. 114–23, and “Telenonia, On Line” in *Kunst im Netz* (Graz: Steirischen Kulturinitiative, 1993), pp. 135–46.