

Sinikka Sassi

## Our Utopia, So Beautiful and Contradictory

The crucial questions about the net concern politics and better future. Can the net help us in taking better care of each other. Our knowledge of the net does not give straight and clear answers. Instead we know what can be expected from the net in its extreme forms. In virtual reality we will be moving in an unknown world which both creates sense of eroding rationality as well as experiences that redefine and revitalize our sense of holiness. We might be witnessing the emergence of a large collective consciousness in which our individuality will play a smaller role and our dependency on others will grow. The net has strange and even frightening characteristics, but it can also teach us something new about ourselves, our identities and the world as it forces us to deal with the very foundations and basic categories of our world view.

Colin Sparks

## Newspapers, the Internet and Democracy

The emergence of electronic newspapers is often followed by discussions of their contribution to the largening of democracy and the growing freedom of choice and participation for the audience. In the article the challenges of the net environment for the éclassici public enlightenment newspaper are discussed from the perspective of the potential changes in the economical conditions of the newspapers. From this perspective, the new communication technology can well prove to be a restricting factor, and the future can thus mean a return to the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere of in the very sense that this ideal has often been criticized.

J. Macgregor Wise

## The Wired World: Communitarianism and Libertarianism in Wired Magazine

This essay is an analysis of the articulation of libertarianism and communitarianism in the so-called "cyberculture". At the center of this analysis is a reading of Wired magazine which explores Wired's popularization of the culture of communication and information corporations, examines the magazine's explicit political stance (advocating "cyber rights") and sketches the articulation of that stance to popular culture. I argue that the political articulation evident in Wired has crucial consequences for the current restructuring of American cultural and political life in that it addresses a powerful emerging bloc of elites who equate culture with a free market corporate economy. The essay concludes with a critique of the idea that the wired world (working and living on-line with the help of our Intelligent Agent Software) will solve the physical world's problems.

Maija Gerlander - Eeva Takala

## The Net from an Interpersonal Perspective

This article discusses communication in the net from the perspective of interpersonal communication: what are the special characteristics of interpersonal communication in the net, what kind of possibilities the net offers for building interpersonal relationships and what kind of effects the net might have to our interpersonal communication? The paper is based on literature that the authors see relevant against their own experiences of communicating in the net and on a survey (conducted in the net) of users of the net. A special emphasis is given on the fact that interpersonal communication in the net becomes text-based. Although édiscussionsi in the net

are conducted textually, the special written nature of this interpersonal communication has only been marginally discussed in the literary so far.

Reijo Savolainen

## How an Internet's Discussion Group Discusses?

**An analysis of a Finnish discussion group debating the Rally of Thousand Lakes.**

The nature of "talking by writing" communication in an unmoderated Finnish discussion group focusing on traffic policy was reviewed. Altogether 124 messages concerning the the Rally of Thousand Lakes arranged in August 1996 in Finland were analyzed. 45 persons persons participated in the discussion. All participants were men and the majority of messages were written by three persons who dominated the discussion. A part of the debate was analyzed qualitatively by focusing on the argumentative strategies used by of the participants. The majority of them criticized the rally referring mostly to social and environmental inconveniences to citizens whereas the proponents emphasized the economic benefits for local business. Characteristic of computer-mediated communication, the discussion revolved around a few themes but also branched to subtopics, thus making the conversation quite fragmentary.

## **EU Is Building the Free Trade of Information**

European Union is preparing a model according to which information gathered by public funding will be made use of by private enterprises. In this model for the future of European "information society" it is the public sector that gathers information and basic raw data. The commercial distribution and development of information services for the public is taken care of by private companies. These companies will have cheap access to the public information. The public sector will only try to cover its own expenses. This model is a step towards the free trade of information inside the Union. The Union believes that this together with a new kind of content industry emerging in entertainment business will solve the problem of unemployment. The model means that national laws will in many cases have to be rewritten.