I am thinking here of keeping in touch, touching base, networking and so on. They all affirm the importance of maintaining contact, of being a point on a grid.

The only way to follow through to the question of the truth of an experience is to chart a path back through the grid. But the grid can only be navigated with the kind of educational and social skills which make radical feedback unlikely, or in any case provide the individual with the kind of resources which make unwanted external control improbable, though as the history of psychiatry continues to prove, by no means impossible.

The demarcation of the point on the grid is not merely a technological-informational complex. It is being carved into city landscapes. According to Marvin Castle in The Information City, the new industrial space and the new service economy organize their operations around the dynamics of their information-processing units, while connecting their different functions to disparate spaces assigned to each task to be performed; the overall process is then re-integrated through communication systems. The new professional-managerial class colonizes exclusive spatial segments that connect with one another across the city, the country, and the world; they isolate themselves from the fragments of local societies, which in consequence become structurally in the process of selective reorganization of work and residence.

In order to maintain a facility to an information society we see a reduction in the distance between the economic and the social. The number and complexity of abstract (sational) calculations increase tremendously in an information econoomy since the means of information exchange involve learning technically specific processes (using automated tellers, logging onto databases, programming your VCR, playing video games, etc) and enacting them with considerable exactness. So it should not be surprising if each of the above elements is best understood as an exaggeration and an extension of earlier developments, rather than as an entirely new form. Taken together, however, they do present a distinct cultural complex which takes its meaning from the shift to an information economy and reflects an attempt to legitimate the views of those groups that have privileged access to the new technologies and its social-economic organization.

The emerging international urban elite expresses its alignment with the dominant order of the day and is continually poised to re-align itself along the possibilities of its flexible specialization and, from there, to transmit its functional-imperative unbearability, with no internal resistance, all the while presenting itself as a clear, smooth package of this same political positioning: it is refined and capable of the most subtle transmutations of its aesthetic or ideological nature. The guest is to be fully immersed in the flows of the grid: to have the channels cleared of all extraneous material and to create a social space out of this same sensibility, to create a society of smooth transmitters.

Alex Fonteyn writes about the cybernetic asylum.