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Everything Has a Form: Myth, Reality
And the Discourses of Cybertopia

Some basic definitions

Myth: the stories, narratives, that society tells about itself

Reality: the physically manifest

The subjective and associative: what people interpret into their life situations with the help of mythic narratives in a society during a specific historical era.

Ulrika Messing, at the time a minister in the Ministry of Culture, said in a speech she held at a conference of schoolteachers in the spring of 2000:

… **the new technology will revitalize our democracy**. Let us take the idea that there is a large distance between citizens and their representatives. Now the direct contact between us can be increased. Via websites both elected officials and political parties can present themselves in an entirely new way.We can communicate opinions, programs. We can pose questions and we can make direct contact, between citizens. Today each and every one of you can readily send a mail to someone in municipal or regional government, in the parliament, or in the government, and you will receive an answer much faster, much earlier and much easier than you would have a few years ago. And I believe that we have only seen the beginning of internet use, for increasing citizens' participation in political decision-making …

How fluid and unstable are the **boundaries between reality, hopes and dreams** … fiction?

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Karlskrona, a town in southern Sweden with a population of 60.000, belonged in the years just prior to the new millennium to a region of the country often described as a miniature Silicon Valley.
A virtual copy of the central part of Karlskrona was on display at various exhibits during 1999. It had the name 'Karlskrona 2' and the idea, in the best spirit of 'Sim City', was as follows:

*…**The goal with the project is to create a digital copy of Karlskrona, Karlskrona 2**. Through the internet the new town becomes accessible to the inhabitants. Digital images of the inhabitants (avatars), streets, and buildings in central Karlskrona constitute a virtual representation of the real structures and the human relations of Karlskrona. To start with Karlskrona 2 is an exact copy of Karlskrona, but since the virtual inhabitants meet and influence each other, re-evaluations of the buildings' functions, changes in social hierarchies, and changes in the laws. The real Karlskrona inhabitants will be able to gather at the town's Big Square and via a large video projection be able to follow their avatar's doings and reflect on the differences between Karlskrona and Karlskrona 2…*

(Superflex, the Modern Institute, 1999)

Karlskrona 2, **IT's heady effects**
A world of ideas that moves the boundaries of the possible forward
The concept of 'new' at an IT fair, Nov. 1999:

*… we move closer to the **new** companies… create **new** business relations… more **new** positions … **new** exciting jobs … recruit **new** coworkers… **new** technology creates **new** cooperation … Intelligent houses open doors for **new** ways of living … **new** models and ways of*

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*working …Who makes money in the **new** IT branch? … an office on
the net – provides you with **new** possibilities …'services without
borders', an alliance project that will make the **new** information and
communication technology available for everyone.*

The intoxicating 'rush' subsides and
reality once again makes itself felt, June, 2000:

Maria: I feel I sit and administrate problems via a computer… I have
worked as a social services secretary for twelve years and I have a feeling, it's
just intuitive, that **my social contacts have declines** …
Maria's situation in her work life is nowadays often focused on the
technological handling of communications technology. In that way
knowledge about how one deals with computer systems becomes a
key factor for self confidence at the workplace and sometimes can be
seen as a more central important source for personal reassurance than one's
co-workers. At the end of an interview I ask her the following question, that
she answers spontaneously:
JC: The first sense of security you get at a workplace?
Maria: To get into the computer.
JC: To recognize the system, the computer system?
Maria: That's the first thing I think about. It's like, well, sure it's still
important with co-workers and all, but it's even more important that I can get
into the computer and manage it.
JC: But before it were the pals at work?
Maria: **I can put up with it, since, despite all, I still have the computer** …

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To once again, in the spring of 2000, make **the contrast with the language of the IT consultants and the advertisements:**

Discovery consists
of looking at the
same thing as
everyone else and
thinking something
different
You can be a future legend. NOW!

To achieve
the impossible,
it is precisely
the unthinkable
that must be thougt
You can be a future legend. NOW!

(Advertising message - Framfab May, 2000)

This is not just empty 'IT-rhetoric', **something has happened**

Genesis of a new world:
Chips and computers + ubiquitous, mobile telecommunications + genetic engineering + electronically integrated, global financial markets working in real time + an interlinked capitalist economy embracing the whole planet and not only some of its segments + a majority of the urban labor force in knowledge and information processing in advanced economies + a majority of urban population in the planet + the demise of the Soviet Empire, the fading away of

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communism and the end of the Cold War + the rise of Asian Pacific
as an equal partner in the global economy + the widespread challenge
to patriarchalism + the universal consciousness on ecological presser-
vation + the emergence of a network society, based on a space of
flows, and on timeless time + **it thas not really matter if you believe
that this world, or any of its features, is new or not.
My analysis stands by it self**.

(from Manuel Castells, *The Informations Age,* vol.III, 1998:356)

In a world consisting of networks and 'plus effects'
a new world is created – whether we wish to believe it or not.

**However, even the texts of the social scientist Castells
are included in our narrative …**