

A Tale of Two Futures

Let us set the stage; imagine a world where the population lived in a constant state of uncertainty. The proliferation of technology was expanding at an exponential rate, and the political climate was hot and fit to start a wildfire.

A group of people stood alone with a way to see into the future. But they had a decision to make, and it was a heavy one. Their objective: to find out if there would be a better future if the president was taken out. Now I know what you're thinking; this is treason! But for the greater good, could one life not be taken? Is one man greater than the culmination of his constituents? No. So they decided to send one person into the future with a singular goal: figure out which future is better: a future where the president was assassinated, or the future where he was not.

They choose you dear reader to decide which future is best, which option to choose. I will now give you the two stories we have heard from our traveller, Iris.

Future 1:

Iris arrived outside of what was once called New York, but is now called Uberville.

"Strange," she thought to herself, "why would the city be renamed?"

Stranger still was the lack of movement on the roads. There seemed to be a few vehicles whipping by, but beyond that, the normal New York traffic was gone.

This could be a good future!

Unfortunately, that is not so.

Iris walks towards the city center, all of the New York people are still there, but all of the cars on the streets are Uber branded. She asks the nearest person to her "Where can i find a church?" In typical New York fashion, he walks away. Iris sees a news stand and decides that would also be a good way to get the inside scoop on what was going on, and to see how far she had travelled.

The robot behind the stand greeted her with an electric sounding "Hello" and she picked up a newspaper without staring for too long. It was April 27, 2050. Iris was shocked by the lack of flying cars and the sun still peeking out from behind what appeared to be normal clouds. Still, Uberville was troubling. The front page was drivel, a smattering of celebrities she didn't know, and some she did, being more ridiculous than before. She turned to the financial section of the paper and began to read some headlines.

The main entry read: "Another Fiscal Win for Macro-Policy, Shareholders are Satisfied"

She read on, learning how corporations had taken even more control in the government, and impressed their will on politicians without abandon. This article focused on how the new "shareholders" of the US government were installed after the fall of 2019. And right now they are all happy. Iris knew she needed to find a library, so she could learn more about the past. She got directions from the robot clerk telling her in his electric way: "Two blocks down, three blocks to the left."

As she walked, she passed stores with multiple logos attached to theirs. Some were brought to you by Verizon, others AT&T, but the strangest was the Uber Church of Christ. She decided to go in, curiosity got the better of her.

Iris walks into the church and is greeted by another, older seeming, robot clerk. This one chattered away a script as she walked into the main hall. Only one man sat in the pews, the altar was replaced with a screen, and a buffering wheel was scrolling endlessly on the stream.

Iris sat down next to the man and said “I’m so sorry to bother you, but would you mind answering a few questions I have?” The man looks delighted to see another human and says “Hi! Of course! It’s been so long since someone has come in here, I had nearly given up on this church thing.”

Iris didn’t understand “What are you talking about? Do you work here?”

“Yeah, I’m Dan, the church keeper. I’m supposed to keep it clean, but no one comes in except me, but since Uber says church is a necessity to keep around, they pay me to be here.”

“Seems pointless if no one comes here,” Iris said.

“Well it may, but I get the occasional customer, and I get to help when I can occasionally. But it’s a job though, and it’s better than the alternative. I’d rather not be out there.”

Iris was confused, but didn’t want to give away that she was from the past, so as casually as she could, she asked “What do you mean better than the alternative?”

Dan stared back blankly, knowing something was strange, he replied “Well you must be from Euro-China or something, because it’s been the same for years. If you don’t have a confirmed job in the system, you get deleted. The shareholders care too much about the numbers of unemployment, so they erase you if you lose your job and don’t have one in 48 hours.”

“What happens after 48 hours?” Iris asked.

“HAHA you have nowhere to go. There aren’t any shelters, sometimes I let people stay here, but I would get fired if Uber found out. Normally people just live outside of the city in the old and abandoned suburbs. Most of them were destroyed when Old New York was shelled though. So it’s just rubble. They don’t have other options though, once you’re out, you’re out.”

A few more words and Iris left the church to return to the past and report her findings.

When she got back, she explained everything to her associates:

“All private and public efforts now go to appeasing the shareholders. In New York specifically, Uber bought most of the property and rebranded the city in their image. They upheld strict transportation laws and regulation. All people had access to buses within the city and some self driving cars between the suburbs, but free travel was restricted to a new license level. All New York policy is based on shareholder meetings and Twitter surveys. Unfortunately, only corporations or governing bodies can use twitter, so mass media is controlled as well. If you lose your job, you lose everything. It’s like that bad Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, Eraser,

except you don't get a new life. It's not a good future." They ask what the status of their current president was, and she tells them this is the future where he was...."

Obviously troubled, they want to begin the second test immediately. The next day, Iris was sent into the future a second time, but this time the alternate future.

Future 2:

Iris arrives in the future, this time, there are cars whizzing by at high speeds, no traffic, everything is moving, and there are at least three times more cars on the road as far as she can see. As Iris walks down the side of the road, a car hums up to her and asks "Do you need a ride into the city?" Iris tells the car she has no money, to which it replies "I need no money, we are here for your service." She gets into the car, baffled that the futures could be so different.

As she arrives in the heart of New York (still called New York), she tells the car to let her out. In the middle of Time's Square, a large bronze statue of a tattooed man has been erected. On the base, it reads: "The Champion of Our Current Era: The Designer" she doesn't recognize the man, but it seems like he was from around her time due to the tattoos, camouflage pants, and large gauges. She continues on, and sees a library literally in Time's Square. The billboards and advertisements are still there, but the shops have been replaced with libraries, workshops, and vertical sustainable farms.

She is stunned by the cars having only one lane, and the rest of the roads being turned into green spaces with bike lanes. She walks to the closest new stand, to see what the latest headlines are in this future. On the front page, an article titled: "The Successes of Our Shared Economy." It explained the history of the vertical farms, and how they are empowering once remote farmers to cultivate their crops with free green fertilizers and free ground to grow in.

Iris thinks to herself: "This is the better future."

She walks into the library, and to her surprise, she sees a familiar face. It's Dan, from the other future, but he's at the main desk in the library. Iris approaches him, and he warmly welcomes her, "Good morning! Welcome to the New York Central library and research center. I'm Troy, how can we help you today?"

Iris says, "I was just looking to ask you a few questions, they may seem odd, but I'm not from here." Troy looks at her cautiously but replies "I'm here to help, ask away."

Iris asks about the vertical gardens, and what pushed the shared economy into view, Troy explains that in 2019 when the market collapsed, policy makers were blamed and thrown out. New thinkers were put in place and began changing laws slowly and testing them to ensure they worked for their local populations. Instead of working towards stabilizing old laws, new policy was created, tested at length, and implemented. By 2030, the US was off of carbon completely, and everything was designed. In 2035, the statue was erected of Jon Kolko in Time's Square, as one of the makers of change in our new era of shared successes by understanding the tacit wicked qualities of the human centered problems policy tries to solve.

Iris and Troy talked for hours about the government and policy and how the current state of things was. She wanted to be sure the right choice would be made. As evening fell, Iris returned to the past to share her news.

When she returned to the past, Iris told her associates all about the world. The new sustainable buildings, the complete lack of carbon emissions, and the focus on people in policy. They were stunned to hear this certainly was the future where the president was allowed to run rampant and create turmoil. His bad policy and bullying of foreign countries catalyzed the people to take a bigger part in their government, to realize they had power over the system, and that it should work for them to support their lives instead of hinder the good of humanity and preserve the profit of corporations.

Afterword:

Which of these two stories were the future where the president was assassinated and which was the future where he was not? Why do you think that?

Our ideas or opinions are often tainted by our views and it is difficult to see long term effects of large decisions.

In the future where macro views were the norm, and stakeholder meetings defined what was developed and how, the president was assassinated. Our public was allowed to become complacent again, and never fought for the change necessary in the world.

The future where micro and macro views were considered, the shared economy boomed, and sustainable businesses were the norm, the president was kept in charge. The policy created under his leadership and the corruption the people were able to see catalyzed a movement against the larger corporate powers, and overturned the norm of objectification of the population. People were considered again, and the country was run for them, by them.

HomeList relies on the good will of people with open housing. IT works with the policies as they are, and attempts to view people as individuals instead of a different population. HomeList seeks to be a personalized solution for people to connect with the resources they need to change their lives. If policy had been written to support people in dire straits instead of making it more difficult for them to take control over their lives, our product would not even be necessary.

Our world is in constant flux, and we hope to make the best of the situations presented, but the change needed to pervade the entirety of society has to come from within. There is no one else to do it for us. We must affect the change we wish to cultivate, we must reflect our ideal state in all of our actions.