

Story 3: Fragmented Net-Zero Initiatives

Background: As national governments are unable to plan for an adequate response to climate change, cities have taken over in many countries, including Canada. However, cities are faced with a divided population in the face of the changes that need to be made. While many people agree to modify their lifestyle to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, a majority resists these changes. To ensure that everyone contributes to the fight against climate change, citizens are assigned a carbon status based on their consumption. The municipal services they can get are calculated on their individual climate performance.

This is the story of Khuram, a forestry worker and newcomer.

November 6, 2050

(Thomas, Khuram's neighbour and friend): Why do you want to move to Camp du lac à l'Original Kurham? There are no services there; it may cost you a lot to live there!

(Khuram): Yes, but you know that here in Cap-Chat, there aren't many opportunities to improve my carbon status. Everyone here already reached Platinum status and access to services remains limited due to the high demand. Many people work from home and due to their eco-responsible lives, they receive services on a golden platter. For me, it's harder. As I have to work outside the village, with my Bronze status, I come after everyone else! As I take the robot taxis in the early hours of the morning or late at night, I wait a lot. I have no social life, I'm always at work or waiting! In addition, my parents are getting older, and I have no choice but to fly to see them. It makes me lose all my points.

Thomas's reality is very different from Khuram's. He designs educational videos on reducing greenhouse gases, a work that is less grueling than Khuram's job. The fact that everyone in Quebec receives his videos on their smartwatch also gives him a sense of prestige.

(Thomas): But you will still need a car to get around once you've moved to the Camp, no? Won't it be worse for your carbon status?!

(Khuram): We are thinking of sharing an old car to drive to the village once a week. There will also be a shuttle from the camp to our workstation in the woods. I hope that, with less travel time, I will be able to work more and be promoted to the reforestation team! You know how much I hate cutting trees.

A month later, Khuram moved into the camp, in a house shared with four roommates, a very different setup from that of the Cap-Chat ecovillage. He is surprised to learn that one of his roommates has hacked into their home's GHG measurement system. It must be said that the building is so poorly insulated that the electricity consumed for heating exceeds the authorized standards, which worsen the carbon footprint of the workers.

Among her roommates, Maria is the most optimistic about this GHG measurement system. During dinner, she reminds us that in many other countries, people do not have as much freedom of choice. Here, in theory, you can choose to occasionally eat meat and chocolate, share a car or fly. Elsewhere, people can hardly travel far from home.

Maria is particularly committed to the environment and the fight against CC. She knows that it is important to impose a limit on GHG emissions, otherwise we will not be able to meet the global targets. And the fight against climate change is everyone's business.

Maria gets along well with Khuram. She told him about her cherished project: the launch of a social economy company specializing in recycling fabrics. There is so much textile waste to reuse and recycle! A real gold mine! She will have to find employees, but she believes that some tasks could be carried out by volunteers through the EcoActions program. Khuram is familiar with the program, having previously participated in it to offset some of his carbon emissions and avoid paying more taxes. Even if it was imposed on him, he found the experience pleasant. Among the works offered, he had chosen to accompany seniors to their medical appointments. It was in line with his values. Khuram has no close family, and we need to take good care of each other!

Even though he likes his job, forestry is hard work, and Maria's project is running through his head. It would be a great opportunity for him to move to a municipality that is better served and better able to improve his status. Khuram thinks that Thomas and his other friends from Cap-Chat could sponsor their initiative and help them obtain grants. "One thing at a time," he said to himself. He hasn't even unpacked his boxes yet.

That night, he dreams of trees growing in the ocean.