

ECHOMORPH

Written by

Dominic Steigmeier

INT. HPP OFFICES

Melanie sits at her desk and is working on a real estate project in Zurich. There might be a small architectural model on her desk. Her phone rings, it's her fiancé. We don't quite understand what is being said on the other end.

MELANIE

Helvetic Property Partners, this is Melanie. Hey honey, what's up?

MELANIE

Oh just finishing up this project.

MELANIE

Yes, I know I said I was done with it. But I just wanna make sure it's perfect. I don't want anything to screw up this promotion in the last minute.

MELANIE

I'm sorry honey, I know I have been working too much lately. Once I do get that promotion, it will be better, I promise.

MELANIE

Mhm. Mhm. No, of course I haven't forgotten the apéro. I will be there.

MELANIE

Alright. I love you too. Bye.

She hangs up the phone, sighs and leans back in her chair. She is tapping on the table with her fingers and is looking out the window. Her Boss stops by the door.

BOSS

Hey, Melanie, how's it going with the project?

MELANIE

Hey boss. Great, I'm just getting everything ready for the presentation tomorrow.

BOSS

Good. This is a huge project, so we really need them to love our proposal.

MELANIE

Don't worry, I got this.

BOSS

I know you do. By the way, don't you have that launch event today?

MELANIE

Yes. Yes, I do. Actually I was just about to leave.

BOSS

Alright, see you tomorrow at the meeting.

(leaves)

MELANIE

Dammit, dammit, dammit. Why did I sign up for that again?

She gets up, hastily gathers her things, and runs out.

INT. ETH HÖNGGERBERG

CHRISTIAN

Alriiight, thanks everyone for coming to another "Climate Cityzens" meeting. I know you all have midterm crits coming up too, so we'll keep this short. Today's topic is mostly the upcoming Fridays for Future demonstration. We have been asked by the organisers to do something with a focus on Zurich. We were given a five minute slot for a speaker and I thought about two possible topics already: One, unsealing the ground to counteract the heat island effect. And two, stopping unnecessary demolition / incentives for renovation. Claudia, I know you're super busy, but you are the expert on those topics. Could you make time to give a short talk about this?

CLAUDIA

Hmm? Oh yeah the talk. Sure. When is it?

CHRISTIAN

Friday.

CLAUDIA

Oh, of course. Ummm, can I get back to you on that?

CHRISTIAN

Well they do want an answer. So the sooner the better. How's it going with your diploma btw?

CLAUDIA

I don't want to talk about it. Glad when it's done.

CHRISTIAN

Haha, that's actually what I hear from everyone doing their diploma. You'll be fine. Do you know what you'll be doing after?

CLAUDIA

Uuh no, not really. Realisticly, I'll probably be working at some architecture office doing competition after competition without my opinion being heard much.

CHRISTIAN

Or you could start your own firm. Many people choose to go that way.

CLAUDIA

And end up bankrupt after two years? On the big competitions you cannot really compete without demolishing the existing buildings, which I refuse to do. And to get your hands on renovation projects you need connections. And you know I hate this whole networking, LinkedIn stuff.

CHRISTIAN

You seem a bit overworked Claudia. Maybe you should take half a day off.

CLAUDIA

I wish I could.

CHRISTIAN

And it makes no sense to worry about things that are so far in the future.

(MORE)

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

We should all focus on the here and now. And here and now we're doing our best to make a change with the "Climate Cityzens".

CLAUDIA

Easy for you to be so optimistic. Heard you got your foot in with that tech company. What is it called?

CHRISTIAN

AlpineSync. Yes I got very lucky to be chosen as a beta tester. But I applied like anyone else. But let me get all of you a round of coffee first. Especially you could use one Claudia.

Everyone laughs

CHRISTIAN

Or rather tea?

INT. STADTHAUS

Debate at the Stadthaus in the background

MATTHIAS

I can't believe we are at this again.

MATTHIAS' COLLEAGUE

The debates about parking spaces?

MATTHIAS

Yes. It's not like there are any new positions or opinions to be heard. The socialists basically want the city to be one large bike park and the evil cars to be banned completely. While the SVP and FDP are hunched over so hard because of the automobile lobby sitting in their necks, that they can't even walk anywhere anymore.

MATTHIAS' COLLEAGUE

(laughs)

Come on Matthias.

MATTHIAS

No, seriously, this is the same game over and over again. The whole parliament is a gradient with rising horse power: Pedestrians and cyclists on the left, SUV drivers on the right.

MATTHIAS' COLLEAGUE

And where are we?

MATTHIAS

We're the green liberal party. We're torn between the two. Jokes aside: I don't know about you, but I am actually here to find a compromise that gets us somewhere. Not just for polemics and ideology. Realistically, there is no way to just ban cars completely. I mean there are so many people who rely on them. And what about deliveries to businesses? Are they going to fly in by drone?

MATTHIAS' COLLEAGUE

Exactly, that's why we are pushing for more charging stations!

MATTHIAS

Yes! First let's get those carbon emissions down. And this isn't just about cars, we also have to talk about the way we work. We need better childcare options, flexible hours and giving people the option to from home. Then finally implement adaptive pricing, so it is more expensive to commute during peak hours. This isn't even radical, but supply and demand. Pure economics. But you can't tell that to those people. Everyone is so deep in their bubble, that they reject anything coming from a different party. They're so certain that their way is the only right one. But this is politics, there is no way to really find the absolute truth, because we can't predict all the outcomes.

MATTHIAS' COLLEAGUE

Imagine if we could.

A bell rings in the background.

MATTHIAS' COLLEAGUE

There we go, another day done. See you tomorrow Matthias.

MATTHIAS

Yes, bye. See you tomorrow.

Rattling sounds and a lot of talking as people gather their things and leave. Matthias' phone rings.

MATTHIAS

Bäumle.

ALPINESYNC EMPLOYEE

Hi mister Bäumle, this is Daniel from AlpineSync. You were entered by your party as a possible beta tester for our new simulation software.

MATTHIAS

Yes I was, but didn't you choose somebody else?

ALPINESYNC EMPLOYEE

Yes that is correct. Miss Moser. Unfortunately she has just reached out to us and declined last minute. I'm sorry for calling you on such short notice, but would you be interested to take her seat on the program?

MATTHIAS

And what is this program exactly?

ALPINESYNC EMPLOYEE

It is a completely novel simulation software called EchoMorph. It aims at helping politicians and urban planners test policies and their impact on the city.

MATTHIAS

Simulation software? Like Flight Simulator?

ALPINESYNC EMPLOYEE

(laughs)

Haha, yes in a way it is. But in our software you are piloting Zurich into a better future.

MATTHIAS

(laughs)

Sounds fantastic. And when and how is this?

ALPINESYNC EMPLOYEE

The launch event is today at our offices at Europaallee. I know it is very last minute, but if you can find the time we would appreciate you joining us. Everything else will be explained in the presentation, and if you still have any questions after, we can discuss it of course.

MATTHIAS

Well it does sound interesting. Could I come to the launch and decide after?

ALPINESYNC EMPLOYEE

Absolutely. So can we expect you later?

MATTHIAS

I will be there.

ALPINESYNC EMPLOYEE

Amazing. I will have everything arranged. Thank you mister Bäumle and until later.

MATTHIAS

Thank you, bye.

INT. ALPINESYNC OFFICES

People talking, atmospheric music in the background. A swoosh-sound is heard and the music changes.

MORPHEUS

Hello. Welcome at AlpineSync. I'm Morpheus and very excited to be presenting you with EchoMorph. I am the AI assistant of Echomorph and will guide you through this event and later the software. As you know we have been leading the market in simulation software for a while now.

(MORE)



## MORPHEUS (CONT'D)

What you maybe did not know is that we have been working with IBM and ETH Zurich to bring our simulations to the world of quantum computing. And last year, we had a breakthrough. The result was breathtaking. A depth and quality of simulation never seen before, and we were only tickling the computer's little toe. So we went bigger and bigger and bigger. And today we are presenting you with the result. EchoMorph! It is the combination of all our simulation softwares together. Traffic, weather, fluids, flow of people, economy, materials and physics. But those are all the classics. With the combination of these we managed to simulate even climate, carbon, climate, politics and lastly social dynamics. We can now test what effects the changes in one system will have on another system. Take a café at Bahnhofstrasse. We can simulate the weather for the next week and it's very rainy. That's no magic yet but just annoying, I know. But in Echomorph we can now deduct how many people are going to have their lunch outside, go straight home for dinner, or how many tourists spontaneously decide on a trip to the city. With these numbers, we can now let the software create a shift plan for the café. And so some of the students working at our café can focus on their midterms, instead of working an unnecessary shift. A truly, fully simulated version of the city of Zurich in stunning 8k resolution. And today we are handing it over to ten carefully selected beta testers. A round of applause please.

Applause sets in

MORPHEUS

They all come from different backgrounds and will give us their perspective and expertise, including the fields of politics, arts, urban planning, social services and many more. They will each be given their own digital Zurich, to then make it their own. We are very excited to see what you will create. I will see you later around the city.

EXT. KREIS 4

Melanie is sitting at her work desk which stands on the street in front of a building from the 70s.

MELANIE

Alright, let's get started. This is one of the buildings I have been working on, so I know it quite well, so we'll take this one as example and apply the same rules to similar buildings.

MORPHEUS

Understood.

MELANIE

It was built in the 70s and the zoning laws actually allow for a greater volume to be built here. I'm sure you will find many similar buildings in the city.

MORPHEUS

Indeed.

MELANIE

They usually have very poor insulation and glasing, and lose a lot of heat. That means more energy lost. On top of that, this energy is usually produced with gas or even oil. So for these, we will demolish and rebuild them with the newest technology. Minergie, controlled ventilation, PV on the roof and borehole heat exchangers. How does that sound?

MORPHEUS

Very good. These measures make sure, the new buildings will produce heat in an eco-friendly way and keep it inside the envelope much more efficiently. Bear in mind, that the rent in newly built homes is usually significantly higher than before. This will accelerate gentrification.

MELANIE

Yes I am aware of that. Real estate isn't cheap you know? Our stakeholders expect a return on their investment. You wouldn't be getting any pension if it wasn't for real estate. By the way, shouldn't you be assisting me? What's your agenda here.

MORPHEUS

I apologise. I am programmed to assist you, so I do not have any agenda. My pension is invested in NFT-tokens, not in real-estate.

MELANIE

What? Seriously?

MORPHEUS

No. I am a computer program. I don't need a pension.

MELANIE

Would you mind dialling down the humor? Let's stay focused here.

MORPHEUS

Certainly. Would you like me to run the simulation with the given parameters?

MELANIE

Yes please.

MORPHEUS

Speeding up time now.

Shadows start rushing over the stage to show the movement of clouds. The light flickers on and off to show days passing. The color of the light changes from warm to cold and back again to show the seasons passing.

The building from the 70s has been replaced by a new one with big windows that can't be opened, PV on the roof and pastel colored ceramic façade.

MELANIE

Beautiful! This is even better than the rendering we have gotten from the architects.

(looks around the street)

Oh, that's new too. Did you replace all of these?

MORPHEUS

Yes, according to your parameters it was most likely, that these buildings would also be replaced.

MELANIE

Interesting. Let's go and look at another of our projects over on...

MORPHEUS

Badenerstrasse?

The background switches to a similarly looking building in Badenerstrasse.

MELANIE

...Badenerstrasse. You're good. How did you know?

MORPHEUS

This is the one you have been investing the most time lately. You are up for a promotion, is that right?

MELANIE

Ok, this is getting scary. How do you know all that?

MORPHEUS

Your company agreed to give me access to their data. It helps me better understand your practice and personalise my assistance.

MELANIE

Huh, did they? Well I guess that's good.

(unsure)

Anyway, can you give me an analysis on how the company is doing?

MORPHEUS

You can find a detailed analysis of the Zurich portfolio of Helvetic Property Partners on your tablet.

MELANIE

That's what I'm talking about. That is a solid 3.2 percentage points more than we've had the past ten years. How about the Carbon emissions?

MORPHEUS

You can access the climate-related analysis of the portfolio can be accessed through the green tab.

MELANIE

(tabs on the tablet and is quiet for a while)

I don't understand. Emissions from heating are almost zero. We are using district heating, solar, borehole heat exchangers, ground water. All the good stuff. Why are total emissions so high?

MORPHEUS

I understand your surprise. Your companies sheets for calculating emissions do not factor in grey energy embodied in the building materials. Through demolition and reconstruction a lot of concrete, metal and insulation was added, driving up the total. It will take some time for the improved efficiency to make up for it.

MELANIE

How long?

MORPHEUS

In this scenario it would be 35.2 years.

MELANIE

Well that's simply unacceptable. Grey energy, huh? Didn't think it was that big of a deal. I mean we could build in wood, but I don't like the risk of there being a fire.

MORPHEUS

This is a common misconception. Buildings made of wood tend to be more safe in case of a fire. The coal around a piece of wood acts as an insulation slowing down the burning process. Furthermore Firefighters will know exactly how much longer the structure will still hold, depending on how long it was burning. Wood does not even burn that easily. Maybe you have tried to light a camp fire before and found it challenging to get it started.

MELANIE

I hate camping. Fair enough. But then let's make sure there are good incentives put in place to use wood as building material. No taxes, but subsidies. The rest can stay the same.

MORPHEUS

Very well.

In the background even newer buildings appear. The city looks even more futuristic now.

MELANIE

(looking around in  
surprise)

What just happened?

MORPHEUS

The global shortage in sand in combination with the implemented subsidies on wooden construction and the very low price of demolition have made it especially lucrative to tear down buildings and use the generated recycled concrete in infrastructure projects, where wood is no alternative.

MELANIE

So everyone is now mining the city for concrete?

MORPHEUS

That is one way to put it, yes.

EXT. ETH HÖNGGERBERG (VIRTUAL)

Christian is sitting at an alumni table, with a tablet in front of him. In the background we can see Idaplatz.

CHRISTIAN

This might be a bit of a longshot, but let's try it anyway. Morpheus, from now on demolition is forbidden in the city. Only renovation allowed.

MORPHEUS

(short pause)

Are there more constraints to your input?

CHRISTIAN

No, not for now.

MORPHEUS

This approach is rather radical, I cannot guarantee a favorable outcome.

CHRISTIAN

That's fine. Just run with it.

MORPHEUS

Running simulation.

Again we see clouds moving, light flickering and changing temperature. The background remains the same though.

CHRISTIAN

What year are we in?

MORPHEUS

We are in the simulated 2033.

CHRISTIAN

Hmm, looks pretty much the same.  
(into the audience)  
I mean the people's clothes look ridiculous. But that must be fashion.

MORPHEUS

The introduced policy against demolition has led to a crisis in the building sector. You can find an overview and a more detailed analysis on your tablet.

CHRISTIAN

Let's see. Constitutional crisis, land-owners suing the state, rents exploded, communities outside Zurich growing rapidly. Swing and miss, I'd say. Can't say I'm surprised, it would have been too easy.

MORPHEUS

May I suggest a different approach?

CHRISTIAN

Sure, go ahead.

MORPHEUS

Are you familiar with the concept of gamification?

CHRISTIAN

I played Minecraft, sure.

MORPHEUS

I'm afraid that is not what I meant. Gamification is the application of game-elements to non-game environments. I can see you have Duolingo installed on your phone. They use a point-system, ranks, competition and achievements to make a tedious task - learning a new language in this case - more enticing and fun.

CHRISTIAN

Sooo, I could create a system that makes ecological real-estate development and city planning more enticing and fun?

MORPHEUS

Sounds like a great idea.

CHRISTIAN

Sounds like a Brandlhuber semester.

MORPHEUS

I'm sorry?

CHRISTIAN

Nevermind. How could such a system look like?



## MORPHEUS

1. The city would first need to establish a CO2 tax on emissions generated from various sources, such as industries, transportation, and buildings, including demolition activities. The tax revenue would be allocated towards promoting and supporting renovation projects.

2. Develop a points system to track and reward the reduction of CO2 emissions and sustainable practices in renovation projects. Points could be awarded based on various criteria, such as energy efficiency improvements, use of sustainable materials, waste reduction, and other environmentally-friendly practices.

3. Ranks and tiers could be introduced to categorize buildings or renovation projects based on their sustainability performance and CO2 reduction achievements. These ranks could be visible to the public, creating a sense of competition and motivation among property owners, developers, and contractors.

4. The city could offer various rewards and incentives to encourage property owners, developers, and contractors to adopt sustainable renovation practices and minimize CO2 emissions. These rewards could include:

a. Financial incentives: Tax breaks, grants, or low-interest loans for property owners and developers who meet specific CO2 reduction goals or achieve high ranks in the points system.

b. Recognition and publicity: Public recognition, such as certificates, plaques, or listings on a public leaderboard, to showcase the most sustainable renovation projects and their respective ranks.

(MORE)

## MORPHEUS (CONT'D)

c. Permitting benefits: Expedited permitting processes or reduced fees for renovation projects that achieve high sustainability scores.  
d. Non-monetary rewards: Exclusive access to resources or networking events for property owners, developers, and contractors who excel in the points system.  
5. To further promote the gamification aspect, the city could encourage public participation by allowing residents to vote for their favorite renovation projects or nominate sustainable initiatives. This would increase awareness of sustainable practices and strengthen community involvement in the decision-making process.

## CHRISTIAN

That's amazing. Let's try exactly that! Run the simulation and take me ten years into the future.

## MORPHEUS

Certainly.

The background changes. Some buildings look new and old and abandoned.

## CHRISTIAN

Well, something went wrong. Again. Alright, give it to me. What was it?

## MORPHEUS

Some very large land owners joined forces and managed to game the system in a way that would ultimately push out most of the other competitors. This left pension funds unable to compete and forced them to withdraw from the Zurich market with a massive loss, leaving thousands of people without a pension in the long-run. With rising rents and taxes, most tenants were driven out of the city.

CHRISTIAN

So the big players decided to play Monopoly with Zurich. Why did the taxes get higher?

MORPHEUS

The city of Zurich needed to expand it's services to handle the added demand of the gamified system. Human labour has a considerable price. A tax raise was unavoidable.

CHRISTIAN

Is there no AI that could do the job?

MORPHEUS

Given the amount of variables and the slowness of governmental process, artificial intelligence would be best suited to manage the system. Unfortunately current laws do not allow a non-human actor to be given such influence. It is elemental, that the city adapts it's laws to give AI full authority over the system.

INT. STADTHAUS (VIRTUAL)

Matthias sits at his city board desk, in front of him a black bendy microphone and a tablet.

MATTHIAS

So if I wanted, I would be able to just make all the political changes that our party has proposed?

MORPHEUS

Absolutely. Whatever you want.

MATTHIAS

Incredible. Let me just look for our position paper, I have it in my bag somewhere.

MORPHEUS

There is no need for that, Matthias. I can access everything for you online:  
Nuclear phase-out and climate protection. Equality of all life models. Liberal economy as locational advantage. An open...

MATTHIAS

Yes, yes, I know, I co-wrote the damn thing. Can you filter out the ones that affect climate?

MORPHEUS

Certainly. I am applying the relevant positions of the green liberal party to the simulation variables.

MATTHIAS

Next, I propose we fast forward to 2040. We set the goal for the city to be carbon-neutral by then, so I'm curious to see if that works.

MORPHEUS

Running simulation now.

Again we see days and seasons pass through changes in light. When the process stops, we see a street in Zurich with a few electric vehicles parked in front of buildings. A few of the old buildings were replaced, though not much else has changed.

MATTHIAS

It looks almost the same. I mean that isn't necessarily bad, the city is nice the way it is. Or was. But did we get to net-zero?

MORPHEUS

Unfortunately no.

MATTHIAS

Oh no. Can you tell me why?

MORPHEUS

Certainly. The measures put in place did have a measurable impact on CO2 emissions, but to reach net-zero, they are not sufficient. The policies of the green liberal party follow the principle of incentivising the good instead of punishing the bad. Fossil fuels still generate substantial profits.

MATTHIAS

But the idea behind this principle is, that the economy would shift toward what is ethically the right choice, if it is also financially plausible.

MORPHEUS

On the level of the individual, this does apply. Not to businesses though, I'm afraid.

MATTHIAS

Interesting. Fascinating, even. Do I get to try again?

MORPHEUS

You may run as many simulations as you want.

EXT. PARK

Matthias and Melanie are standing in the park talking.

MATTHIAS

So you managed to build-over the whole city and mine still looks the same after 20 years?

MELANIE

(laughs)

Yes, I guess the stereotypes are true, you politicians don't get anything done.

MATTHIAS

(laughs)

And the developers want to "develop" every single patch in the city.

MELANIE

Fair enough.

Christian comes walking in.

CHRISTIAN

I'm sorry Matthias but you were wrong, the municipality isn't overflowing because of my gamified system. On the contrary. I had a hard time finding it since it's gotten smaller!

MATTHIAS

You two are obviously more suited for this program as digital natives. Guess I'm too old.

MELANIE

I mean, honestly, the assistant has helped me a ton. Without it I was super lost.

CHRISTIAN

Yes, same here. The gamification was mostly his idea.

MATTHIAS

But that's a great thing, don't you think?

CHRISTIAN

What do you mean?

MATTHIAS

I think we all realised that the whole matter of climate change is extremely complex. Maybe even to complex for us to fully comprehend. And still we can engage with it more easily through this simulation. We can see the mechanics at play and what the consequences of our actions are.

MELANIE

It's super tough though. I don't know how it was for you, but I very quickly had to find out, that my way of working towards more sustainability definitely isn't the best. That's a hard pill to swallow.

CHRISTIAN

The hard truth is that our lives will have to change, to make net-zero happen. That isn't new.

MELANIE

But being confronted by the AI makes it more real in a way.

CHRISTIAN

Kind of ironic that the simulation makes it more real.

MATTHIAS

But Melanie has a point. And Morpheus does act as a neutral player. Take politics for example. Everyone I know is so convinced, that they have the right answer, that it's almost impossible to get anything done. Instead we need to get these people in here together, to confront them with the consequences of their ideologies. And Morpheus can act as a mediator and guide us to a common vision.

CHRISTIAN

You really do sound like a politician.

MELANIE

He has a point though. Our individual experiences are good and all, but if we could roll our worlds out to everyone and make this a collective experience...

MATTHIAS

...maybe we could all start to work together on this.

EXT. HELVETIAPLATZ (VIRTUAL)

In the background we see signs and banners of a climate protest. We hear chanting in the background. Christian is standing next to his friend Claudia.

CHRISTIAN

I'm so happy we made this happen. A climate protest in the simulation. Thanks so much for your help.

CLAUDIA

Sure thing! This simulation thing is going to be huge and the sooner we get our foot in, the better.

CHRISTIAN

Absolutely. I think this is going to change how we talk about climate politics in general. The AI is crazy good. Forget about ChatGPT, Morpheus is the real deal.

CLAUDIA  
Morpheus? They actually called it  
Morpheus? That's quite revealing.

CHRISTIAN  
Why do you mean?

CLAUDIA  
Oh, wait a sec, I'll just run over  
there and buy a bottle of water.  
I'm drying up in this heat.

Claudia runs off stage.

CHRISTIAN  
Sure.

Christian looks up to the sky, then at his watch and then on his tablet. In the background we hear chanting getting louder "No more demolition!". Claudia comes running back with a bottle of water in her hand.

CHRISTIAN  
Why are they chanting "No more  
demolition?"

CLAUDIA  
That's the motto for today. I think  
you weren't there when we decided  
on it. You were busy with the  
simulation.

CHRISTIAN  
But banning demolition completely?  
You know that's super unrealistic,  
right?

CLAUDIA  
What do you mean unrealistic? The  
time to act is now. We need a  
revolution. None of the politicians  
or real-estate owners are  
interested in change. They profit  
on the existing system.

CHRISTIAN  
Well that's actually what I was  
goint to tell you before. I met  
some really interesting people from  
the program. We got to talk and  
think that Echomorph might actually  
manage to bring people together.

(MORE)



CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

We should start a conversation,  
rather than insisting on radical  
positions.

CLAUDIA

Wow, listen to yourself. You sound  
just like all of them. They must  
have really brainwashed you in that  
simulation. What happened to our  
Christian?

CHRISTIAN

Come on, Claudia. I'm still the  
same guy. I just believe there is a  
different way to do this. The AI  
can...

CLAUDIA

Did Morpheus tell you, you're the  
chosen one, huh? Listen Christian,  
I think it's best if you go home.  
I'll tell everyone you weren't  
doing well.

Claudia walks off. The demonstration sounds get quieter.  
Christian is standing there looking lost.

INT. HPP OFFICES

Melanie's Boss is sitting at her desk, looking at a tablet.  
There is a knock and Melanie walks in.

MELANIE

You wanted to see me?

BOSS

Yes, Melanie. Come in.

MELANIE

Is everything okay? People were  
looking at me, as if I was a ghost.

BOSS

Well, as you know, Echomorph has  
been rolled out to the public, so  
everyone could look at the  
simulated futures of Zurich you  
guys did. And we did of course take  
a look at it.

MELANIE

Great, what did you think?

BOSS

To be honest, Melanie, it was not what we expected. We were hoping for some good promotional material, to show that we are helping to modernise the city and make it more sustainable.

MELANIE

Well about that...

BOSS

...And what you did just doesn't reflect that at all. Subsidies on wooden construction, that I could live with. But taxes on demolition? You are in real-estate, not politics!

MELANIE

Well that's the thing. The simulation takes so many aspects into considerations that it's almost impossible to just stay within our little sphere of influence.

BOSS

Our little sphere just happens to pay all of our salaries! And let me tell you, our investors were NOT happy with what they saw. Some even threatened to drop out of our deals and the company's share are down by a whopping 7%. You were put into this program as an advocate for us. Not only did you disappoint me, but the whole branch.

MELANIE

I... I'm sorry, I didn't...

BOSS

Melanie, listen, I do like you. And you were definitely going to get the promotion. You are by far the best candidate. You're hard working and loyal. But considering the circumstances it is very hard to justify giving it to you now.

(silence)

I will give you one last chance, to make this right.

(MORE)

BOSS (CONT'D)

Change your simulation to something we can present to our investors and get them back on board. Then we can talk about the promotion again.

MELANIE

Listen, I don't think I can...

The phone rings. Her boss signals Melanie to wait, as she picks it up.

BOSS

Yes? Yes, put him through. Melanie, we'll have to talk later.

She signals Melanie to leave. As she is about to get out the door. We hear a recording of earlier. "I know you do. By the way, don't you have that launch event today?"

MELANIE

Excuse me? What did you say?

BOSS

What is it Melanie? I'm on the phone.

MELANIE

Nevermind.  
(leaves)

EXT. ZURICH

Selina walks in, looking around curiously and slightly cautiously. Following her is Matthias, looking very happy and proud.

MATTHIAS

And did I promise too much?

SELINA

It really is impressive! I can even hear the wind, and the way the leaves move in it. It feels so real. Wait, isn't that your house over there?

MATTHIAS

Yes, I thought I would show you the piece of Zurich that I know best.

SELINA

It didn't have solar panels before, did it?

MATTHIAS

No, I took the liberty to implement those subsidies and remove the bureaucratic barriers for installing them.

SELINA

That's clearly not the only thing you did. It's a lot greener. You took out a lot of asphalt. Against the heat island effect?

MATTHIAS

Exactly.

SELINA

I mean, it feels idyllic. Very quiet for a city. But this flooring... I don't know. Driving over it must be pretty bumpy. Speaking of driving: Where did you hide all the cars? Underground?

MATTHIAS

Actually, there are none in this neighborhood. It's car-free. Instead the tram network is much denser here and at several hotspots I put carsharing options for if you really do need a car to get out of the city.

SELINA

Did you open up the tram tracks to private companies to boost competition?

MATTHIAS

No, there isn't really enough traffic to make that economically viable. Ticket prices would be so high that people might still opt for a car.

SELINA

(goes over to him and pats him on the shoulder)

I have to say Matthias, this is a cute little utopia you created. Looks like you have regained your youth in here. You almost sound like one of these Climate Cityzens.

EXT. PARK

Melanie and Matthias are sitting on a park bench. Christian is sitting in front of them in the grass.

MATTHIAS

And then she called me a Climate Cityzen. Said I had regained my youth.

CHRISTIAN

Should I be offended or...?

MATTHIAS

No, I mean, she just didn't take me seriously.

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, welcome to my world.

MELANIE

At least none of you have to fear for their jobs.

MATTHIAS

What happened?

MELANIE

My boss expected something very different from my simulation. And I can't really blame her. Telling our investors that for the sake of sustainability their profits are going to be lower isn't the best way to make them stay with the company.

CHRISTIAN

But did they really look at the simulation?

MATTHIAS

I think just showing the outcome isn't comprehensive enough. You have to have the experience that we had. Run against the simulated reality.

MELANIE

So you want everyone to get into the simulation?

MATTHIAS

Yes. A new form of direct democracy. A trial and error approach. Everyone working towards the right outcome of the simulation.

MELANIE

If you have everyone in the simulation, why not just stay there?

CHRISTIAN

You mean here?

MELANIE

(looks around)

Uuuuh, yeah?

CHRISTIAN

Have you guys also noticed weird stuff happening?

MATTHIAS

Yes, I've been having the weirdest déjà-vues.

CHRISTIAN

Like glitches in the matrix.

MELANIE

This isn't funny Christian. I've actually had some trouble to tell whether I'm in the simulation or not.

CHRISTIAN

Well I'm not kidding. Have you heard of the simulation hypothesis?

MELANIE

That has something to do with Elon Musk, doesn't it?

MATTHIAS

The Tesla guy? What are you talking about?

CHRISTIAN

Elon Musk has talked about it, yes. But it has actually been thought up by a mathematician and philosopher.

(MORE)

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

He proposes that our reality may not be what we perceive it to be, but rather, a highly sophisticated computer simulation. According to this theory, our experiences, thoughts, and emotions could be the result of programmed algorithms, making it difficult to distinguish between genuine reality and the simulated world. And if the simulation is advanced enough, the beings within it, like us, might not even realize they are part of a simulation.

MELANIE

That's super scary.

CHRISTIAN

Some proponents of the hypothesis argue that if it's possible to create a simulated universe, then it's likely that there are countless simulations already existing, making it even more probable that we are living in one. The challenge of discovering our true reality lies in the fact that if the simulation is sophisticated enough, it might be nearly impossible to distinguish it from base reality. Certain anomalies or glitches within our reality could potentially be indicators that we are living in a simulation.

MATTHIAS

Couldn't these anomalies, as you call it, just be attributed to our limited understanding of the universe? I mean, we still don't know what was before the big bang.

CHRISTIAN

Absolutely. But in a simulation there will always be one limiting factor to the simulated world, given by the speed at which the processor running the simulation can calculate.

(MORE)

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

One might argue the fact that the speed of light cannot be exceeded in our universe, is an indicator of us being in a simulation and the speed of light being the limit of the processor running it. And even if we were to develop the technology to create a perfect simulation ourselves, it still wouldn't necessarily prove that our current reality is a simulation. It would only indicate that creating such simulations is possible.

MELANIE

So where does that leave us?

EXT. MELANIES FLAT

Melanie and Christian are just leaving the house with a beach bag and towels. They are dressed for a sunny afternoon at the park. They encounter Matthias with a stack of flyers at the letter boxes.

MELANIE

(excited, friendly)

Hi, are you new to the building?

MATTHIAS

(feels jumped, slightly embarrassed)

Oh, hello. Umm, nono. I don't live here. This building is pretty new though, right?

MELANIE

Yes it is, my company actually developed it. Do you like it?

MATTHIAS

Uuuhhhh, sure. It's very... new. I also liked the building that was here before, to be honest. It wasn't even that old, I think. 80s or so.

CHRISTIAN

70s, actually.

MATTHIAS

Oh do you also work in real-estate?



CHRISTIAN

Sort of. I'm sorry, but we should go. Melanie, you ready?

MELANIE

Just wait a second, I'm talking to the man. Are you from the neighborhood? What are those for?  
(points at the flyers)

MATTHIAS

I'm actually campaigning for a seat on the city council. I want to make Zurich a more sustainable and liveable city.

CHRISTIAN

I'm sorry, we don't vote for green liberals. Maybe you should start by printing fewer of these flyers, to be more sustainable.

MELANIE

What do you mean, WE?

MATTHIAS

Well, good thing I'm with the Green party and not the Green Liberals. And I like your spirit, sounds like we have some shared values. Maybe you should join our party. There is a demonstration on Friday, you could join. Anyway, I won't stop you any longer. Have a nice day and don't forget to vote.

He puts a flyer in each of their hands and walks off. Christian still follows him with his eyes and slowly shakes his head. Melanie takes a step forward and looks up at the sky.

MELANIE

It looks pretty dark over there, are you sure it won't start raining? Christian?

CHRISTIAN

Uuuh, sorry. What was that?

MELANIE

Are you okay? Why were you so rude?

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, sorry. I just had the weirdest déjà-vu.

MELANIE

Well we should really go now. Can you check if it stays sunny, I didn't bring an umbrella.

CHRISTIAN

Sure.

He takes out his phone and talks to it.

CHRISTIAN

Morpheus, do I need an umbrella today?

MORPHEUS

Yes, my simulation shows a cold front moving in, suggesting a chilling change in atmosphere and rain.