

scenarios

TORONTO 2030:

TALES OF POLICY AND PROFIT

Scenario 1: Corporate Cooperativism

Scenario 2: Profitably Public

Scenario 3: The Social Impact Franchise

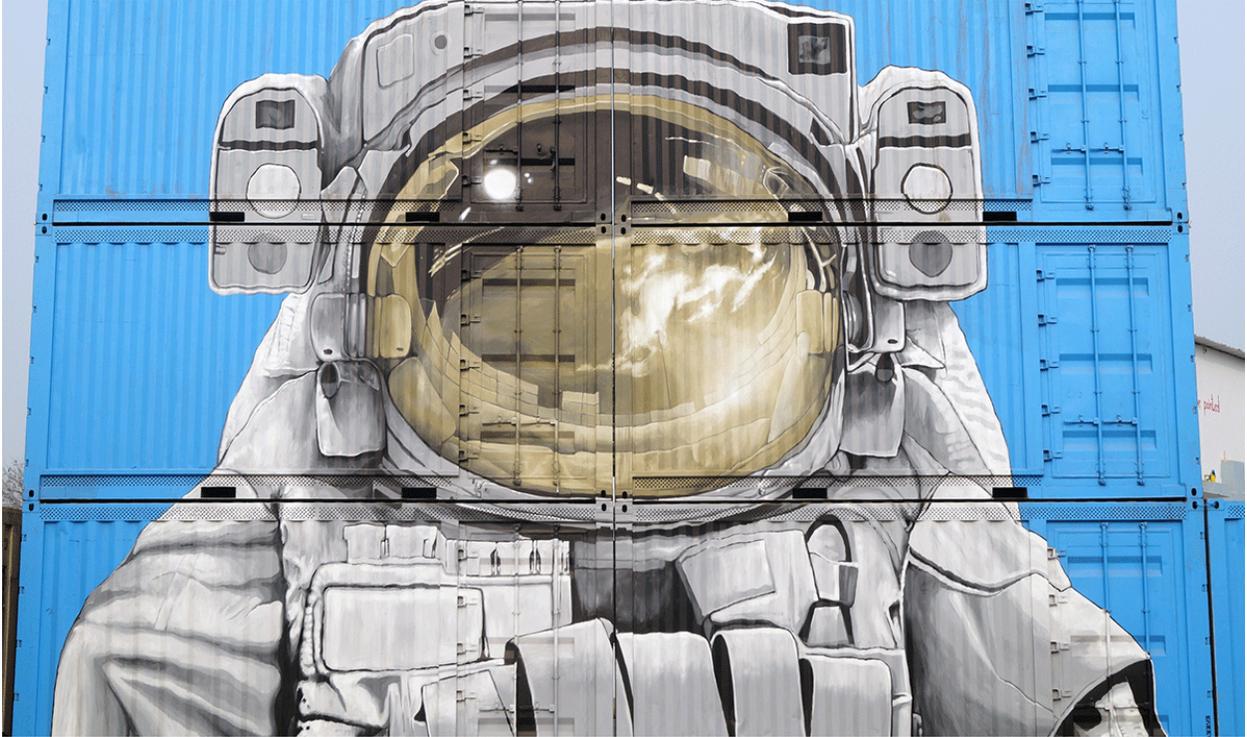
Scenario 4: Purpose-driven Conglomerates



MICROTASKING

MARCH 2020





Scenario 1: Purpose-driven Conglomerates

Corporations now have a purpose-driven profit business model. In this scenario, microwork platforms offer Skills Packs training upgrades. Meanwhile, governments organize drone water-flights to attack forest fires across the globe. And it's not unusual to see a microwork hub in a repurposed shipping container hub celebrating [Blue Origin](#).

Government is behind + purpose-driven profit

Scenario 1, Purpose-driven Conglomerates, was developed at the microworking session held on December 10, 2019. The related persona is [Robin Esposito](#).

Note: SamaKar is a fictitious organization. [Samasource](#), a microwork platform intentionally designed for measurable poverty reduction is its inspiration. References support the plausibility of the scenario. There is no connection between Samasource and TWIG's microtasking project.

Purpose-driven action to remain competitive

Government policy hasn't kept up with the demands of the cumulative shifts happening worldwide. Economic changes, corporate growth and environmental bursts triggered several alarming market swings. To remain competitive in an unpredictable market, corporations have shifted towards purpose-driven action. To allow for long-term impact, leaders recognize the need for a different approach.

Above all, three AI/M conglomerates are dominating the gig-market

All in all, the leading provider is the Global Microwork Exchange (GMX). Their headquarters are in San Francisco. Also, they have Toronto and Montreal satellite hubs, and work in 17 countries, on all continents. They have over 12,000 active daily workers in Canada and the US. Currently, GMX provides a large variety of AI and microwork services to Fortune 50 companies and impact clients alike.

In 2019, [Samasource raised \\$14.8 M](#), and GMX raised 14.83 million USD. Then, GMX raised an additional 314.4 million in 2024. This large amount was attributed to their amalgamation and the high value of the mission. Also, this was the first time an Artificial Intelligence/Microwork (AI/M) corporation had a purpose-driven mission that was profitable for investors. As of 2030, GMX is a billion-dollar company, with impact projects globally.

SamaKar's expanded network coverage and amalgamation with seven of their competitors triggered GMX's creation. Largely, they did this to pool resources, and create bigger impact possibilities. Originally they were a not-for-profit. However, they have been a for-profit business (aka social purpose organization) since 2019.

Today, GMX is a key example of large conglomerate AI/M companies, which are a growing trend

In Toronto, we can see the difference. Because policymakers are beginning to work with the AI/M organization on sharing their missions and requesting project outputs. There is no precedent for this yet, and the government is approaching the possibilities with caution. Small government-based undertakings in AI, data, research, and CX are beginning to occur.

Microwork is an opportunity-filled space

In 2030, microwork is an opportunity-filled space **where underemployed workers can earn a living wage**. Torontonians earn a monthly average of \$2,194.19, with flexible project schedules that allow for life's complexities. Some even choose not to get paid, donating their wages to distributed workers on the global team. This is especially good since the GTA has seen a large influx of refugees over the past decade. Presently, the real numbers are unclear. Yet, it's estimated that over 70% of new Torontonians have participated in some kind of AI/M work this year alone.

AI/M corporations have redefined their approach to the role of technology in their business models, and they recognize their impact on the world. As a result, GMX and other AI/M organizations are tackling some of the world's most pressing problems with global approaches that break down geopolitical boundaries.

Workers say that it's because the skills are approachable. Microwork organizations offer free, digital Skills Packs training upgrades. These upgrades are completed in tiny increments. You can join a project that requires you to have some tacit knowledge by upgrading your skills. Because the Skills Packs are digital and downloadable.

When they upgrade, Skills Packs graduates can enter a new workspace. Typically, workers switch between simple tasks, AI, data, research, and CX. When they contribute they can advance over time, and progress to more interesting projects. Work collected during training goes to paying clients and subsidizes their training further.

Purpose-driven gamification

The most interesting aspect is the increase in technology and its gamification features. AI/M organizations are providing top-notch infrastructure to workers. This includes fast and free internet connections, regardless of location. Container workspace hubs provide free tech terminals on a first-come-first-served basis. The workspace hubs are container buildings with super high-speed connectivity, available 24/7. These are like Internet cafes in the 2010s – but with a microwork purpose.

Overall, Ultra Skills Packs training upgrades come with free tech – delivered by Amazon

The really big Ultra Skills Packs training upgrades garner new technology, delivered next day by Amazon. Those who pass challenging upgrades have a new “tech-toy” in the morning.

Now, mid-to-advanced microtask projects look more like fun puzzle games, and less like work. The new AI/M game-play is enticing. Once they get past the initial learning curve, some people are just playing these projects for fun. Workers/Players (W/Ps) feel a sense of alignment and community with company missions, and want to lend a helping hand. If they choose to do, they can work on a project in the global sphere, or in their own backyard.



Drone fire-fights 2030

Toronto 2030

In 2030, Toronto's AI/M_TO initiative helped solve the city's decades' long debate about transit. This made the GTA a major GMX hub. The AIM_TO conference showcases the AI/M_TO initiative's success. The venue is Toronto's waterfront arena, and attendance is free. Because attendees have to complete only five small segments of work to access their ticket.

GMX will be showing full video-coverage of the Vancouver forest fire drone water-flights. The drones were manned by over 3,000 people globally, for over 1,400 hours. According to rumours, over 200 houses and several acres of land were saved. In gratitude, the California fire department will be presenting a plaque. Currently, this project is part of a group of microwork initiatives offered to W/Ps.

Experimental projects tackle otherwise impossible challenges. However, competition is fierce. Currently, ultra-microworkers are vying for position on these projects. In order to be fair, the final team is chosen by a lottery.

Critical events

2020-2030: Purpose-driven conglomerates

To develop the scenario, the group established critical events. If government policies and regulations fall behind and corporations move in the direction of purpose-driven profit, these events might actually happen.

- Co-working spaces increase in use. In fact, it's ubiquitous for non-standard employment.
- An increasing number of people augment their salary with microwork and gig income. This challenges the designation of non-standard employment.
- SamaKar goes from a not-for-profit to a for-profit model. This secures a \$1.83M USD investment.
- SamaKar and KarmaSchool amalgamate with seven other microwork and AI competitors. Consequently, this forms a super pack called the Global Microwork Exchange LLC. Collectively, they pool their network and resources. Meanwhile, the reach and impact increase.
- Fortune 500 organizations and emergent organizations that use new forms of AI and supply chain infrastructures are a crucial source of revenue.

When this happens, what communities exist and what happens to the government?

- Governments are over-tasked and under-funded due to environmental challenges, financial downturns, and misuse of technology (due to quickly shifting systems). Trepidation and unanticipated social costs trigger a breakdown of speed and action. I.E: a lack of alignment with policies.
- Because of growing tensions and conflicting interests, backlashes happen between lobbying groups. Various advocacy groups spring up.
- Reduced AI dependability on Human Intelligence Task (HIT) processing. All of a sudden, microwork is 'macro' in nature, and AI takes over simpler jobs.
- GMX releases the first Skills Packs training upgrades. Then, their competitors copy it.
- An African AI/M releases **microwork hubs in repurposed shipping containers**. Consequently, competitors produce copies of these hubs.
- AI/M_TO releases Urban TO Skills Packs training upgrades. Suddenly, microworkers can onboard topical knowledge about Toronto-based projects. After that, other city packs follow.
- The first AI/M_TO Conference is held. In less than an hour, tickets sell out. Following its success, meetup groups happen on a monthly basis. At this point, there are meetup groups at every hub capital.
- AI/M's begin to address growing social needs, as initial project pilots. Although some fail miserably, others are successful.
- Suddenly, social video adverts spring up as popular media. These adverts feature water-drone activity in forest fires. Globally, these drones are manned by thousands of people.

Astronaut graffiti on semi-Trailers by [Pixabay](#) from [Pexels](#)

Drone water fights by [skeeze](#) from [Pixabay](#)



Persona 1: Robin Esposito

Robin is a microworker with one of “the good guys”.

The scenario, [Purpose-built Conglomerates](#), represents a plausible future where microwork provides opportunities for advancement.

Government is behind + purpose-driven profit

Note: SamaKar is a fictitious organization. [Samasource](#), a microwork platform intentionally designed for measurable poverty reduction is its inspiration. References support the plausibility of the scenario. There is no connection between Samasource and TWIG's microtasking project.

Scenario 1 was developed at the microworking session held on December 10, 2019. The related narrative, [Purpose-driven Conglomerates](#), describes Toronto in 2030.

There is only so much fake cheese a human can eat

Robin Esposito sat at her kitchen table and stared out the window, sipping her third coffee of the day. The sun was coming up over the hills, and the dreaded wheel of death was still spinning on her screen. Soon, Amazon's community fund would improve her connection speed.

It was the only thing standing between her and a promotion. Even with corporate impact dollars, this internet problem persisted. Then there were the power outages that went with it due to the rolling fires.

She had been working long hours to save for a generator, but Robin and her son Darin were getting sick of Mac n' Cheese. There is only so much fake cheese a human can eat!

Still, Robin reminded herself that it would all be worthwhile

Worth the sacrifice! After all, she was a microworker with one of "the good guys". A small shop in comparison to the rest, but still a global agency with great reach, and better scaling potential. SamaKar had been an early adopter in the microwork business. It already included over 12,000 workers. Robin was proud to contribute to social impact projects in over 17 countries.

The agency had remained true to its purpose and blazed a path of positive impact that inspired others. She was proud to call this org her home base. Even though microtasking was simple and lonely, it was great to be part of something purpose-driven. It not only paid the bills but provided the ability for advancement. And she was part of positive changes in the world.

For Robin, it was hard work and tough going

It was especially tough to feel the ever-present pressure. The guttural fear of flying without a safety net, hurtling through each day with no end in sight was with her always. She sought safety, and her bed, and Mac n' Cheese again, on the other end.



All it would take is for one of them to get ill or for a serious injury to occur. Some ridiculous twist of fate (like her father's faulty aorta) could throw them off course. Dad's illness had forced her to drop out of high school. At this point, she was six credits shy of a diploma.

She had to try and scrape together enough money to get private treatment before the healthcare wait-list ran out of time. Although she tried her best and found a local job that paid overtime. Their church community organized bake sale fundraisers and donated online giving pages. But in the end, it had all been too quick, and the money hadn't even been enough to cover the majority of funeral costs. She'd been lucky to have found this gig instead, with flexibility, and room for growth.

It felt good to focus on improvement. *Sigh*. The wheel was still spinning. She looked out the window at the beautiful woods of her childhood, in her small, rural, northern Ontario town. Then, she sipped her coffee again. A red cardinal flew a majestic arc over her yard. They would have to do something about this connection speed.

Scenario 1: Contributors

This scenario was written by [Ana Matic](#). It was developed at the Microwork Drivers Workshop on December 10, 2019. It's based on the contributions of the following people. *With thanks.*

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Scenario 2: Profitably Public

In the Profitably Public scenario, the government is proactive while corporations compete for social reputation. Rising global tensions built consensus for sweeping, conscientiously capitalist reforms. Corporate tax hikes support measures like greater privacy protections, which in turn unlock personal data's full commercial value. New social tech and norms boost ethical consumption. And all these forces are reshaping Toronto. Changes are visible everywhere, from ag-tech complexes to hallucinatory popup nightspots — if you can afford the social impact offsets to get in.

Government is proactive + purpose-driven profit

Scenario 2 was developed at the microworking session held on December 10, 2019. The related persona is [Alyx Lee](#).

“Your capitalism’s not working? Have you tried resetting it?”

The world is swimming in data — or maybe drowning.

AI accelerates advances. It supports increasingly complex systems, from social networks to population biomonitors and satellite clusters. But these technologies also concentrate on control, raising social inequality and tensions. Overlapping national and corporate interests jockey for global influence. They cooperate on problems like climate change one minute, then trade cyberattacks the next. Local extremists feed on global tensions.

These dynamics played out in the last decade’s interlocking crises. Ageing populations and new pandemics strained public medical systems. Falling pension contributions and tax avoidance weakened social safety nets. Precarious workers regularly fell right through.

Unchecked markets hardly seemed an attractive alternative, though. Monopolies tightened and wages stagnated. It was also a decade of dramatic data breaches and abuses. Anxiety rose over digital annexation, whether by Silicon Valley or Beijing.

A mandate to upgrade government

All this left Canadians increasingly willing to take political chances. Hope grew that a more conscientious capitalism could deliver humane innovation. But this required government smart enough to keep citizens informed and empowered.

Consensus grew across parties and levels of government that serious investment was necessary to update public institutions for the algorithmic age. Ideas like “data sovereignty,” “privacy as a utility” and “digital social democracy” shaped public agendas.

Governments bargained hard with scandal-weakened corporations for access to Canadian markets. But they also worked to ease costs, by making digital markets far more efficient.

The resulting experiments are reshaping Toronto’s civic, economic and social life. And all these changes are on vivid display in booming microwork markets.

Deals for dollars & data

Legislators redesigned social programs for a world where most people have several employers. Hourly contribution and entitlement requirements softened, making company staffing more flexible. Widespread HR and accounting automation have lightened any regulatory burden. But citizens also have easier access to benefits.

All this depended on new revenues, supported by international reforms. These helped more fairly identify and tax corporate revenues, preventing profit sheltering. Streamlined CRA filing and a Canadian [e-currency launch](#) have simultaneously lowered everyone's transaction costs. And all this has helped keep tax rates down, by increasing collection efficiency.

Similar compromises allowed ambitious data governance reforms. These took sensitive details about Canadians out of private hands. But the resulting data pools also provided significant social and economic value.

Governments have unified management of citizens' medical, tax and demographic data. The gains here go beyond internal efficiency gains. Easy access to data has increasingly become a public service. Microworkers, for instance, can request digital verification to a 3rd-party of their identity, medical or police records.

Projects like [Sidewalk Labs'](#) Quayside development likewise spurred greater attention to citizen information. Canadian governments worked with companies like [Element AI](#) and [ThinkData](#) to pioneer new approaches. Then increasingly, privacy laws mandated using independent data trusts to protect sensitive personal information.

Making a market for morality

Policymakers also pushed for more transparency about companies' social and ecological impact.

This model developed out of already widespread, evidence-based impact standards. These ranged from carbon accounting to [public benefit corporate legislation](#) and [certification](#). Such measures also mandated availability of significant details on worker conditions, pay and demographics.

Many companies were already collecting such data for internal or insurance analysis, which smoothed transition. Now they just had to audit and publish it, in proportion to their Canadian business.

Such information let people compare major companies' actual impact, not just branding. This helped take social impact from consumer niche to mainstream business priority. It now significantly affects consumer choice.

That's partly due to urgent concerns like climate change. Yet it's also boosted by new shopping analytics services. These filter and sort purchase options in real-time, by personal priorities. Pulling now-available impact data from a product's whole supply chain, they make "the right thing" clear. So customers do it more.

Such tools also help people track their own total impact. Services then combine such consumption and financial records with sources like home and transport data. The result are blended personal “moralytics” scores. These are everywhere now. Spread through social sharing and gamification, promised insight into people’s true selves drives integration with dating apps and other services.

This positive social feedback loop drives further ethical consumption and disclosure. It’s also spawned many new offsetting services. So even conventional companies now compete on purpose-based metrics, to improve profits.

That’s partly because corporate reputation has **only become more important** when competing for idealistic young talent. All of which means even the most hard-nosed investors increasingly factor social impact into their decisions.

Earning a micro-living in 2030 Toronto

Together, all these developments have fostered not just more microwork opportunities but far more profitable ones. And this has fuelled a remarkable Toronto boom.

Conventional employers are certainly crowdsourcing more jobs. But Canadian digital workers also command premiums for their accurate, micro-targetable qualifications. Marketers have also built on **longstanding practice** by assembling test panels of Canadian consumers to match any target demographic. And demand is rising for higher-skill micro-labour. Experts from plumbers to dermatologists offer remote consultations via new platforms.

New privacy protections also let individuals control and profit passively from their own information. Personal data streams are increasingly detailed and useful. And combined with tough privacy laws, this encourages organizations and businesses to offer direct payment for access.

But citizen trusts also increasingly control massive pools of value, from genomic and facial recognition data to personal social graphs. Members can then opt into uses they approve. Options range from public-interest research participation to (paid) studies and ad targeting. Combined, passive personal and group data licensing gives citizens a **basic (market) income**.

Many combine microwork’s flexibility with care, community and cultural work. Workers can plan better, and proliferating platforms drive competition for labour. Given reduced policy incentives for worker misclassification, platforms also foster more worker coordination. This increases both effectiveness and work satisfaction.

Microwork is now commonplace in mainstream media and culture. As ever more jobs turned into gigs, popular awareness and sympathy grew. All of which helped secure legislative protections.

TO residents have also founded several successful microwork platform startups. Skilled, specialized and secure micro-labour has likewise helped sustain the city’s broader AI cluster.

Such shifts have also reshaped the city's human geography. Toronto supports an extensive system of shared workspaces, for instance. And transportation systems are far less strained.

Absolute economic disparities are even greater than in 2020. But digital workers can favour factors like housing cost over workplace accessibility. Virtual commutes also make it much easier for lower-income residents to resettle in more affordable communities. This has eased pressures by reducing population flows into Toronto. They're sometimes even reversing, helping revitalize smaller Ontario communities.

Critical events

2020-2030: Profitably Public

To develop the profitably public-focused scenario, the group established the critical events that might take place should the government take a proactive role, and corporations reverse direction to purpose-driven profit.

- 2020: Anonymous dump of the Midtown Memos, records stolen from a white-shoe NYC firm. Partners there discreetly helped tech giants bury scandals, skirt regulation and "minimize" taxes. Most suspect foreign state hackers, but they're never identified.
- 2021: Launch of global transmedia phenomenon *Strange Company*, Brazil's first "ultranova." It combines dozens of reality-style narrative feeds with an alternate reality game. The public joins in by completing tasks on a cryptic microwork platform.
- 2021: A ProPublica/Australian Broadcast Corporation investigation reveals funding of China's Uighur detention camps with forced micro labour. Such digital abuses soon explicitly added to Canada's *Modern Slavery Act*.
- 2021: Midtown Memos revelations fuel OECD-wide reforms to tax corporate revenues more effectively.
- 2022: Minneapolis serial killer's arrest leads to public panic over Orthodoxx. This dark-web service allows the simple search (and purchase) of detailed personal information. Details for millions came from combining and deanonymizing legal data brokerage offerings.

What events trigger this change?

- 2023: Outbreak of the virulent H7N13 flu pandemic. This pushes many strained health systems to break. Also, it reminds survivors how much collective action can matter.
- 2025: Passage of Canada's omnibus federal *Data Sovereignty and Protection Act*. It includes major provisions for business impact transparency.
- 2027: Announcement of sustained over-benchmark returns for Human Ventures, a major impact-oriented fund. Investors range from OMERS to Jeff Skoll.
- 2028: *Nature* publishes the first major findings from Canada's Public Pool genomic data trust. Commercial applications promise significant licensing returns for trust participants.
- 2029: Toronto success story Klutch closes their buzzy Series C funding round. The startup built a marketplace for taste, offering AI-powered polling of people like the ones users most want to impress.



Persona 2: Alyx Lee

Thanks to data royalties and a solid bioreactor gig, Alyx can live well and set something aside for the next flu or market shock.

Government is proactive + purpose-driven profit

Scenario 2 was developed at the microworking session held on December 10, 2019. The related narrative, [Profitably Public](#), describes Toronto in 2030.

Mom was right: there's solid money in synthetic agriculture

It was a long shift. With the new bioreactors still calibrating, outputs weren't quite right. There was something off with the texture...

After all that, Alyx set their devices for minimal distraction right through the PATH. No need to let smoothie and *kluy tod** offers get in the way of dinner at home with the family.

A fairly empty train left Alyx room to sprawl comfortably. So curiosity set in about a whitelisted ad-test ask. It arrived a few hours back, but was still available. Obviously a tight targeting fit.

The video for a new CleanCuts cultured chicken breast doesn't take long. Cute kids play tag in a reclaimed poultry house. It's now all creepers and quick-growth interior mosses. Closing flicker promises sweet offset numbers against farmed meat. It's a good spot, and Alyx's smile isn't forced.

That would probably be pointless anyway. CleanCuts' values match and privacy ranking are high. So they'll be getting video, haptics & heart rate from the view. Plus any relevant purchases in the few weeks. Satisfying way to earn a few bucks.

Alyx arrived in Canada young. So Toronto dominates their early memories. Childhood near a small community garden left them passionate about plants. And Alyx really still believes that saving the world will take fixing food.

At least, that's one of the things it'll take. Mom was right: there's solid money in synthetic agriculture.

That led to a double major in Agronomy and Biochemistry. Then a year of placements on small, southern Ontario farms to give Alyx some time working real dirt. Then it was back home, helping scale up TO's food production.

Their main gig is minding a reactor sector on the York Biosystems subfloors. This means working with nutrient startups, and a lot of gene-hacked yeast. But not much sun.

MICROTASKING PROJECT

Luckily, the city's demand for heirloom greens is bottomless. This leaves plenty of reason to spend time in the co-op greenhouse atop Alyx's apartment block. That's good for a share in profits, plus salad.

Then there's always remote bioreactor consults for hobbyists. But Alyx especially loves helping farmers near where their parents grew up. Development offset dollars cover remote tech repair, plus pest and seed license troubleshooting.

Along with data royalties, this all lets Alyx live pretty well. Even setting some money aside for the next flu or market shock.

The rest of the ride slips past with a recap of big *Strange Company* news. Then some flipping between favourite character threads.

When a StockX alert pings, Alyx indulges: they grab some slick black Onitsukas. Crunch-rate hours getting those reactors set up last month more than cover the shoes. Plus the site flagged this nearly new pair just a 20-minute cycle from home. So it doesn't even mean a carbon and waste hit.

That should keep last month's footprint cut streak going, too...which'll make for an even better look when they post pics.

The evening's turning up.

* *Fried banana*



Scenario 2: Contributors

This scenario was written by [Alastair Cheng](#). It was developed based on the contributions of the following people at the Microwork Drivers Workshop held December 10, 2019.

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Photo used to represent Alyx by [Alekzan Powell](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Sneakers and bike wheel by [Marcelo Franchi](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Scenario 3: The Social Impact Franchise

In this scenario, the consequences of the gig economy are laid bare. Due to a lack of ridership revenue, infrastructure such as public transit collapses. Microwork enters industries such as education, health, and social services.

Government is behind + profit before purpose

Scenario 3, The Social Impact Franchise, was developed at the microworking session held on December 10, 2019. The related persona is [Vasil Ramadan](#).

Note: Samakar is a fictitious organization. [Samasource](#), a microwork platform designed for poverty reduction, is its inspiration. References are provided to support the plausibility of the scenario. There is no connection between Samasource and TWIG's microtasking project.

There is little progress by 2030

To paraphrase [Edward Snowden](#), the law always lags behind technological innovation by at least a generation. Amazon's Mechanical Turk started in 2005. By 2030 microwork has been around for almost a generation.

Finally, all levels of government are getting a handle on the impact of microwork. However, for too many Torontonians, it isn't fast enough. The Canadian Minister of Labour is tasked with developing "[greater labour protections for people who work through digital platforms](#), whose status is not covered by provincial or federal laws". By 2030, there is little progress.

Human Resources firm, Randstad Canada, claimed that, by 2025, "[the future of the workplace is agile](#)."

Regrettably, by 2025 agile translated into precarious for the average worker

Global corporations dominate microwork platforms and set the agenda. With little oversight, microwork enters industries such as education, health, and social services.

Unions focused on the gig economy, but not the precarious microwork underbelly. The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada's (PIPSC) membership rejected a proposal to "[organize professionals doing gig work in the private sector](#)."

The efforts that exist focus on highly skilled and specialized knowledge workers:

- [UNIFOR's Canadian Freelance Union](#)
- [CEP's Canadian Freelance Union](#)
- [The Canadian Media Guild Freelance Branch](#)
- [Urban Worker Project](#)

Due to limited resources, the decent work movement can't deal with digital worker precarity.

The social impact franchise: Samakar

The emerging organized worker model doesn't focus on microworkers, the most precarious gig workers. Lower-skilled workers can't break into higher-paying jobs; no resources or solutions are available to address this issue.

In 2019 social impact franchise, SamaKar opened a Research and Development hub in Montreal. "Sama" is a Sanskrit word, meaning equal. "Karman" is Sanskrit for work. SamaKar runs as a hybrid model. A nonprofit owns the majority of the shares in the for-profit company, which raises capital from investors.

SamaKar also runs [KarmaSchool](#) and [KarmaHub](#). It is a social impact microwork platform. Samakar moves people out of poverty through digital work and recognizes the inevitability of the emerging gig economy. It also shows freelancers how to thrive in it. Their work creates humane and fair work conditions for microworkers.

Samakar's move into Canada is small and unnoticed, but not for long. In the early 2020s, all levels of government welcome big tech companies.

City infrastructure is privatized, touting the new smart, livable city. Surveillance capitalism by design is the norm. By 2025 an already unaffordable city has become unlivable for many:

- Those who can move to smaller communities.
- Those who remain live where they work.

This creates consequences. Public transit use is at an all-time low. Fewer people are driving to work. This has a net positive environmental impact, but public transit collapses due to a lack of ridership revenue.

There is increased workforce accessibility for some people

Through microwork, people with disabilities, older residents, youth, newcomers, and racialized communities gain labour market access. But they lack social capital and inclusion. They also have no access to stable career pathways. Precarity is the common bond that connects most workers. They feel isolated and disconnected from their city and each other.

Many realize that the microwork labour market is part of the problem. Industry demands acquiesce government institutions. Outdated and underfunded social services grapple with a profit-first mindset.

Either way, they are unable to patch the social safety net. The system has bottomed out, creating precarity for the vast majority of residents.

For some, barter economies emerge. Housing remains unaffordable. But there is a major shift toward a rental market built on co-operative housing models.

Toronto 2030

One year after the social impact franchise, Samakar opens

Torontonians are looking beyond mainstream institutions. They want a new culture, leaders, and a new social system. The decent work movement in Toronto is gaining ground.

Torontonians begin to realize that SamaKart is a valuable ally. Some are sceptical of solutions from business, but there is a need for businesses and people are looking for new models.

Working with [Beyond Jobs](#) out of the UK, SamaKar franchises its model into Toronto. SamaKarTO opens in 2029, aligned closely with the local decent work movement. It has the backing of SamaKar's corporate partners and clients.

- KarmaSchoolToronto partners with communities, existing organizations, and organizations to support precarious microworkers directly.
- Subsidiary KarmaNorth handles the microwork platform. It brings Toronto, Canadian, and international companies on board to hire microworkers in Toronto.

In the absence of policy, the Canadian Ministry of Labour sets up funding

Then, they run pilot projects aimed at supporting microworkers. Private philanthropy also steps up. They have little impact.

By 2030, SamaKarTO represents a diversity of industries and sectors supporting microworkers and others in the gig economy. This base started with SamaKar corporate clients who are 50% of the Fortune 50. Then it quickly expanded into more Toronto-based employers.

It also works with local for-benefit corporations with a social purpose, including impact investors. This social impact franchise has grown and mobilized as a response to globalized for-profit corporate dominance.

SamaKarTO's resources come from services provided to corporations and employers that use SamaKarTO's services. Through its built-in Toronto solutions, the city's microwork precariat is moving out of poverty.

SamaKarTO harnesses the realities of the gig and tech economy while offering a humane approach. It's a strong new advocate for fair working conditions, decent work, and poverty reduction.

SamaKarTO moves [SamaKar's policy agenda](#) forward. It supports local government and creates a livable city with decent work policies and protections.

Critical events

2020-2030: The social impact franchise

To develop the scenario, the group established critical events that might take place if government policies and regulations fall behind, and corporations continue to move in the direction of profit before purpose.

- 75% of Torontonians became precariously employed or unemployed.
- Government has become the biggest user of microworkers. Privatization of social services has begun.
- There is an increase in large global corporation dominated labour outsourcing.
- Increase in social isolation; more and more people work from home through portals.
- [Sidewalk Toronto](#) and projects like it are everywhere. I.E: the privatization of city infrastructure and services.
- A shift happens. People realize that the emerging microwork labour market is a disaster and they have more in common with each other than they thought.
- Government institutions collapse and are co-opted. They complement industry trends. Human/social services can't patch the social safety net. This bottoms out precarity for the vast majority of residents. A revolution of values occurs.
- The local [Decent Work movement](#) gains prominence.
- New leaders, a new social system, and a new culture emerge, based on what was considered fringe approaches just 10 years earlier.
- Models such as [SamaSource](#) and [Beyond Jobs](#) expand into Toronto. They work with decent work advocates, activists, and academics. They also bring a globally responsible social impact franchise model to Toronto.



Persona 3: Vasil Ramadani

Vasil is a social entrepreneur who is happy about the impact of his work and hopeful for a better world.

Government is behind + profit before purpose

Scenario 3 was developed at the microworking session held on December 10, 2019. The related narrative, [The Social Impact Franchise](#), describes Toronto in 2030.

Note: Samakar is a fictitious organization. [Samasource](#), a microwork platform designed for poverty reduction, is its inspiration. References are provided to support the plausibility of the scenario. There is no connection between Samasource and TWIG's microtasking project.

Vasil wakes up every day feeling good

Vasil Ramadani is connected to a global network of people who think and work like him. So he's happy about the impact his work is having on his community. He's also hopeful for a world that can be better for the vulnerable and that there are pathways out of poverty.

Each day is an opportunity to move someone out of poverty. He has a passion for social responsibility in business. That makes running a social impact enterprise is an opportunity for him to make the world a bit better. It's also a chance for him to satisfy high tech, start-up, corporate, and government client needs. Just like his Montreal colleagues, he rejects the idea that business can't be a force for good and progress.

To begin with, Vasil started work at SamaKar's Montreal office. Then in 2029, he started the first SamaKar social franchise. He is the owner of SamaKarTO, and SamaKar provided capital for him to get started. Currently, he is pitching his business plan to investors.

Vasil was born in Pristina, Kosovo. He came to Canada with his family when he was four years old. He grew up and studied in Toronto.

He's excited to return to a city where he has roots

As an avid photographer and nature-lover, Vasil loves to spend downtime in Toronto's parks and nature. Therefore, he loves the myriad of beautiful road-trips, which are a two-hour drive outside of Toronto.

Vasil's MBA and background in IT helped him go from working with code to making a difference. Working in SamaKar's Montreal [R&D hub](#) has shown him that hope isn't enough. Under these circumstances, practical and measurable efforts are key. Although he recognizes that the gig economy is here to stay, it doesn't have to be a precarious existence.

For example, SamaKar uses Impact Scorecards to measure their impact on reducing poverty in people, families, and their communities.

When he left Toronto in 2021, the city of his youth was spiralling into inequality and unaffordability. He sees Toronto as a perfect city to bring all of SamaKar's enterprise solutions together; from KarmaNorth to KarmaSchoolTO.

Overall, he's enthusiastic about being back. He's also excited to scale, adapt, and diversify the SamaKar model in Toronto. Because he worked at SamaKar for eight years, he is well-versed in their global network of corporations and trainers.

Above all, he understands and laments Toronto's social and income polarization. As a result, he believes that SamaKarTO can be the spearhead of change. Because Toronto is a city with a long history of welcoming and caring for each other.

He believes that the redefined version of "Toronto the good" can reverse the prospects of the city's most vulnerable. For Vasil, It feels right to be part of the effort.

Scenario 3: Contributors

This scenario was written by [Marco Campana](#). It was developed at the Microwork Drivers Workshop on December 10, 2019. It's based on the contributions of the following people. *With thanks.*

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Scenario 4: Corporate Cooperativism

Microwork economies and winner-take-all profit motives are contentious. Concerns about climate change are paramount. And suddenly, mega-corps are aligned with environmental causes.

Government is proactive + profit before purpose

Scenario 4, Corporate Cooperativism, was developed at the microworking session held on December 10, 2019. The related persona is [Dan Yoon](#).

Note: Corporate cooperativism is a concept that developed out of the first workshop. It does not to our knowledge exist as a popular term. However, platform cooperativism is a movement that offers new models for microwork. Trebor Scholz's work, [Platform Cooperativism: Challenging the Corporate Sharing Economy](#), is a valuable resource. Also of note is the [Platform Cooperative Consortium](#). In this scenario, profit before purpose has fostered multi-national, rather than worker involvement in cooperativism.

Mega-corps dominate cooperativism

Overall, this pervasive business model is “corporate cooperativism”. Through their supply chain, corporations arrange a network of microwork interactions. Then, they use their networks to set global precedents and establish economic norms.

However, the government is trying to limit corporate influence. Through partnerships with industry associations and trade conglomerates, they are taking action. Because they want to protect their members and constituents. Yet they need to create regulations, which maintain relationships with corporate employers and the microwork platform winners.

To date, public service and civil society efforts have had limited success. They deal with four significant challenges:

- The economic inertia of the mega-platforms
- Difficulties in tracking cross-industry participants
- Fears of disrupting complex business operations
- Possible market effects that might result from aggressive trade or policy formulations

Although one successful government effort is retraining; governments frame it as “smart for business, people, and the bottom line.” However, corporations have embraced the reframing. Because it's a worthwhile investment that allows them to scale their people as they scale technologies.

“Train yourself while you're training the AI.” In fact, this has become the mantra for upskilling programs. Then, there are related programs, which have become an accepted norm for existing and new platform entrants. They work with credits to motivate early and mid-career workers to upskill. These policy mechanisms translate continuous learning into social and economic credits.

Also, leadership related to transparency is a government initiative that holds promise. The federal government made an election promise to enforce levels of transparency. Voters viewed it as a valuable first step towards data privacy and ownership. This step is fundamental to the government having the teeth to enact policies.

Climate change cooperativism aligns mega-corps

Currently, concerns about the impacts of climate change are paramount. Because people are aware of the expanding cooling and electricity requirements of server farms and data streaming. So microwork economies and winner-take-all profit motives are contentious.

In response, corporate cooperativism aligns mega-corps with environmental causes. They make investments in environmental reparations and clean solutions. Then, CEOs tell their shareholders that they are a necessary cost of ownership.

Also, proactive governmental policy initiatives encourage the reduction of environmental impacts. Policies are introduced regularly that apply end-to-end in supply chains. Initially, there was some push-back from multinational corporations. Yet, successfully removing energy impact early on removed corporate resistance. From a business perspective, environmentally neutral supply chains increase cost-effectiveness and improve profits.

To address public pressures, governments have re-evaluated the usage of streaming and data farms. They directed a wave of legislation toward the technology industry. However, the changes are moving slower than the rate of public opinion and concern. People demand certainty and effective action from all levels of government.

There are new instruments for corporate cooperativism

Against this backdrop, multi-nationals engage in corporate cooperativism. It is challenging to understand how it works. There is not a clear sense of the economic arenas they are competing in, versus those in which they are effectively cooperating. Therefore, economists are attempting to devise new instruments for corporate cooperativism.

People can perceive the effects of platform monopolies on labour environments. Unfortunately, the platforms lack analytical tools and operational and financial transparency is moribund. This creates systemic frustration and occasional protests. But the collective objections to global mega-corporation monopolies lack focus. In fact, public protests are failing to change the trajectory of market monopolies.

In an adaptive response, some policies 'play' mega-corporations against each other. Thanks to a progressive policy, corporations get tax breaks and incentives when they upskill or create job-growth opportunities. Meanwhile, a centralized registry for microworkers is introduced. This also enables tracking of employment history and job-satisfaction rates. An outcome is mediated response in the growth of monopolies. In parallel, efforts are underway to improve socio-economic analysis tools.

However, corporations are more successful than governments on social platforms. They have the organizational infrastructure to build and manage platforms, investment dollars, and have the human capital to operationalize systems.

Policymakers walk a fine balance being cautious and assertive

Governments are contending with the “regulation stifles innovation” sentiment. Policymakers are both cautious and assertive. Government has also directed some of the regulatory instruments at microworkers, which is also contentious. Because they are requested (and sometimes required) to report on their activities, policymakers want to investigate the inner workings of the microwork economy.

So the debate about government regulation and control is inflamed and coming from all sides. And the customer-centric corporate marketing model is the artillery holds sway with consumer opinions.

Due to ever-changing socio-economic dynamics, policies have a varied and often limited effect on the activities of mega-corporations. Restricting microwork exploitation and holding the reins on monopolies is met with obfuscation techniques by the corporate networks. Then, complex microwork distribution networks and profit-driven, corporate supply chains are introduced. Through platform cooperation, mega-corporations challenge the size and effects of government on economic policy outcomes.

Governments are re-orienting towards bottom-up effects and influencing labour-markets. Positive proactive policies that are having some effects include:

- Offering participation rewards
- Career trajectories and re-training programs that support developing new AI-oriented, in-demand skillsets

Toronto 2030

Public-private partnership mechanisms are incentivizing communities, and partnering with for-profit companies. Together they are working to shift labour from microtasking to higher-value jobs.

In fact, the government is enacting regulations that open the black box on microworking. The regulations are enabling continuous policy adjustments, which empower sustainable economies. Yet the policy environment is complex. Because balancing long-term policies threatens livelihoods.

Then, self-reliance and a “train yourself” ethos prevail. Social edifices, such as privacy, are traded for content and labour networks access.

Meanwhile, the government voice isn't influencing public opinion. Sophisticated CSR campaigns portray responsible corporate actors. "We are innovating the future of microwork to enable a stronger economy" becomes a mantra. The government works with mega-corps to incrementally enact more effective policy controls. Economic growth and avoiding negative social outcomes are a key discussion topic.

Critical events

2020-2030: Corporate Cooperativism

To develop the scenario, the group established events that might take place if the government took a proactive role, and corporations were profit before purpose.

- Shared workspaces have grown; they're ubiquitous for non-standard employment.
- An increasing number of people augment and subsist on microwork income. This challenges the designation of 'non-standard employment'.
- Revenues are supported by emergent organizations. These organizations use new forms of supply chain infrastructures.
- Governments use global platforms and share social data/ information. Although they offer microwork services to their constituents, there's some trepidation about the unanticipated social costs and other effects. E.G: a lack of alignment with policy.
- Various social groups react to the increased use of microwork. This challenges the traditional labour structure and approaches to work agreements.
- There are growing concerns about microwork. Because it sets a precedent for work that is not guaranteed. Some see it as a dangerous trend. Because it impacts the feasibility of labour negotiations.
- Increasing backlashes between lobbyists and other groups. Because the tensions have grown between conflicting goals and agendas.
- "AI training AI" escalates fears that human work's importance has reduced.
- Workers and their allies demand assurances of living wages. Because affordability concerns are growing.
- Unrest against the perceptions of "big government" challenges the effectiveness of policy-makers.
- Government action is "interference in free-market economies."
- To support constituents, government policy encourages "platform cooperativism". This enables fair and responsible marketplaces.
- Microworkers participate in retraining and workforce development initiatives. This re-educates them while creating adaptive career trajectories.
- Reduced AI dependability on Human Intelligence Task (HIT) processing. Microwork is "macro" in nature. Because AI is taking over the simpler jobs.



Persona 4: Dan Yoon

Dan wanted to do well enough to keep his job. Although he also wanted to minimize bad effects on people.

Government is proactive + profit before purpose

Scenario 4 was developed at the microworking session held on December 10, 2019. The related narrative, [Corporate Cooperativism](#) describes Toronto in 2030.

Note: Corporate cooperativism is a concept that developed out of the first workshop. It does not to our knowledge exist as a popular term. However, platform cooperativism is a movement that offers new models for microwork. Trebor Scholz's work, [Platform Cooperativism: Challenging the Corporate Sharing Economy](#), is a valuable resource. Also of note is the [Platform Cooperative Consortium](#). In this scenario, profit before purpose has fostered multi-national, rather than worker involvement in cooperativism.

Dan was always good with computers

However, when they assigned him his job, they didn't realize this was not a computer thing. It was a people thing. Although Dan Yoon liked people, he was an introvert. But because the money was better and the work was interesting, he couldn't say no to a promotion. Also, he was good at his job.

Although Dan was doing work that was a lot like what he did with computers. It was sort of like coordinating many servers in the cloud, although they sometimes de-synced. He was managing real people working on microwork tasks.

The output was about managing two sets of risks

The first one was rational, due to the fluctuating microwork market prices. If they had a flex-contract, people could start working and then switch to somewhere else. Of course, only after the first guaranteed contract deliverable. This type of contract was usually cheaper for the company.

The second risk category was less predictable because it addresses random work stoppages. Work could stop due to a heatwave, flood, or wage strike.

Dan wanted to do well enough to keep his job, which meant controlling the flow of tasks. Although he also wanted to minimize bad effects on people.

In some sense, Dan's work was like that of an investor, who monitored several "portfolios" in real-time. Except they were pods of real people, working on small tasks. If work stoppages occurred, or work of similar quality could be obtained for less, Dan had to switch, quickly and efficiently, to some other provider. He sometimes struggled, due to complicating factors. This depended on the type of contract and its compliance with the latest policy developments. But he was able to make it work.

Dan always imagined himself making it big in e-sports. When he visited home and hung out with his cousins, e-sports were a pastime. Although this work was almost as good. Because it required agility, thinking, quick responses, communication, and making the right calls. Just like e-sports, a wrong decision could be detrimental. It might not get your team killed on the digital battlefield, but the wrong microwork deal could lose money. Because clients could become unhappy. If this happened, the company would first lose money, and then their reputation. Competition these days is fierce. So that was unacceptable.

If a microwork rating fell below the fabled “double-A”, it could spell disaster. Because a company could cancel their competitive deals. At their size, that would mean the end.

Unlike most of their competition, large mega-corps with billions in their pockets aren’t backing them. They were small in comparison and trying to be the good guys.

Scenario 4: Contributors

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Photo used to represent Dan by [Munga Thigani](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Overwatch Sport Competition photo by [Florian Olivo](#) on [Unsplash](#)



online

microtasking.ca

This resource is a print version of the content on the website.
Additional resources are available online.

[Microtasking project toolkit](#)

[TWIG's microwork library](#)



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