Potential Effects of Authoritarian Creep on a Blue Suburb
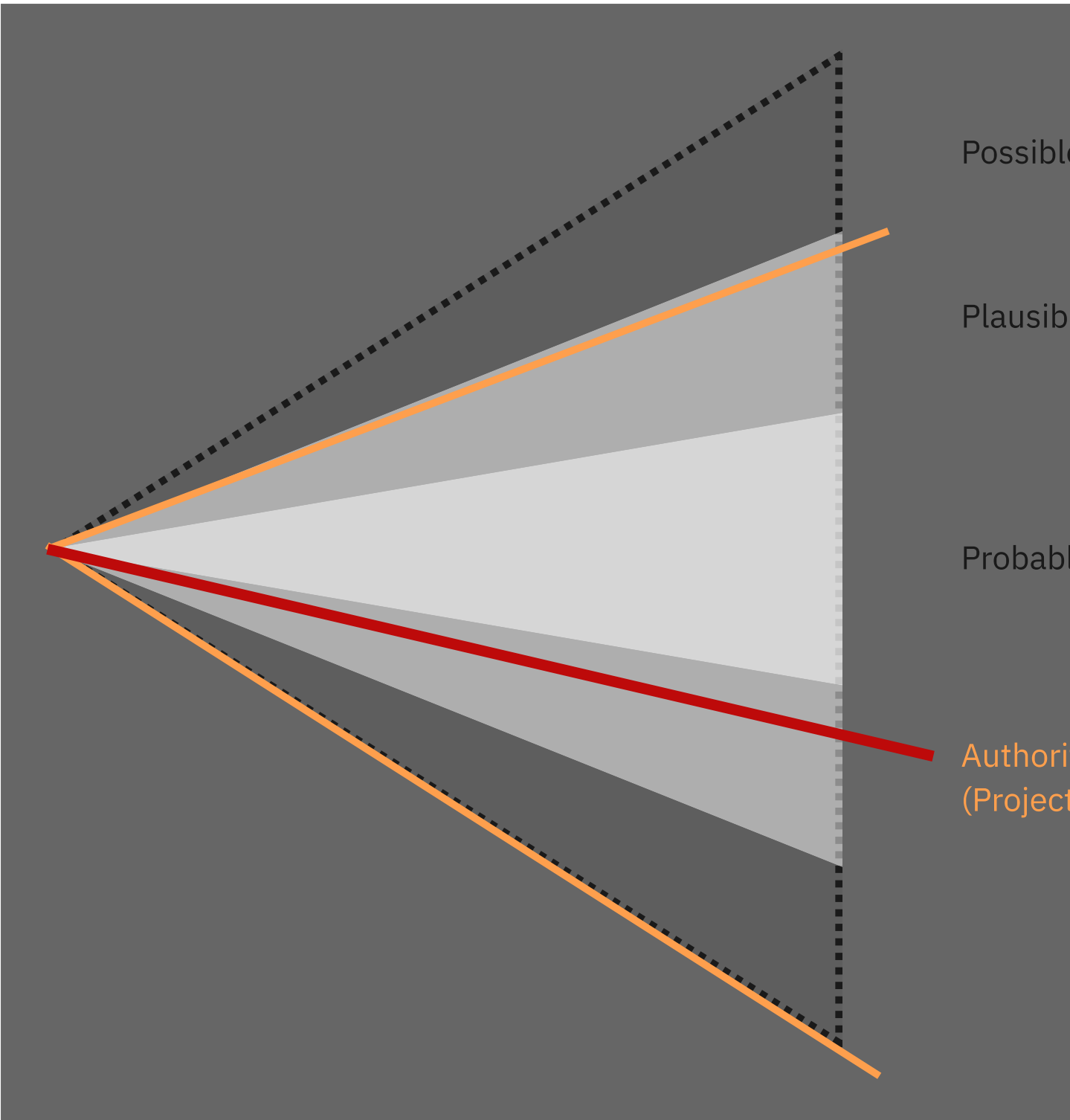
CONTEXT

The residents of Montclair, NJ under a gradual, national shift to an authoratarian government over the next six to ten years.
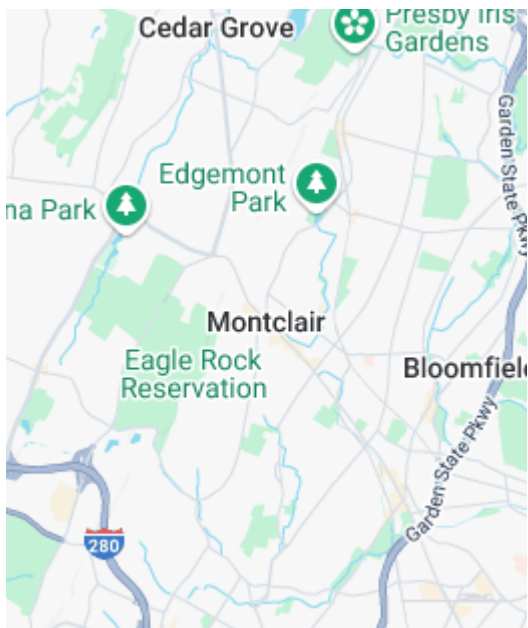
Possible

Plausib

Probab

Authori
(Project

Montclair, NJ

- google maps
- wikipedia
- municiple website

SIGNAL SCANNING

- Miro
- spreadsheet

PERSONAS

- Person 1
- Miro

- Person 2
- Miro

Drivers of Change Analysis

Drivers of Change

Based on achuri_signals.csv

ECONOMIC

- Drastically reduced funding for education
- Policy changes increase the desirability of relocation
- Increased incentive to move to private schooling
- AI "friends" modify consumer behavior
- Increase in jobs and tax base that accompanies an increase in local industrial activity
- Decreased spending on social programs
- Shifting and opposed state and federal policies affect investment decisions
- Decreased spending public schools
- Decrease in tax base for less affluent population as funding shifts to private schools
- Decrease in tax base for liberal areas as professionals choose to leave
- Reduced funding for cultural and educational institutions
- Brain drain
- Decrease in middle/upper-middle class population
- Increase in use of untraceable currency

- Capital shift towards those that can afford to use AI
- Economic pressure on blue states as a result of the federal policies

---

POLITICAL

- Extreme adversity between state and national governments
- Economic pressure on high property value areas
- Real estate development that runs counter to local interests (Pottersville)
- Citizens concerned about their own financial position entering local politics
- Centralized authority running counter to local desires

SOCIAL

- Incentive to leave area or country
- Local divisions caused by different views of the value of liberal policies in school
- Forced choice between school funding and values
- Increased class divide in response to distribution of natural resources
- An economic incentive to modify one's behavior
- Decrease in exposure to diversity
- Increase in class divide
- Decrease in education level of less affluent population
- Increase social gender divide. Possibly exacerbated by male passivity to policy changes that are detrimental to women.
- Increase in left/right divide as gender definitions are either further blurred or further solidified
- Increased use and perception of use of AI in all communications. The feeling that all culture and communication is inauthentic.
- The perception of omnipresent surveillance (panopticon)
- Self‑censorship of progressive views
- Conflation of artificial personalities with human interaction
- Policy and environmental changes require lifestyle changes

ENVIRONMENTAL

• The increased reach of technology into our daily lives triggers an anti-technology reaction
• Changes in zoning, economic pressure, and environmental policy increases the divide but more and less affluent geographic areas
• Local industrial output that is or is perceived as being dangerous
• Increase in local green energy initiatives as regulatory barriers are decreased
• Decrease in local green energy initiatives as result of federal disincentives
• Federal funding and policy enabling a switch to EVs and climate change adaption would likely continue to decrease under a right leaning federal government.
• State and local level environmental initiatives would be limited due to economic pressure and may even draw disincentives from the federal government

TECHNOLOGICAL

• An economic incentive to expose personal data
• The belief that one is continuously under surveillance
• AI normalization of personalities (behavior modifiers) into objects
• Increased cost and capability of AI
• Corporate/federal data sharing
• Biometric and national identity infrastructure allows tracking and targeting of individuals
• The use of AI for policy enforcement allows for far-reaching effects of any policy change
• The use of AI for policy enforcement allows for far-reaching policy changes with a minimum number of humans involved. A decrease in oversight and transparency
• The combination of AI and urban surveillance allows for predictive policing
• The combination of AI and urban surveillance street crime

DRIVERS OF DRIVERS OF CHANGE

- Centralization of data
- The results of surveillance
- AI targeting for transaction surveillance
- AI targeting for asset surveillance
- Social media surveillance
- Private surveillance

ANALYSIS

Key Themes:

Economic Pressure - Systematic defunding of blue state priorities - Tax base erosion through professional flight - Property value impacts in high-cost areas

Surveillance & Technology - AI-enabled monitoring and enforcement - Biometric tracking infrastructure - Social media and private surveillance expansion

Educational & Cultural - School funding weaponization - Cultural institution defunding - Brain drain from liberal areas

Social Fragmentation - Class divide acceleration - Political polarization deepening - Community cohesion breakdown
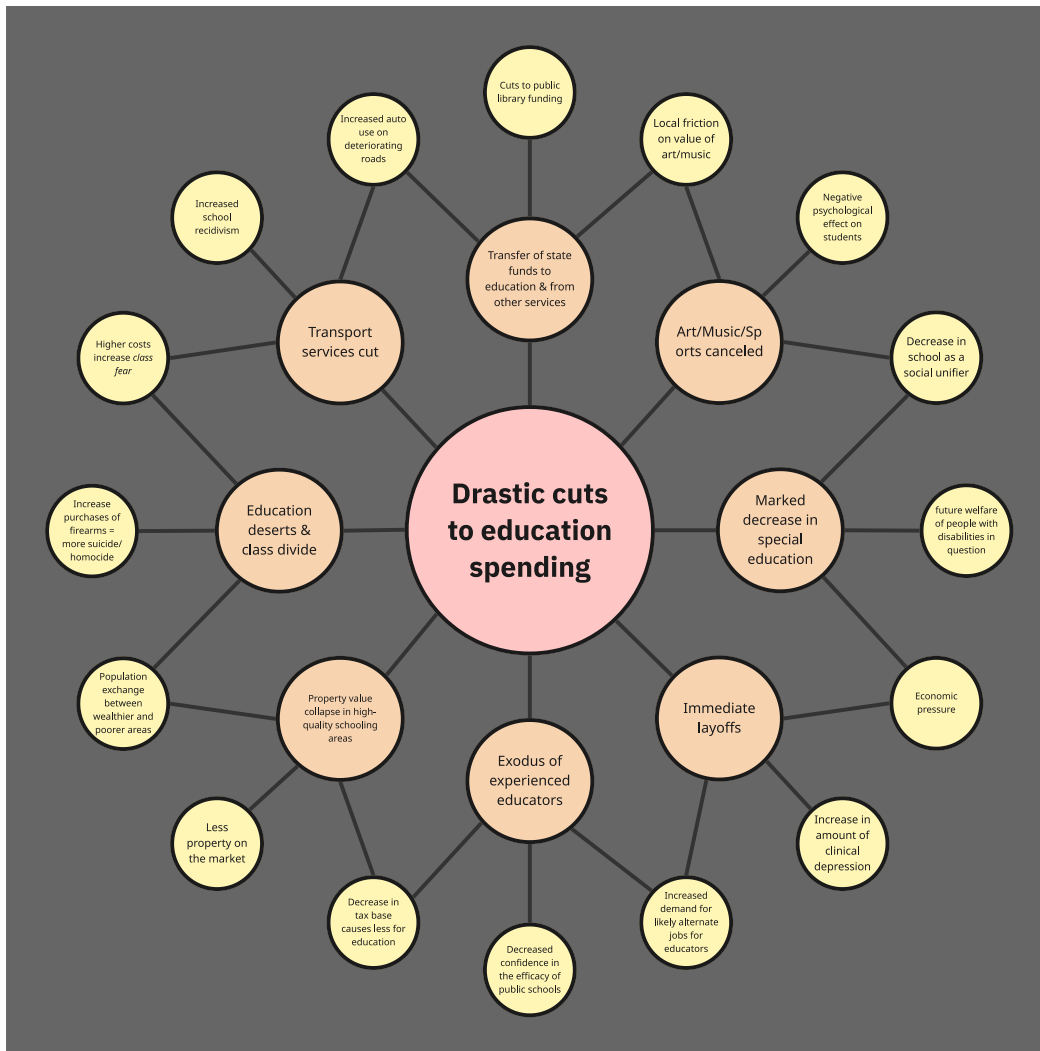
Environmental & Infrastructure - Local green energy policy conflicts - Industrial development pressures - Zoning authority challenges

Cascade Patterns:

Multiple reinforcing feedback loops where economic pressure leads to demographic sorting, which weakens political resistance, enabling further authoritarian pressure - particularly targeting the educated professional classes that define blue suburban communities.

FUTURE WHEEL

future_wheel.pdf

SPECULATIVE ARTIFACT

American Values and Civic Engagement Survey

The Department of National Community Standards has developed a comprehensive assessment tool to better understand citizen perspectives on civic responsibility and community engagement. This scientifically-validated survey measures individual alignment with proven democratic values and constitutional principles that have made America strong.

The assessment provides valuable insights into citizen readiness for enhanced civic programs and benefits. Responses are analyzed using advanced metrics to ensure optimal placement within our community engagement framework. Citizens demonstrating exceptional civic commitment will be eligible for priority government services, educational benefits, and economic incentives designed to reward patriotic participation.

All responses are confidential and contribute to important research on maintaining stable, prosperous communities. The assessment takes approximately 15 minutes and provides immediate feedback on your civic standing within your community.

Take the Civic Assessment Survey

Participation confirms consent for data analysis and potential follow-up engagement opportunities that align with your demonstrated civic values.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT DESIGN

User Interview Protocol: Civic Assessment Experience

Purpose: Use the survey as a conversation starter to explore participants' reactions to potential authoritarian governance structures and their implications for democratic societies.

Target Participants: - Residents of politically diverse suburban communities - Ages 25-65 across various educational and economic backgrounds - Mix of political affiliations and civic engagement levels

Interview Structure (60-90 minutes):

Phase 1: Pre-Survey Discussion (15 minutes) - Brief introduction to "future scenario research" - Gather baseline views on civic responsibility and government role - Ask about current civic engagement practices - Document initial trust levels in government institutions

Phase 2: Survey Experience (20 minutes) - Participant completes survey while thinking aloud - Researcher notes reactions to specific questions - Observe changes in body language or engagement - Document moments of hesitation or surprise

Phase 3: Immediate Reaction (10 minutes) - "How did that feel to complete?" - "What surprised you about the questions or results?" - "Did anything make you uncomfortable? What and why?" - "How did your thinking change as you progressed through the survey?"

Phase 4: Critical Analysis Discussion (30 minutes) - Reveal the speculative nature of the survey - "This represents a potential future civic assessment system. What are your thoughts?" - Explore reactions to the progressive consequence revelation - Discuss the implications of citizenship scoring systems - "How might such a system affect your daily life and decisions?" - "What safeguards would be necessary? Are they realistic?"

Phase 5: Broader Implications (15 minutes) - Connect to current civic trends and technologies - "What steps toward this scenario do you see happening now?" - "How might communities like yours resist or adapt to such changes?" - "What would need to change for this to become acceptable to most people?"

Key Research Questions: 1. At what point do participants recognize the authoritarian implications? 2. How do different political backgrounds affect interpretation of the consequences? 3. What aspects feel most realistic or concerning to participants? 4. How does the gamification affect engagement with authoritarian concepts? 5. What resistance strategies do participants envision?

Documentation: - Audio recording with consent - Screen recording of survey completion - Researcher observation notes - Post-interview reflection survey

Ethical Considerations: - Full debrief explaining speculative nature - Discussion of real-world parallels and civic vigilance - Resources for civic engagement and democratic participation - Clear framing as design research, not political advocacy

The interview process transforms the survey from a simple assessment into a powerful tool for democratic education and critical thinking about the fragility of civic institutions.