Twitter Thread by David Boxenhorn



David Boxenhorn
@davidboxenhorn

1. The death of Silicon Valley, a thread

How did Silicon Valley die? It was killed by the internet. I will explain.

Yesterday, my friend IRL asked me "Where are good old days when techies were

> Where are good old days when techies were libertarians.
>
> — Cranky (@rushingdima) January 9, 2021

2. In the "good old days" Silicon Valley was about understanding technology. Silicon, to be precise. These were people who had to understand quantum mechanics, who had to build the near-miraculous devices that we now take for granted, and they had to work

3. Now, I love libertarians, and I share much of their political philosophy. But you have to be socially naive to believe that it has a chance in a real society. In those days, Silicon Valley was not a real society. It was populated by people who understood quantum mechanics

4. Then came the microcomputer revolution. It was created by people who understood how to build computers. One borderline case was Steve Jobs. People claimed that Jobs was surrounded by a "reality distortion field" - that's how good he was at understanding people, not things

5. Still, the heroes of Silicon Valley were the engineers. The people who knew how to build things. Steve Jobs, for all his understanding of people, also had quite a good understanding of technology. He had a libertarian vibe, and so did Silicon Valley

6. The 3rd wave was was the internet. It, too, started out dominated by technologists. People who understood networks. It, too, had a libertarian vibe. But soon it became dominated by marketeers. People realized that the internet was the best persuasion tool ever invented

7. People realized that you can build monopolies based on branding and network effects, alone. The technology that destroyed the ability to build monopolies based on technology, created the ability to build them on human nature

8. Silicon Valley came to be dominated not by people who understood technology, but by people who understood people. In particular, it became dominated by people who understood how to manipulate people

9. Now, technologists were still a key component of Silicon Valley. Every company had its critically-important engineering section. But who do you think determines the nature of corporate culture, the people who understand technology, or the people who understand people?

10. It's no contest, really. Even when the founders of Silicon Valley companies were technology people, as they were for Google and Facebook, the founders eventually lost the corporate culture wars to their cultural superiors

11. We will look back on the old Silicon Valley, the libertarian Silicon Valley, as a unique time in history. We won't be going back to that, until the next technological revolution takes place, in some other center of technology

12. But not all hope is lost. The cultural uniformity of Silicon Valley will inevitably be challenged by a counter-culture. And this counter-culture will have the greatest tool ever invented for navigating around monopolies, and spreading new messages: the internet

13. Everything in this thread is predicted by a short essay that I wrote six years ago, on a platform that no longer exists.

You can read a copy of that essay here:

https://t.co/zJmMdivP0E