

Tool 4.1

Exploring futures through art

CLARITY Competence Area:

Opening up to diverse climate-resilient and regenerative futures

GreenComp Competence Area:

Envisioning sustainable futures

Why use this tool?

The world we live in today first existed in the imagination. The cities we live in, the smartphones we hold in our hands, the eco-villages we created... were first a vision, science-fiction, or a dream in people's minds. Numerous artists and designers have explored and experimented with different visions of the future at all times. They venture into different possible futures, without being limited by what the world looks like today. Expanding imagination is essential to bring to life a more climate-resilient and regenerative world, while fostering joy and excitement when working on addressing climate change impacts.

Activity 4.1.1

Solarpunk art explorations

Overview

Solarpunk is an artistic and literary movement envisioning and working towards actualizing a sustainable future interconnected with nature and community. By exploring images or texts from the solarpunk movement, learners can reflect upon alternative visions of the future, which enhances imagination and inspiration or drive to take action.

Curriculum linkage

Arts, Language & Literature and Civics & Social Studies

Competences built

Originality, imagination, exploratory thinking and active hope

Prep Work

Select solarpunk artworks that can resonate with your local context and/or resonate with some of the learners who are not originally from the place that the school, organization or university is based.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

For optional deeper explorations:

- Climate emotions wheel (1.2.1)
- Section "Diving underwater" of The Iceberg Model (3.4.1)

This activity can be integrated into the Futures Literacy Lab (4.2.2.) when envisioning desirable futures collectively.



BASIC INFO

Age range:

6+

Duration:

20 min. to several sessions of 45 to 60 min.

Group size:

Flexible

Level of difficulty:

Basic

Materials/space required:

Monitor, whiteboard, or TV to project images of artworks, or printouts. If you consider creation, material to draw, paint, collage or design solarpunk worlds otherwise.

Location:

Flexible

Engagement of external stakeholders:

Not necessarily. Solarpunk artists are welcome.



Levels in the activity

1. Exploration
2. Creation
3. Open dialogues

Level 1: Exploration

1. Briefly introduce what the solarpunk movement is to the learners.
2. Show the group the solarpunk images or videos from the resource library and beyond that you selected. Feel free to add to the library if you find relevant solarpunk artworks. Feel free to also research “afrofuturism” when looking for solarpunk arts. The images are meant to highlight the multiplicity of possible net-zero, sustainable or regenerative futures. Allow learners some time to look at the different images or videos.
3. Invite learners to reflect upon the following questions:
 - a. What did they expect or did not expect in the images or films, including what surprised them in negative, positive or neutral ways?
 - b. What do they like about those visions?
 - c. What do they think is missing?
 - d. What would they like to see more of in the present?
4. Optional (deeper level of reflection 1):
 - a. How did it feel to explore the solarpunk worlds?
 - b. Does the emotion of joy and curiosity about net-zero, sustainable or regenerative worlds feel conducive to action?
 - c. Did looking at the images feel sad in any way? If so, why?
 - d. Are there ways to cultivate emotions of joy and curiosity other than looking at solarpunk artworks?
5. Optional (deeper level of reflection 2):
 - a. What are the values that appear to underlie the solarpunk worlds?
 - b. How do they differ from the values that underlie the world around us?
 - c. What would be needed at individual and collective levels to cultivate those life-affirming, regenerative values?



Level 2: Creation

1. Following the exploration of various solarpunk visions, invite learners individually or collectively to create their own solarpunk visions.
2. Allow learners to form affinity groups (i.e. group of learners resonating with the same visions or values), and to come up with divergent solarpunk visions. There are no right or wrong visions, as different visions may have different values at their core.
3. The visions can be created as visual artworks or multimedia artworks. They can also be shared through texts written in the first person and narrating the stories of individuals exploring solarpunk worlds, or through short plays taking place in the solarpunk worlds.
4. Invite learners or groups of learners to present their visions to the rest of the group, including the questioning, interests, and/or values that underlie the vision.
5. Optional (deeper level of reflection):
 - a. How did it feel to create your solarpunk worlds?
 - b. Do you feel inspired or driven to take certain actions as a result of this creation?
 - c. Are any other emotions coming up for you?

Level 3: Open dialogues

1. Organize an exhibition and/or performances of the created solarpunk artworks in the school. This can also be open to a wider community.
2. Organize a school-wide, or community-wide dialogue about visions of the future, around questions such as:
 - a. What did you expect and what did you not expect in those visions?
 - b. What do you like or dislike about those visions?



Learners sharing and explaining their solarpunk visions with the group.

Photo by Carmelo Zamora, REAL School Budapest.



- c. What do you think is missing?
 - d. What would you like to see more of?
3. Optional: share those visions and key findings from the local dialogue with the municipality or local government for inspiration.



Dos and don'ts

Do:

- Encourage the use of multiple art forms and media to represent solarpunk visions
- Encourage the use of symbols of the future instead of going for an exact representation, as it could be overwhelming to some learners to try and perfectly represent the future they envision.
- Encourage going back to the vision and changing it over time, or following conversation: the vision should be seen not as a work of art (only), but as a work in progress.

Don't:

- Don't promote the use of AI to generate solarpunk visions without weighing the multifaceted costs and limited benefits of this approach, and explaining those thoroughly to learners.
- Don't use AI to generate solarpunk visions without using it as an opportunity to question the assumptions and biases built into the AI tool.
- Don't grade the solarpunk visions.

Adaptations:

If your learners are uncomfortable sharing their visions with the group, creating their solarpunk vision could be a prompt for a journalling exercise. For further information about journalling, check activity card 2.1.1.

As an outdoor alternative to level 2, find an outdoor place near the school; this could be a town square, a landscape, a park, a natural area, or a busy street. Once in the identified space, ask the learner to reflect on the future vision they would have for this specific location. What would their solarpunk vision of that space be like? Invite the learners to create this vision onsite or when they are back in the classroom.

We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.



References

This activity was designed by One Resilient Earth.

- De Meyer, K., Coren, E., McCaffrey, M., & Slean, C. (2020). Transforming the stories we tell about climate change: from 'issue' to 'action.' *Environmental Research Letters*, 16(1), 015002. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abcd5a>
- Jensen, S. (2016). Empathy and Imagination in Education for Sustainability. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 21, 89–105. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1151868>

Possible resources

- SOLARPUNKS. <https://www.solarpunks.club/>
- XR SolarPunk Storytelling Showcase <https://www.solarpunkstorytelling.com/about/artwork/>
- Rjukan Solarpunk Academy <https://www.rjukansolarpunkacademy.com/>
- Art Competition winners: Solarpunk 2019 <https://atomhawk.com/resources/art-competition-2019-winners/>
- Solarpunk artworks by Dustin Jacobus <https://dustinjacobus.com/>



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

This Clarity Project Resource © 2024 by the Clarity Project Consortium is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

