

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/>



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Activity 4.1.2

A photograph of the future

Overview

In this activity learners are invited to reflect on the changes they hope to see in their community, using photography to symbolize these changes. This exercise can help learners have less negative emotions in relation to their future, and shift towards more positive emotions such as curiosity and hope. This activity is a shortened and adapted version of 'a photograph of the future' from the [Re-Imaginary resources](#).

Curriculum linkage

Arts , Civics & Social Studies, Geography and History.

Competences built

Imagination, regenerative thinking, exploratory thinking, perspective-taking and active hope.

Prep Work

Have the necessary technology ready.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

Could be used in combination with tool 4.2: Growing Future Literacy.

Steps in the activity

1. Introduction
2. Photograph
3. Discussion and reflection



BASIC INFO

Age range:

12+

Duration:

15 minutes to 3 hours

Group size:

Flexible

Level of difficulty:

Basic

Materials/space required:

Pen and paper for notes, phone/camera for pictures (or alternatives, see below)

Location:

Outdoors

Engagement of external stakeholders:

Not necessary but an intervention from local visual artists/photographers could be beneficial



Step 1: Introduction

1. Give an overview of the assignment by explaining to learners that they will be asked to reflect on the changes and transformations they hope to see in the world, in response to climate change and/or the ecological crisis, and then go outside and come back with one photo that symbolizes this change. Explain to the learners that the photograph can be as abstract or as literal as each person wants it to be. It can also be taken intuitively or following a clear logic.
2. Invite learners to reflect on the types of changes or transformations they are hoping for in relation to climate change. This could be prompted by a specific question, or questions, or be left more open-ended.

Step 2: Photograph

1. Invite learners to take some time alone and in silence (approximately 5 minutes) to walk or sit and see what naturally grabs their attention in the outdoors. If it helps, people are welcome to take notes.
2. Invite learners to take a photograph of an image, composition, or object that represents the change. Reassure the learners who may not be certain of why they have taken the specific photograph. Let them know that through discussion, they can discover some meaning.

Step 3: Discussion and reflection

1. Invite the learners to reconvene in small groups of 3-5 people and share their experiences and photographs with the group, one after the other. Ask the person to the right of the person who is speaking to take notes for the person who is sharing. At least 2 minutes should be allowed for each person to explain their photograph without interruption and another 2-3 minutes for others in the group to ask questions or share their interpretations.
2. Invite some volunteers to share key insights from each group with the plenary.
3. Optional: provide a way for photographs to be emailed or uploaded onto a central computer so that they can be shared. The photographs could also be printed and hung in the classroom.





Dos and don'ts

Don't:

Don't comment on the quality of the photograph. This exercise is not a photography workshop, but an activity to reflect on the transformations the learners want to see.

Adaptations:

- If the use of technology is not preferred, an alternative could be to have the learners draw/sketch what naturally grabs their attention.
- For younger groups (12- 16 years), this activity could be coupled with a tour of the city or neighborhood, during which the photographs could be taken.
- An example of an alternative photography workshop can be found here, for inspiration. For example, if the class cannot go outdoors, the learners could use photographs of themselves and use collage to reflect on their future.
- Possible to use before and after tool 4.2. Growing Futures Literacy, to see if the learners relationship to the future changes after those activities. How have their visions changed?
- 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

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Finnegan, W. (2022). 'It's beautiful, living without fear that the world will end soon' – digital storytelling, climate futures, and young people in the UK and Ireland. *Children's Geographies*, 21(5), 898–913. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2022.2153329>

Glaw, X., Inder, K., Kable, A., & Hazelton, M. (2017). Visual Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Autophotography and Photo Elicitation Applied to Mental Health Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917748215>



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Activity 4.1.3

Exploring parallel worlds

Overview

In this activity, learners are invited to explore how a parallel climate-resilient world might look and function. Learners will have the opportunity to experience, describe, and engage in storytelling about this parallel world, and consider what strengths and skills they possess and can use in this world. The fact that we are not asking learners to consider a 'future world' can free their imagination and creativity. This activity is inspired by a tool developed by former teacher Wolfgang Brunner.

Curriculum linkage

Language & Literature, Civics & Social Studies and Natural Sciences.

Competences built

Imagination, exploratory thinking, perspective-taking and active hope.

Prep Work

See below.

This activity can be used in relation to tool 3.5 and especially activity 3.5.3. "Finding your ikigai" – as it can support learners in exploring their meaning and purpose in relation to the future worlds they may want to help shape on planet Earth.

Steps in the activity

1. Preparation
2. Exploring parallel worlds



BASIC INFO

Age range:

12+

Duration:

A set of 2-3 40-minute lessons

Group size:

Flexible

Level of difficulty:

Intermediate

Materials/space required:

Invitation Card(s), whiteboard and/or large piece of paper, markers, art supplies (as needed)

Location:

Indoors

Engagement of external stakeholders:

No



Step 1: Preparation

Print or make an adaptation of the following prompt. You may choose to turn this into invitation card(s), or to display it somewhere for the entire class:

"You have been cordially invited by the Planetary Council to participate in a brand-new learner exchange and storytelling program! Your task is to create a story that reflects your lived experience on planet _____, a climate-resilient planet that has achieved a sustainable balance between humans and nature.

As you do so, we would like you to carefully imagine, explore and describe the planet, with particular consideration given to both the climate and the climate between beings. These stories will be collected and displayed in a showcase of stories about life on parallel worlds."

Step 2: Exploring parallel worlds

1. Introduce learners to the concept of parallel worlds. Explain to them that parallel worlds are worlds and existences that we can imagine as having developed alongside – or parallel – to our own. Many novels and films take place in parallel worlds, and learners might have already 'daydreamed' about parallel worlds. Encourage questions, sharing, and curiosity on the topic.
2. Present the invitation/prompt from Step 1: Preparation, and explain the structure of the activity. More specifically, tell learners that during this activity, they will imagine a parallel world where, instead of living on the earth, they are now living on a climate-resilient planet that has achieved a sustainable balance between humans and nature, which they themselves will conceptualize.
 - a. In case the learners are not familiar with the concept of *climate resilience*, it is important to explain it to them before they engage in the storytelling exercise. Feel free to provide as much or as little information about climate resilience before the exercise as you wish, since this exercise can also serve to discuss climate resilience in more details throughout the session.
3. Let the learners know that their task is to convey their experience within this parallel world through storytelling. This storytelling can be done through



written word, song, art, or any other medium that is possible within the classroom. The focus for this activity should be more on learners conveying their experience within the parallel world through storytelling, and less on the specifics of how that world works.

4. Allow learners as much time as they need to envision their experience of this parallel world. Then, allow time for learners to craft their stories. They may craft their stories individually, or after group discussions. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to portray their experience. As they craft their stories, encourage learners to be as creative as they wish with their storytelling. Some things they can consider for inspiration:
 - a. What do you do in this parallel world?
 - b. How do you live in this parallel world?
 - c. What are your strengths in this parallel world? How do you use your strengths?
 - d. How does this world work? How do you feel about it?
 - e. What are your connections and relationships in this world?
 - f. What are the values that matter to you?
5. When learners have finished crafting their stories, invite them to share their stories with the class. Encourage curiosity and self-reflection at this stage. Some questions you can ask them to reflect on:
 - a. How did this activity make you feel?
 - b. What does it reveal about your perspective?
 - c. Were there any similarities or differences you noticed between your experience in this parallel world and your experience here on Earth?

Dos and don'ts



Do

Do use this as a stepping stone for a longer learning journey - exploring how amazing the Earth can seem if you look at it as a spaceship travelling through space.

Don't:

Don't expect your learners to be experts in resilience from the start, the activity is about exploring and imagination. And sometimes what seems to be ridiculous suggestions for a long lasting resilient life might be expressed. In those cases keep asking questions and you will have started the process. Sometimes the most important thing is to ask the question.



Adaptations:

- Some learners might find it difficult to conceptualize a parallel world, as it relies heavily on imagination. A different and more hands-on option is to create a biosphere together with the learners, and encourage them to imagine they are tiny creatures and/or humans living within that biosphere. To get inspiration to create a biosphere take a look [here](#).
- 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.

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A biosphere.

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