

## Session 1: Changing Lifestyles

1. Pair speaking: What lifestyle change completely changes your life for the better within a few weeks?

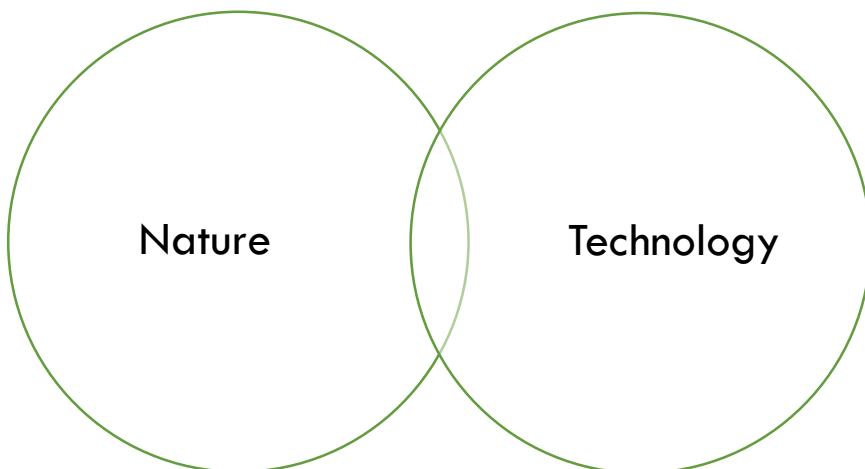
2. Based on the screenshots, predict what kind of future the video will present:



### Useful phrases:

- **idyllic** – extremely pleasant, peaceful, or picturesque
- **self-sustaining** – able to maintain itself without external help
- **community resilience** – the ability of a community to recover and adapt to change
- **low-impact living** – lifestyle choices that reduce environmental harm
- *It is **plausible** that...*
- *This imagery suggests a future in which...*
- *This appears to **foreshadow**...*

3. While watching, jot down elements from each category (e.g., solar panels, cloud-making machine, wind blimps, robots, the lush green fields)



4. Fill in the short transcript with 1 word

Dear Alice,

So this place is yours now. It's a \_\_\_\_\_, but nothing \_\_\_\_\_ doing is easy. The land is more than just dirt. If you look after it, it will feed you forever. You are a smart one, I know you will be okay come \_\_\_\_\_ or shine. And remember, a business is only as good as its people, so treat them well. Our job is to \_\_\_\_\_ seeds, so our grandkids get to enjoy the fruit. So eat well, Alice, and keep planting those seeds. Because how we eat today feeds tomorrow.

5. Read the text and answer the questions:

- 1) According to the article, how does solarpunk use technology differently from cyberpunk?
- 2) How does Vincent Callebaut's architectural style align with solarpunk principles?
- 3) What political and ideological movements are closely connected with solarpunk, according to the article?
- 4) How does the article describe the current state of the solarpunk movement and its potential future?

## The solarpunk art movement: Cyberpunk's joyful counterpart

<https://theboar.org/2025/08/the-solarpunk-art-movement-cyberpunks-joyful-counterpart/>

The term 'solarpunk' may mean a great deal of different things to different people: to some, it suggests a consumerist, aesthetic-obsessed Pinterest board filled with solar panels and meadows. To others, it may be a painting or drawing inspired by Art Nouveau visuals, or quite simply, a hand-sewn, **sustainably sourced** shirt. In the modern day, these all make up the essence of the solarpunk movement.

Solarpunk today exists as a multi-layered movement: at once an artistic, architectural, and literary genre, as well as a way of philosophical, political, and social thinking. In contrast to cyberpunk, its gritty, dystopian, yet more well-known equivalent, which imagines a high-tech, urbanised, and pessimistic future, solarpunk imagines an optimistic, utopian vision of the future. Such works are often characterised by advanced tech, but used in tandem with nature, not taking over and erasing it as in cyberpunk worlds. Instead of sprawling cityscapes, solarpunk embraces images of **degrowth** – collectivism instead of post-capitalist exploitation, and inspiration drawn from natural materials, shapes, and colours, rather than the neon and concrete palette of cyberpunk.

Andrew Sage is an adherent to solarpunk in all its forms, art as well as philosophy. His yearly solarpunk collaborative art projects provide, in the true spirit of solarpunk's **collectivist ideals, a community-sourced showcase** of what solarpunk art can be. The 2025 edition ranges from community-rich cityscapes full of natural earth tones and joy, to landscapes dotted with wind farms, from imagined flyers in a solarpunk community to the insides of what public libraries could become in such a future.

Architect Vincent Callebaut, while not defining himself as a solarpunk, works in a similar way to many who embrace the movement. His work incorporates greenery, bioclimatic rules, and renewable energy, coining his approach as the 'Archibiotect'. This connection to natural forms in solarpunk originated, however, with some of its earliest conceptions and the Art Nouveau style.

The term 'solarpunk' originates from a 2008 blog post from Republic of the Bees, titled 'From Steampunk to Solarpunk'. This post suggests an adaptation of the sci-fi/fantasy genre steampunk, which explores alternate worlds and futures where steam technology and Victorian aesthetics dominate. This blending of modern and old inspired solarpunk, imagining a world where the renewable energy sources of wind and solar dominate, leading to a return to, for example, sailing boats, as the post begins. This post acknowledges the very real political fights that are integral to solarpunk, namely that those against fossil fuel-based economies and the political corruption that exists in their defence.

It is clear in these seminal works of solarpunk that the political movement towards a green, sustainable future of energy and technology is essential to the art itself, and the two cannot be separated

The visual identity of solarpunk is, however, often credited in part to Tumblr user missolivialouise, beginning with her 2014 concept art of a solarpunk aesthetic. Her art is "based on updated Art Nouveau, Victorian and Edwardian aesthetics, combined with a green

and **renewable energy** movement". The contributions of Afrofuturism and Amazofuturism are also critical in the formation of the genre's style, as well as its anti-imperial, decolonial political groundings. As such, it is clear in these seminal works of solarpunk that the political movement towards a green, sustainable future of energy and technology is essential to the art itself, and the two cannot be separated.

As such, solarpunk creators are often also involved in leftist, anti-capitalist, decolonial, and anarchist movements as well. A primary example is, once again, Andrew Sage, who creates videos about these sides of solarpunk, such as his 2025 video 'Does Anarchy Need Leaders?'. He engages with solarpunk as an artist as well as an activist. In 2014, however, Adam Flynn posted his 'Solarspunk: Notes toward a manifesto', codifying the anti-establishment drive, but also its opposition to cyberpunk's depressive nihilism. He also clarifies the -punk suffix, explaining that it is not there to be trendy, or relate it to cyberpunk, but because of the resistance to an oppressive system that characterises the genre. Later, 'A Solarpunk Manifesto' was published on the website Regenerative Design. This manifesto reiterates the visual aesthetics of Flynn's post, particularly the 1800s influence stemming from the Republic of the Bees, as well as non-Western innovation. Hayao Miyazaki of Studio Ghibli is also cited as an inspiration, a more mainstream, unofficial aspect of solarpunk that has seen an ironic surge in attention from the Studio Ghibli AI trend.

The place of AI in solarpunk art and a solarpunk future is still debated within the movement. A Reddit thread suggests that there is no clear answer: on the one hand, the energy demands of generative AI outstrip the principle of scaling need to respect **harmonious living** with the Earth. At the same time, some visions of solarpunk include the sort of high-tech, quality-of-life improvements that the use of AI in medical fields to help treat cancer would fall under.

The solarpunk genre is still growing and still forming as an established movement. Many old works, such as Ursula K. Le Guin's 'The Dispossessed', can be seen as aligning with solarpunk, and new works continue to come out of communities like that of Andrew Sage. Given time, this optimistic vision of a peaceful, sustainable, **post-capitalist utopia** could grow in strength, and maybe, one day, come to fruition.

## 6. Fill in the sentences with the expressions below:

*sustainably sourced / harmonious coexistence / community-sourced showcase / eco-friendly design principles / renewable energy-driven living / degrowth mindset / nature-inspired aesthetics / post-capitalist utopia / collectivist ideals / low-impact innovation*

1. Many coastal towns in Portugal are moving towards \_\_\_\_\_, with solar panels and wind turbines powering entire communities.
2. The library renovation incorporates \_\_\_\_\_, with curved wooden shelves and soft green tones reflecting the nearby forest.
3. The café prides itself on serving only \_\_\_\_\_ ingredients, ensuring that farmers are paid fairly and ecosystems remain intact.
4. The annual art fair is a \_\_\_\_\_, with hundreds of residents contributing photographs, sculptures, and installations.

5. The architect followed strict \_\_\_\_\_, using recycled materials and maximising natural light to reduce energy use.
6. The start-up developed a water purification device as a form of \_\_\_\_\_, ensuring minimal disruption to local ecosystems.
7. Advocates of the \_\_\_\_\_ believe that reducing production and consumption is the only path to long-term sustainability.
8. In this ecovillage, technology is used to promote \_\_\_\_\_ between humans, animals, and the surrounding landscape.
9. The novel imagines a \_\_\_\_\_ in which resources are shared equally and money has been replaced by community barter systems.
10. Her decision to volunteer at the local food co-op is rooted in \_\_\_\_\_, which prioritise mutual support over individual gain.

## 7. In pairs, discuss the following questions

- To what extent, the idea of solarpunk could be implemented in your lifestyle?
- What are the potential dangers of *degrowth mindset*, mentioned in the text?
- What should we learn if we want to live a lifestyle a little bit closer to solarpunk?

## 8. Homework

Write a **5-sentence personal comment** on the video below – you may agree, disagree, you may have no opinion on the topic ☺ You may also share what you have learnt from the video and what surprised you.

Try to use at least 2 expressions from our lesson

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHI61GHNGJM>