

What is Solarpunk?

Solarpunk is a speculative sub-genre of science-fiction, loosely built along the same lines as steampunk or cyberpunk. **Solarpunk focuses on societies with renewable energies at their core.**

Why "Solar"?

*"Sunlight bathes the Earth in enough energy in a day for 10 years of global energy consumption."**

Solarpunk's use of natural energies presents a series of unique challenges. How to harness them? What changes in society and governance do they imply?

*"It's about how people will rearrange their lives, values, relationships, markets and politics."**

Coal and oil have shaped our modern societies so far; how would clean, renewable energies shape our future world?

*The Weight of Light, A Collection of Solar Futures (Edited by Clark A. Miller and Joey Eschrich)

Why "Punk"?

Solarpunk is usually grubby, with hard, hands-on work to make things happen. It shows a variety of political organizations, often based on the notions of common goods, shared responsibility and equal rights. That's very punk!

Beyond the Crises

Solarpunk depicts civilizations after they overcame great crises (climatic, social, economic).

They're often post-capitalistic worlds, where money no longer rules everything. They show entire societies who underwent political and social changes, or pockets of resistance against brutal, conservative authorities.

Overall, they bring a positive, benevolent perspective to the near future.

Solarpunk is now a blooming movement all around the world, with works from Europe, Brazil, North America, South-East Asia: anthologies, novels, festivals, conferences, online discussions and art...



Cyberpunk?

Cyberpunk is a science fiction subgenre depicting a dystopian future with advanced technology, cybernetics, and societal breakdown, typically in gritty urban settings.

Punk?

Punk is a vibrant and rebellious subculture that emerged in the 1970s, characterized by its distinct music, edgy fashion, and a fierce anti-establishment ethos that champions individuality and social critique.

Steampunk?

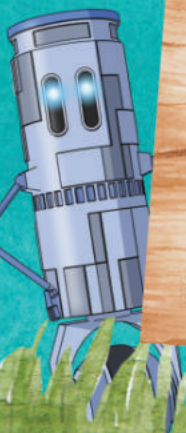
Steampunk is a subgenre of science fiction that combines Victorian-era aesthetics and technology with imaginative elements, often featuring steam-powered machinery and clockwork inventions.

INTRO TO SOLARPUNK

Solarpunk is about imagining a positive future in stories and art, through renewable energies (that's where the 'solar' comes from), equal rights and sharing.

It's a balance between humanity, nature and technology.

Imagine if the electricity in your house came from solar panels on the roof, or if your block shared one big garden where all the neighbours could garden, relax, play, have a barbecue...



Principles of Solarpunk Societies

Welcome to our Solarpunk house where all its repurposed windows will tell you about the core philosophies of Solarpunk and examples of them in **The Real World**, **Scotland** and **Fiction**, also things you can do for your own solarpunk revolution!

Solarpunk isn't just an aesthetic. Beware of greenwashing! It's a radical societal change to promote a better, sustainable future for all lifeforms.

Sharing and Mutualisation

The Fab Labs are shared workshops where people can use a wide range of tools and acquire skills (welding, woodworking, electrics...)



Several areas of Scotland are community-owned, like the Isle of Eigg (with its own renewable electricity grid) or North Harris, through the creation of trusts with local representatives.

In *Eutopia*, by Camille Leblouanger, children are raised together by all adults in the community, and take part in everyday tasks (gardening, cooking...)



Everyone does their part and helps in all areas of society. It can be growing food, fixing things, minding and raising children, or living in shared housings instead of individual homes.

Solarpunk promotes autonomy, empathy, generosity, and accessible knowledge.

People are aware they're interconnected; mutual aid and care systems help them to thrive. People and societies tend to form archipelagos. Community is key (family, peers, friends, neighbours, coworkers...)

What about you?

Do you own something you don't use every day and that other people might borrow (a drill, a wheelbarrow, a boardgame, a fondue set)? Offer to share it by posting on social media or putting up a sign on your door. Sharing is caring!

Ecology

Solarpunk civilizations use the energy of water, wind, and sun to power technology.

Societies are attuned to their ecosystem: they've learned to adapt to it rather than bend it to their will.

People observe and study the environments they're part of, so they can act while causing the least harm to it. Environment shapes building: for instance, clay walls for natural cooling in hot climates.

One of the main challenges are cities, where most of the global population lives: solarpunk strives for sustainable and cooperative urban living.

Permaculture promotes organic polyculture, helps biodiversity and regenerates soils all around the world.



In Orkney, tidal turbines use wave movement to produce electricity.

In "The Lighthouse Keeper's Garden" (from the anthology *Future Hopes*), the inhabitants of a threatened coastal town build a living shoreline of oyster and mussel beds to create a natural barrier against the sea.

What about you?

Have you tried "guerilla gardening"? It's a political movement where people reclaim certain areas (public places, abandoned plots...) through gardening with native plants and produce. It brings back biodiversity and promotes a free access to nature for all. Their tools of choice are "seed bombs".



Direct Democracy

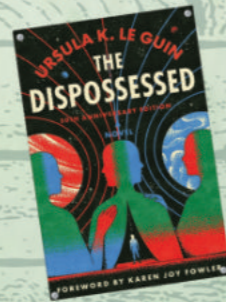


In the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (Chiapas, Mexico), anybody above the age of 12 can take part in decision-making.

Community councils are voluntary citizens' groups, acting as a go-between for local authorities and communities. They weigh in on projects affecting all residents.



In *The Dispossessed* (by Ursula K. Le Guin), the planet of Anarres founded its society under the principles of anarcho-communism and cooperation.



Citizens take on a political role within their community. Everybody can be involved in policy making.

It relies on distribution of power and direct democracy, either with independent, self-governed communes or a decentralized government.

Most importantly, people want to get involved: because of the smaller scale of things, they can make a difference.

Solarpunk societies are built on social life, solidarity, social justice and interconnections.

What about you?

Are you part of an organization, association or collective? How can you make everyone involved?

Durability and Frugality

It means producing less objects, reusing or upcycling what is already at hand. People creatively reuse existing infrastructure or technology.

Objects can become parts for another project. Missing parts can be 3D-printed instead of buying a whole new unit. People only produce what they need by using creativity and ingenuity.

Low tech and degrowth are main components of solarpunk. Resources are not infinite, and their use needs to be carefully thought out.

"Frugal engineering" refers to lowtech, cheap, practical, technological innovations. It's primarily developed in the Global South, where resources are scarcer.



The Findhorn eco-village on the coast of Moray is a place of shared living and ecological housing. It aims at self-sufficiency through wind power and permaculture.

In the *Monk & Robot* series (by Becky Chambers), people own a pocket computer they're given when they come of age. They keep it all their lives and have it repaired as many times as needed.



What about you?

Do you own something broken that could be repaired or mended instead of replaced? Is there someone around you who could give advice and lend tools? And don't forget online tutorials!

Accessibility of Resources and Social Equality

Some towns around the world are experimenting with "universal basic income". It's a fixed, unconditional salary given to all citizens to cover their basic needs: food, housing, heating...



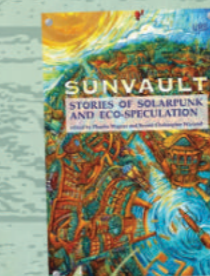
What about you?

What would you do if you had universal basic income? Time to dream... and maybe to make it real!



In Scotland and Scandinavian countries, people have the "right to roam", meaning we have access to most land and water (provided we act reasonably & responsibly) for walking, foraging, swimming, camping...

In the short story "The Hearth Boston Project" (from *Sunvault: Stories of Solarpunk and Eco-speculation*), activists take over a first-class hotel to turn it into a massive homeless shelter.



Communities have access to all basic goods and services.

They tend to limit resource and wealth hoarding. They promote pooling of resources instead of private ownership.

This gives greater freedom to people to live their lives fully. With their basic needs and comforts covered, they have more time to do other things besides work: be creative, take care of someone (a child, an elder, themselves...), help others with projects, learn and teach, play, nap...

Why create solarpunk stories and art?

Fiction and art influence reality. In the same way sci-fi presents possible futures to the audience, solarpunk helps us envision attainable, desirable, hopeful futures, outside of systemic violence towards people, animals and nature.

It imagines solutions to help humanity forward, whether it's green cities, fossil-free societies, or liberal and tolerant mindsets towards differences. Sometimes it provides much-needed escapism into better worlds when our own world feels too hard to live in. It also stimulates our need for change and fosters creativity.

A lot of solarpunk could be described as “thought experiment in design”: “What happens to our civilization if we change this? Or that?”

In solarpunk, things are not perfect: it shows us the work is never done, and there are a billion things to try to make it better. It enriches our collective, cultural imagination.

As all stories do, they make us think.

Solarpunk has been called **“practical utopianism”**. It shows a way towards possible utopias (i.e. perfect societies) through very practical changes.

“We have two choices. We can be pessimistic, give up, and help ensure that the worst will happen. Or we can be optimistic, grasp the opportunities that surely exist, and maybe help make the world a better place. Not much of a choice.”

Noam Chomsky, *Optimism over Despair: On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change*

“Each of us arguing with ourselves, we shall make a home together.”

Jonathan Safran Foer, *We Are the Weather*

A MAP FOR THE FUTURE

Solarpunk is about thinking up solutions for a positive future, to inspire and innovate.

Sometimes all we need are ideas, and we can find these in stories or art! It's about trying things to make our world a better place for everybody.

The novellas *A Psalm for the Wild-Built* and *A Prayer for the Crown-Shy* by Becky Chambers depict a hopeful, sustainable society built on empathy and ecology.

2021-2022

Kim Stanley Robinson writes *The Ministry for the Future*, where an international organization is tasked with protecting the rights of future generations.

2020

A solarpunk manifesto is published in several languages on the website 'Regenerative Design'.

2019

The first solarpunk festival takes place in Berlin (followed by the SolarPunk Summit in Texas in 2020).

2018

Solarpunk becomes popular online (blogs, Tumblr, reddit).

2014

The first solarpunk anthology is published in Brazil: *Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World*.

2012

The Fifth Sacred Thing, by environmental pioneer Starhawk, depicts a post-catastrophe San Francisco turned into a sustainable utopia.

1993

Octavia Butler publishes *Parable of the Sower*, where a small group of people escapes a violent environment to build a community following the principles of 'Earthseed'.

1993

The novel *Songs of the Stars*, by Norman Spinrad, depicts a society where all energy comes from "wind, muscle, sun and water".

1980

Ernest Callenbach writes *Ecotopia*, one of the first tentative environmental utopias in literature.

1975

In her seminal sci-fi novel *The Dispossessed*, Ursula K. Le Guin imagines an imperfect utopia built on social equality and collectivism.

1974