

Title

Creating a sustainable future for the African child: a solarpunk concept

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Abstract

This article investigates the conceptualization and integration of the formerly known literary genre and art form; now a subgenre of climate activism, solarpunk as a way of building a sustainable future for the African child; a future that takes pride in preserving the planet and creating a safe space for the African child to thrive, survive and develop. Solarpunk is a speculative and optimistic concept that seeks to reimagine the future of sustainability and mitigate climate change; an ecotopian future where technology especially renewable resources and nature exist in ecological harmony (symbiotism). It proffers sustainable solutions like that embodies the core concept of African philosophy- being a whole person and being one with your surroundings, particularly focusing on community and its strength, a core concept for the Africa scene. It encourages social action through sustainability education of the next generation that is the African child. It integrates evidence from reviews, personal correspondence and diaries. With the potential to address challenges faced by African children, the article is arranged in sections that: introduce solarpunk and its alignment with African philosophies, analyze the current challenges faced by African children, present the context of climate action through the lens of BAIW (Because Africa Is Worth It), present practical applications of solarpunk principles, discuss the role of forest guards and social action groups in biodiversity preservation, and explore how solarpunk addresses the challenges of the African child, concluding with policy recommendations to support the adoption of solarpunk in Africa.

Key words

African child; African philosophy; climate activism; climate change; ecotopia; social action; solarpunk; speculative genre; sustainability education

Key dates

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Introduction and Background

As the golden light of sunrise paints the vast savannas and bustling cities of Africa, a new generation of young visionaries awakens, ready to reclaim their continent's future. In the world where the rhythms of nature and technology harmonize, Africa children are not just survivors of a fragile planet but co-creators of a brighter future. This article embarks on a journey, weaving together tales of innovation, community and environmental stewardship, to envision a future where the African child thrives, their laughter and dreams are powered by a hope-filled world full of possibilities. Every African child has the right to a secured future; a future that takes pride in preserving the planet, a safe place for an African child to thrive in, the African child who has a right to survival and development. How can we give them that without providing a sustainable future for them?

The present and still popular depiction of the future of climate change is a technologically ridden and robot-controlled future, deeply rooted in capitalism. In as much as those sci-fi tales of grim endings might be interesting to watch, it however drives a pessimistic and fear-filled view of the future of climate change with no solution in sight. But wait there is a hero or the “knight in shining armor”, both figuratively and literally called solarpunk. Bringing in the heart Africa, a place where ancient traditions meet cutting-edge innovation, a new narrative of sustainability and climate justice is unfolding and this need to build a sustainable future while upholding African traditions births the “not so new” concept called solarpunk.

Although solarpunk is a concept that is not yet fully mainstream, it has begun to pick up momentum over the last few years. It originated from Brazil in 2008 as a literary and artistic genre that rebelled against the idea of cyberpunk and steampunk and as interesting as they are, they do not necessarily help us move forward, only dwelling on this apocalyptic, techno-fascist, or dystopian world which increases the sheer volume of the downright pessimistic ideologies weighing on our conscious and unconscious mind, where some people have accepted it as our fate as humans. Amid rising climate anxiety and an intensifying climate crisis, solarpunk offers an unapologetically optimistic vision of the future that imagines a radically different societal and economic structure in harmony with nature.

Solarpunk is a speculative literary genre and a subgenre of climate activism that depicts a possible future where technology and nature can live in ecological harmony. A form of Ecotopia (Ecological Utopia), that presents this deeply optimistic world where we have conquered climate change or at the very least have mitigated its effects in every possible way and prioritize our planet in policies and activities (Pethokoukins, 2023). Solarpunk also depicts a harmonious community void of opposing philosophies or non-humanitarian perspectives like capitalism, consumerism, ecofascism, racism, tribalism, instead it is anti-capitalism, thereby creating inclusive worlds and ecosystems and social and environmental justice and promoting communal living among Africans (Sage, 2023). It is a highly optimistic view on the future of climate change where renewable technology meets ecological awareness.

Climate change as a concept in Africa is not new. However, the awareness and knowledge of it is. According to Statista, lack of climate change awareness in Nigeria is at 6 in 10 persons, with only 30%, who have “heard” about the topic. At this stage where adverse effects of climate change are being experienced by every “Tom, Dick and Harry”, we cannot let the everyday man suffer so we have to act. Some people might argue that awareness is important and rightfully so. That is where solarpunk comes in; it creates that awareness while actively seeking out ways to solve the problem without leaving any part behind. It is one thing to be aware of the effects of climate change as an individual but it is another for millions of Africans to acknowledge climate change and come together to work to mitigate its effects.

Solarpunk or Hopepunk as described by Alyssa Hull in her article showcases the optimistic nature and hope-filled expectation for the future of the human race. Solarpunk has also been tagged as Peoplepunk by Andrew Dana Hudson, “On the political dimensions of Solarpunk”, highlighting the importance of people in creating a better future. It focuses on the human aspect of sustainability, recognizing how collective action can help build a more sustainable world and build resilient communities. Without people, solarpunk is not feasible so it is “PEOPLEPUNK”, depicting how social action and collectivism can change the future.

The ‘solar’ in the term represents the use of renewable energy to create this sustainable future and the ‘punk’ refers the rebellion against downright pessimism and fearmongering about climate change.

Solarpunk is characterized with; Afrofuturism, Ecological awareness, Green technology, Green architecture and buildings, ecovillages, sustainable architecture & products and generally just sustainability in general not Faux-sustainability like how we recycle plastics only for us to dispose it improperly or burn them like here in my current state of residence, Enugu or to produce more plastic and label it as recyclable or even how the mesh grids in solar farms still constitute a problem where we use water to cool off these grids, as a result it is not sustainable for water management and conservation. Faux sustainability can be seen where we depict solarpunk through the lens of aesthetics where we use garden buildings to present an appearance of sustainability without addressing the root cause of climate change (Lydia Noyes, 2021).

Thesis statement

This article explores how solarpunk principles and practices can be applied to create a sustainable, equitable and environmentally just future for African children by embracing solarpunk values of community, sustainability and social justice and with that we can reimagine a livable future for African children that is rooted in African culture and traditions, and also prioritizes renewable energy, eco-friendly technologies, sustainable agriculture, climate resilience and innovation. Through a solarpunk framework, this article argues that the African child can become agents of change in the transition to a sustainable future, driving innovation, creativity, and community-led solutions that address the continent's unique challenges of poverty, inequality and environmental degradation whilst positioning them as leaders in the global transition to a low-carbon economy.

Because Africa Is Worth it (BAIW)

The future of the African child is intricately linked to the continent's sustainability development trajectory. With over 40% of Africa's population below the age of 18, investing in children's wellbeing, education and empowerment is crucial for achieving the sustainable development goals. The African child faces numerous challenges, including limited access to quality education and healthcare (emphasizes still remains on the quality), poverty and malnutrition, limited opportunities for economic empowerment, vulnerability to climate change, conflict and social injustice. Prioritizing the African child's future means addressing these challenges head-on. By investing in children's development and empowering the African child's

voice, Africa can break free from the cycle of poverty and inequality, foster innovative leaders and problem-solvers in various sectors who would create innovative solutions pertaining to sustainability in those sectors, ensuring a healthy and productive population and creating a more sustainable and resilient continent.

As one of the most vulnerable population besides the older population and women, children are vulnerable to climate change because their wellbeing relies not on themselves but on their caregivers and parents. If that is compromised, they are then exposed to various situations beyond their control. This is why we must make it a priority to protect these young ones from the effects of climate change by educating and empowering them on what is important for any sustainability development goals and because we are yet to fully experience the effects of climate change, something we know the next generation might experience more of, we have to curtail or mitigate the effects and causes or at the very least ensure they are educated about it.

By prioritizing the African child's future, we can unlock the continent's full potential and create a brighter future for all. Because Africa Is Worth it, we must act now to ensure a brighter future for our children.

Solarpunk is a movement that envisions a sustainable and eco-friendly future with community-driven solutions that has the potential to transform Africa's development trajectory but it also aligns with Africa's indigenous sustainable development principles in several ways;

Environmental stewardship: Solarpunk's emphasis on environmental sustainability and stewardship resonates with Africa's indigenous beliefs of living in harmony with nature, particularly the Ubuntu philosophy with the ethos that living in harmony with nature is both a spiritual and communal duty.

Community-led innovation: Solarpunk's focus on grassroots innovation and community-led solutions mirrors Africa's indigenous approach to innovation and problem-solving, especially as exemplified by the Harambee theory that fosters communal engagement and innovation.

Circular economy: Solarpunk's focus on waste reduction and recycling aligns with Africa's indigenous principles of minimizing waste and living in harmony with nature, which can be seen in the Sankofa ethos of reusing and recycling materials as a means of sustainability, encouraging people to

adopt the age-long practices of resource management. Countries like Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya have historically adapted to and contributed to circular economy practices with Ghana being the practice of repurposing and upcycling textiles as a long tradition in the north and Nigeria's tradition of biomass recycling and composting where many rural communities take to use cassava peels and palm fronds for animal feeds and organic fertilizers.

Renewable energy: Solarpunk's focus on solar and other renewable types of energy like geothermal resonates with Africa's abundant solar resource and indigenous knowledge of harnessing nature's energy, particularly the African Environmental theory depicting how Africans have age long knowledge of utilizing renewable energy, though some are already lost knowledge like the Ancient Egyptians who harnessed the power of the wind to sail boats on river Nile.

Sustainable agriculture: Solarpunk's emphasis on sustainable agriculture aligns with Africa's indigenous practices of agriculture and permaculture.

Local solutions: Solarpunk encourages local, problem-specific solutions, which aligns with Africa's indigenous approaches to development and also places importance on local knowledge and innovation.

Resilience and adaptability: Solarpunk values resilience and adaptability, traits that have enabled Africa's indigenous communities to thrive in the face of historical and present challenges.

There are several African Philosophies and theories that align with the principles of solarpunk(African Social Work Network), including:

1. **Ubuntu (African Humanism):** It emphasizes interconnectedness, community and harmony with nature. "A person is a person through other people." (Samkange&Samkange, 1980)
2. **Sankofa (Ghananian philosophy):** From the word "return and get it", it encourages learning from the past to build a better and brighter future (Asante, 2008), reflecting solarpunk's focus on sustainable progress.
3. **Harambee (Kenyan philosophy):** derived from the Swahili word for, "to pull together", it promotes collective effort and collaboration for the greater good (Ogot,

2002), mirroring solarpunk's emphasis on community and cooperation.

4. **African Environmental Theory:** detailing how Africans have a symbiotic relationship with their natural environment as a source of income, a heritage and a source of spiritual being. (Okot p'Bitek, 1986)
5. **Bottom-Up approach:** It is of the belief that in community development, starting from the community going up to government is more beneficial than top-down approach where governments present projects or ideas to the people (Mupedziswa, 2010). So that mirrors solarpunk's ideology of community-led innovations and local solutions where the principles are the same, but the application is unique to the needs of the community or based of the effects of climate change on that particular area. It also pinpoints an essential part of community development in social work practice where the people must be carried along to ensure the sustainability of a project.
6. **Human Factor (HF) Approach to Development:** It emphasizes human beings as the centre of development where African countries are to only accept developmental proposals that align with their own mission and visions statements of development (Nyerere, 1974), mirroring solarpunk's principles of indigenous knowledge and situation-based application.
7. **Green belt Movement (GBM):** The GBM is encourages self-determination, justice and environmental conservation, particularly in its areas of activity: Environment/ Natural resources and biodiversity through education, conservation, protection, restoration including tree planting, water harvesting (Maathai, 2006).
8. **Yoruba' Ifa philosophy (Nigerian philosophy):** focuses on balance, harmony, and sustainability in nature and human relationships (Abimbola, 1997).
9. **African Holism (various traditions):** it emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of balance and harmony (Mbiti, 1990).

10. Ujamaa (Tanzanian philosophy): it promotes family and community-hood, mutual support, and collective well-being (Nyerere, 1968).

The current situation of the African Child in the face of Climate change

Overview of the challenges faced by the African child in relation to climate change

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has brought it to our understanding that "climate crisis is a child rights crisis" through the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI). With over 1 billion children all over the world at risk of climate related disasters infringing on the African child's right to life, education and health, increasing the risk of children being exposed to displacement by floods and also increasing the African child's vulnerability and an estimated 125 million in Africa by 2030 who would be at risk of water scarcity, malnutrition, and displacement. Climate and environmental disaster have various impacts on the wellbeing and future of children causing some to stop school, go through devastating circumstances and increase their exposure to several health hazards.

It is crucial we address the impacts of climate change and safeguard the rights of the African child, the right to life, the right to health environment, and the right to survival and development. The Declaration in Children, Youth and Climate change also stands to advocate for the right of children to have a healthy environment. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) also says that climate change is one of the biggest threats to the rights of a child especially the right to life amongst other rights like the right to education and right to clean water and more. The UN General Comment No 26 provides crucial guidance on the impact of environmental degradation and climate change on the rights of a child. The document underscores the urgent need for countries to address environmental harm and climate change, and it elaborates on the obligations of governments to ensure that the rights of children are upheld in the face environmental challenges, reaffirming that children have a fundamental right to clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child mandates that African countries do whatever is necessary to guarantee the survival, protection and development of children, this provision stresses the importance of giving

precedence to children's wellbeing and development in the allocation of resources regardless of the resource constraints of African countries. It highlights the interdependence of children's rights and the need for a comprehensive approach to their care and protection (African Union, 2019).

With climate change being seen as a leading cause of certain health issues for the African child, they are at risk of heat strokes, asthma and other respiratory tract infections, cholera, malaria, malnutrition etc. The right to life and health which is the prerequisites for other rights to prevail is at risk of infringement. In the midst of it all, the African child is also exposed to dangers of floods, implying a situation of displacement too (Fox 2021). We can see that there is an inadequate response to climate change impacts in Africa and lack of financing and response teams in areas that are flooded and multiple unrecorded deaths. We must take action to protect African children who have their entire life ahead of them.

Solarpunk principles and practical application

Characteristics of solarpunk

Afrofuturism; It is an aesthetic that incorporates science fiction into history and experience of African-Americans to create this futuristic society and it has connections in literature, music and art (Gallagher, 2006). It seeks to decolonize technology and science, centre African culture, knowledge and the African experience and explore that intersection between traditional African practices and technology.

Ecological awareness; It involves Africans having an understanding of how our everyday activities impact our environment and various ecosystems. It could be also seen as the awareness of global warming and climate change and the need to protect of our limited resources and reduce pollution and environmental degradation to the smallest state possible.

Long term design; It is an approach to solarpunk concept that prioritizes sustainability, durability and timeless design in the creation of products, systems, and infrastructure. It involves considering the potential consequences and impacts of a design over extended period in a bid to minimize waste and pollution, build resilient and adaptive systems and encourage circular economies as way to combat

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global warming, increase sustainability and reduce our carbon emissions.

Green technology: Also known as environmental technology or clean tech, it is the innovative solutions and products that prioritizes environmental sustainability and reduce harmful ecological impact. It includes renewable energy like solar and wind power, Eco-friendly transportation, effective waste management and recycling solutions.

Green architecture and Afro-centric buildings: This is where we merge traditional African design elements with eco-friendly technologies where infrastructures not only minimize environmental impact but it also celebrates African cultural heritage. It involves use of energy-efficient systems and water conservation, green buildings, use of natural and recycled materials, Incorporation of African designs and patterns like the Windcatchers buildings design from old buildings in Northern Africa that act as natural air conditioners where natural convection is used to pull hot air out of the buildings and bring cooler air in. it can be seen in places like Ancient Egypt during the Early Dynasty period and in Khartoum, Sudan. We can also see Green architecture in the form of using clay in building our houses but fusing in the current technology to make it more durable. For example, the use of compressed mud bricks or compressed stabilized earth blocks (CEBs), where a mixture clay, sand and water is compressed into blocks by a hydraulic or mechanical press with the durable enough to last for centuries. This will ensure that far less cement is used in building houses in order to make the environment better.

Ecovillages and Community; Ecovillages are sustainable communities that embody the values of environmentalism, climate justice and community powered resilience. It is characterized by self-sufficient communities, renewable energy powered communities (solar, wind, hydro), eco-friendly infrastructure, organic farming, permaculture. Ecovillages and community are deeply connected due to cooperative living where skills, resources and responsibilities are shared and where there is inclusivity and celebration of diversity and culture and shared values of environmental sustainability, social justice and collective action. There are a good number ecovillages around the world like the popular ecovillage in Findhorn in Scotland, Nourish ecovillage in Kruger National Park in South Africa (Paxian, 2021) and Hiware Bazaar, Maharashtra in India (The Indian Express).

Anti consumerism & Anti-capitalist society; These are core principles of solarpunk. It rejects the idea of extreme consumer culture and the exploitative nature of capitalism and instead embraces minimalism where we reduce our footprints and reduce waste, cooperative ownership and localism where local and sustainable economies are supported

Practical applications of the Solarpunk concept

Urban greenhouses

Urban greenhouses are a key feature of solarpunk cities, providing sustainable food production. They are envisioned as sustainable, high-tech and community-driven spaces that combine three things: Food production, Education and Innovation. They could be integrated into buildings and is powered using renewable energy while utilizing advanced hydroponics (plants grown in a nutrient-rich solution rather than soil), aeroponics (plants are suspended in the air and their roots are sprayed with a nutrient-rich solution at certain intervals) and aquaponics (A symbiotic system where plants and aquatic animal co-exist where fish or other aquatic animals produce waste which is converted to nutrients for the plants and the plants purify the water for the animals, thereby creating a loop system) (Agritecture, 2019).

Gardens, homesteads, ecovillages and community gardening

These concepts play a crucial role in creating sustainable living and resilient community-driven ecosystems. Urban and suburban gardens provide fresh produce and green spaces, promoting food security in urban areas and improve air quality. Homesteads involve self-sufficient homes that produce their own food with gardens, orchards with other features like renewable energy and greywater systems (wastewater specifically from sinks, showers and washing machines). Homesteads like the ones that are a part of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in Nkuringo, Uganda. Community gardening involves having shared plots of land for collective gardening, fostering community and knowledge sharing, increasing access to fresh produce in rural and urban areas.

Treated wastewater and rainwater harvesting

In a bid to conserve water, wastewater is treated using advanced water treatment to minimize waste

and increase water reuse. This water could be used for non-drinkable uses like irrigation, toilet flushing and industrial process. Rainwater harvesting involves collecting and storing rainwater for uses, thereby reducing pressure on drainage systems while providing water in areas that lack water.

Renewable energy; solar power, hydro, wind and geothermal

The basis of solarpunk is based from the use of renewable energy solutions, reducing or carbon footprints and slowing down the impact of climate change and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and lowering carbon emission. Solar harnesses energy from the sun through panels then generating electricity or heat. Wind energy uses wind turbines to convert wind kinetic energy into electricity; imagine a hamster on a wheel, generating to power a tiny light bulb or fan. Similarly, wind energy uses blades like the hamster wheel to capture the kinetic energy in the wind and as the wind turns the blades, electricity is generated. Hydro energy taps into energy of moving water like rivers, oceans or tidal currents using hydroelectric power plants or tidal power turbines. It is quite like wind energy. Geothermal involves harnessing the earth's natural heat to provide warmth and hot water. This can be used to heat space or homes and greenhouses.

Community focused and Community-led solutions

Here, we emphasize on collaboration, inclusivity and social justice where solarpunk's projects focuses on the innate needs and problems of the community, prioritizing community needs over individual's needs; when we prioritize the many, the one is cared for too, but when we prioritize only the one, the many are left behind ["Caring for the community cares for the individual, but individualism leaves the community behind"]. Solarpunk empowers community to be innovative and drive change, acknowledge that community members are experts in their own lives, which in turn supports grassroots initiatives and bottom-up approach. Initiatives like Cooperative renewable energy projects, community gardens and shared food system and community-led housing initiatives.

Permaculture systems and Regenerative design

Permaculture embodies the principles of sustainable living, regenerative design and harmony with nature. In solarpunk, it is often integrated into community design, urban planning and restoration of ecosystems with aspects such as closed-loop systems, holistic approach, regenerative agriculture

and ecological design. It inspires urban farming, ecovillages and climate resilience and adaptation strategies that promote biodiversity. Regenerative design specifically in permaculture, involves mimicking nature's way of growing and producing trees and plants in a participatory design process.

Positive psychology & metacognition

Positive psychology and metacognition fosters a culture of wellbeing, resilience, continental growth. Positive psychology specifically encourages people to look for their strengths over deficits or weakness and building positive mindsets about climate change or the "end of the mankind". Metacognition encourages self-reflection and self-awareness about our understanding of climate change and reprogramming that mindset into a more optimistic and hopeful one.

Green technology

An integral part of the solarpunk visions is sustainable technologies that are renewable energy focused, green architectures, eco-friendly transportation like the electric cars and electric trains and working with available resources (Guelfo .D.,2023). Green technology involves looking out for better and more eco-friendly ways of modifying current technology to reduce environmental impact.

Upcycled goods

It encourages minimal waste ecosystems or circular ecosystems where recycled materials are used to create new, useful and sometimes creative items. For example, making furniture from old planks of woods and other materials, clothing made old, repurposed fabrics, Art pieces made *from plastic bottles and other materials*.

City planning and water management

Planning cities with nature or the environment in mind is crucial for building solarpunk cities. From green spaces to urban gardens to eco-friendly transportation, even to policies that keep nature in top priority. In a lot of cities like Lagos where clean water is a problem, with water management in solarpunk cities, we not only solve that problem but also the problem of water conservation using community-scale water management systems, rainwater harvesting that store rainwater for non-drinkable uses like flushing toilets, irrigation, which reduces the amount of water wasted in entering the drainage system and stormwater management systems like pods and wetlands that capture and slowly release stormwater and help cities mitigate

flood risks. In water management, we also have dams and flood walls as flood control structures, while dams create electricity for the city, it also helps protect the city from coastal flooding. Even adopting ideas like the sponge city project in China, that should help mitigate the effectiveness of floods while mimicking earth natural way of draining waterlogged areas.

Resilience building and Disaster response in communities (community-led climate resilience programs)

The effects of climate change are already being experienced by various countries from the global north to the global south, but how can the African community survive? Through solarpunk, communities are able to develop community-led climate initiatives, developing resilience plans and projects. Workshops and training are offered to these communities focusing on disaster preparedness and community response, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) are formed with trained volunteers to help provide immediate support and coordination during disasters where these volunteers are informed of adaptive reuse, where existing infrastructure and materials are repurposed for temporary housing of survivors, medical and other needs. These volunteers who are drawn from the local community, help to drive the efforts whilst empowering the residents too, creating solutions which are culturally resonant and also strengthen these communities' capability and ability to independently sustain these efforts in the long run.

Forest guards, biodiversity, social action groups and protecting Africa's environment for the next generation

As it pertains to solarpunk, the Human factor is important, it emphasizes human beings as the centre of development, without people and community, solarpunk principles cannot be achieved and, on that note, this article looks at this from the standpoint of forest guards and social action groups.

Africa is full of forests of different types, from the rich ever green tropics in West and Central Africa to the dry forests in arids or semi arids regions in Chad, Sahara, Egypt and Mauritania etcetera (Savannahs and woodlands) and down to the swamps or wetlands in places like the Niger Delta in Nigeria and the mangrove forests in Senegal and Gambia (Nair & Tieguhong, 2004). Forests have important ecosystem services, such as: habitat to an array of unique and diverse plant and animal species, many of which cannot be found anywhere else in the

world. They play a crucial role in regulating the climate, supporting local communities and maintaining global biodiversity. There are many benefits of forest ecosystems: they have a rich biodiversity which can be crucial for water conservation, water filtration and purification, carbon sequestration, coastal protection and support for fisheries and agriculture (Australian museum, 2023). Forest help in store the excess carbon in the atmosphere thereby strengthening health and providing nutrition, supply key sources of income to population that are crucial for the survival of communities facing the adverse effects of climate change. Forests are vital ecosystems facing unprecedented threats, including deforestation, climate change and biodiversity loss.

Biodiversity on the other hand, in literal terms means variety in biological ecosystem; living things like the different plants, animals and microorganisms and the different ways they cohabit and interact with each other (Australian museum, 2023). Biodiversity works together to form the complexities of life on earth and if we lose one specie, we have lost a great amount of our natural resource as many plants and animals are dependent on each other for survival. Meaning, if one of them becomes extinct, the others become endangered species. Due to many reasons, climate change included, biodiversity is decreasing by the day which can lead to our planet becoming inhabitable for us (The Royal Society).

If forests and biodiversity are this important, shouldn't we protect them? If they are such a crucial part of nature, shouldn't we guard something that if lost could essentially alter life as we know it? Forest guards and social action groups are a crucial aspect of protecting our ecosystem and in turn climate change. Forest guards are frontline defenders playing an important role in safeguarding these environments. Solarpunk, a movement envisioning a sustainable and eco-friendly future, offers a framework for forest guards to amplify their impact. They are responsible for patrolling forests to prevent illegal activities like hunting endangering species or species in sanctuaries, monitoring wildlife populations and habitats, giving us feedback on this will help scientists be more accurate in their findings, collaborating with local communities to promote conservation, enforcing forest laws and regulations, supporting sustainable forest management practices (Forest History Society).

The intersectionality between forest guards and solarpunk principles offer opportunities for synergy

and innovation, not only are they versed with knowledge of the ecosystems in their locality or place or residence, but they already have also working relationships with communities in that area which could have a positive impact on collective action in those communities (Folkesson M., 2008). By embracing solarpunk values, forest guards can: Adopt sustainable practices and technologies to enhance conservation efforts, integrate renewable sources to power forest management efforts, Foster community-led conservation initiatives, promoting inclusivity, social justice and indigenous knowledge, Develop sustainable infrastructure, such as eco-friendly trails and facilities, Promote regenerative and restorative practices, enhancing forest biodiversity and ecosystem activities, Act as whistleblowers, informing of areas of forest being affected by climate change especially in arid or drylands so that regenerative efforts can be applied impromptu.

Social action groups can play a vital role in promoting solarpunk values and creating more sustainable and equitable future, it emphasizes the bottom-top approach. They can help organize community-led projects in their localities like community gardens, renewable energy cooperatives (Smithsimon G., 2018). They can advocate for policy change like eco-friendly technologies and sustainable land use. They can educate their members and the broader community about solarpunk values and environmental issues. They can help develop grassroot innovation and community-driven solutions. They can be a team of professionals who would provide training and capacity building programs for community members focusing on sustainable projects, disaster and risk management and reduction and can help promote participatory governance models, ensuring community involvement in decision-making processes and policy development (Think Social Work, 2023). Social action groups in Solarpunk acknowledge the intersectionality of social and environmental injustices, addressing the needs of marginalized communities and promoting equitable solutions thereby promoting inclusivity.

Now we understand the function the two groups. There is also a crossroad or overlap between social action groups, solarpunk principles and the goals of forest guards, they include.

First and foremost, social action groups, solarpunk and forest guards all aim to protect the environment and promote sustainability, addressing

environmental injustices and promoting eco-friendly practices.

Social action groups and solarpunk emphasize community-led initiatives and participatory governance, aligning with forest guards' community engagement and education efforts.

Solarpunk's focus on inclusivity, equity and social justice intersects with social action groups' advocacy for marginalized communities and forest guards' work with local communities.

Forest guards' conservation efforts, solarpunk's renewable energy focal point and social action groups' advocacy for climate policies intersect in addressing climate change.

Lastly, Forest guards's work with indigenous communities, social action groups' support for indigenous knowledge and rights and solarpunk's emphasis on indigenous and community-led initiatives intersect in promoting indigenous solutions, self-determination and decolonization of knowledge.

How solarpunk can be used to address the challenges of the African child

The African child is a product of systems and communities around them and if the community around is nurturing, it will in turn support their physical, emotional, social and economic development. As solarpunk addresses problems in the society at large, it reflects in the life of the average African child. Solarpunk can be used to address the problem of electricity for schools, providing sustainable power for schools, communities, improving access to education and medical facilities. Through solarpunk's innovative water management systems, the African child can be provided with clean drinkable water, thereby reducing their susceptibility to waterborne diseases. Solarpunk's agricultural practices of vertical farming and permaculture ensure food security for the African child by increasing food production and availability and combating hunger and malnutrition.

Solarpunk incorporate a sense of environmental stewardship in the African child through education about the importance of conservation and responsible management of Africa's resources. Through community development, solarpunk foster a sense of ownership and responsibility to the planet among African children, promoting future sustainable innovation. Solarpunk also strengthens the voice of the African child on the issue of climate

change as they have been empowered through awareness and education. Solarpunk teaches the African child small lifestyle changes that make a big impact in the face of climate change. Through solarpunk's do-it-yourself approach, it promotes hands-on learning, skill sharing and innovation for the African child to become future and present problem-solvers and change agents. Social action groups can educate children and communities about sustainable practices, climate change, and conservation through school initiatives and programs. Solarpunk encourages and supports child-led or youth-led projects, allowing them to take ownership and drive change. We can also address a lot of challenges by encouraging peer-to-peer education; supporting children in educating and inspiring each other. Due solarpunk's inclusive nature, it would foster intergenerational dialogue, where we facilitate discussions between children and adults to promote mutual understanding of climate change and action.

By applying the solarpunk principles, the African child is empowered and given a seat at the table to make decisions and shape their future while upholding cultural heritage.

Solarpunk policy and government recommendation for Africa

With only 17 percent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets on track and the remaining 83 percent showing minimal or stalled progress [50 percent of the targets are weak or insufficient and 30 percent have stalled or reversed], Africa needs to step up to ensure it can meet up to create a future for the next generation. To harness the potential of solarpunk in Africa, it is recommended that we:

- a. Set ambitious targets for renewable energy adaption (at least 50% of energy mix by 2030)
- b. Incentivize solar and wind power through tax credits, grants and subsidies.
- c. Allocate funds for sustainable infrastructure development and encourage and support community-led initiatives for green projects.

- d. Develop programs that promote sustainable development and eco-friendly practices.
- e. Encourage permaculture and regenerative agriculture practices especially in areas facing drought.
- f. Implement effect waste management systems and encourage recycling and minimize landfill waste.
- g. Funding research and innovation Africa-owned sustainable technologies and renewable energy sources.
- h. Ensure that sustainable development in Africa is inclusive, equitable and accessible by all Africans not just the rich.
- i. Use human resources such as forest guards to facilitate conservations and social action groups for collective participation.

Here, we have explored the potential of solarpunk in creating a sustainable future for the African child, from it principles to applications and recommendations for the government. By embracing solarpunk, Africa can incorporate traditional development pathways and sustainable development to create this holistic and equitable future for the African child to thrive.

The availability of climate change knowledge in social work (eco-social work) especially in Africa has been too slow over the past few years, we are expected to lobby for the development of social policies that encourage climate change awareness and help communities around us build resilience against climate change especially communities that are currently being affected by the effects of it (Ross .D. et al, 2020).. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) adopted a policy statement in 2007 that acknowledges the impact of climate and calls for social workers to raise awareness about climate change and advocate for climate justice.

Stakeholders and social workers are urged to prioritize environmental research in formulating their policies and curricula, focusing on solarpunk principles in Africa and for the African child to create a world grounded on sustainability, equity and innovation so that the African child can grow, learn and prosper in a healthy environment.

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