Future Scen arios

The world in 2050

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Imprint

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Future scenarios
in 2050

Description

The FUTURE SCENARIOS lesson gives young people an opportunity to look into the year 2050. Five very different versions of the future are presented, which take a highly simplified look at society, technology, the environment, human coexistence, politics, etc. The scenarios are presented as audio podcasts one after another to the participants, who then can form an opinion about them. Through targeted questions, participants are encouraged to envision themselves in each scenario. The presentation is supported by pictures that participants can assign to the respective scenarios.

Objective

The aim of this lesson is to take a look at a medium-term future with young people, to ask them about their wishes, needs and fears and to initiate a process of participation in civic education based on the question „What kind of future do you want to live in?"

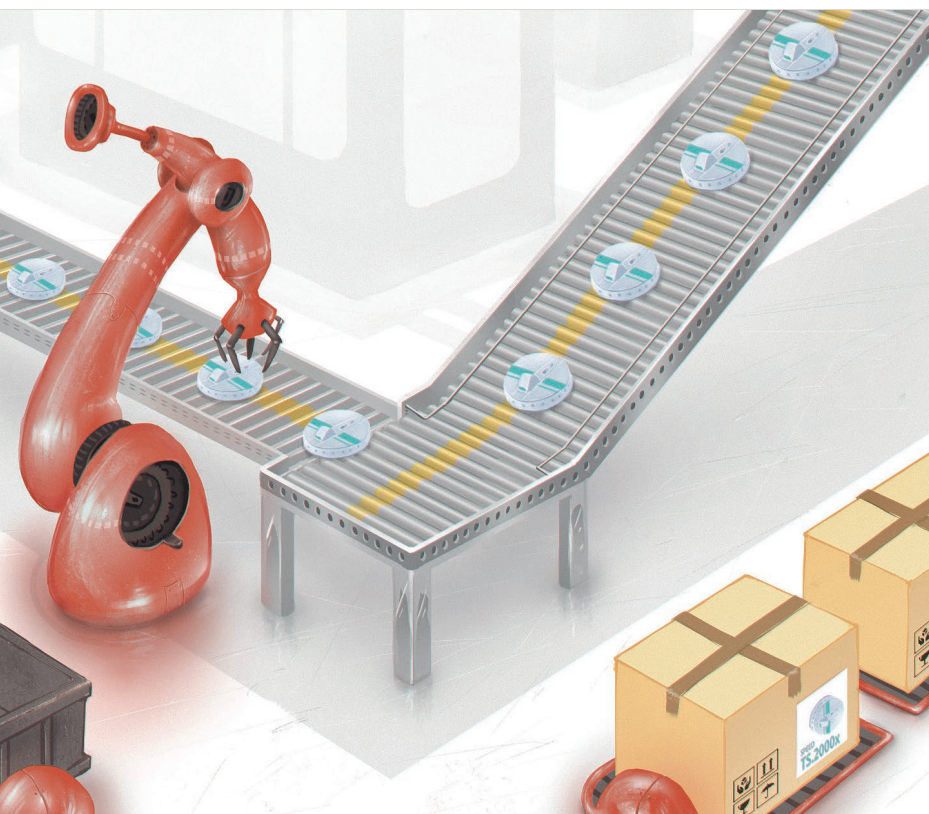**Duration:**

approx. 100 minutes

Classroom set-up:

Circle of chairs,
three dual-sided pinboards

Number of participants:

Between 15 and
25 participants

Preparation effort:

Materials required

• 5 Audio files

• Playback device for audio files (Bluetooth speaker, laptop with speakers, etc.)

Audio file to download: https://2050-en.politische-jugendbildung.blog

• 3 pinboards

• 25 symbol pictures

• Push pins (approx. 50 pieces)

• Quotes, printed out

• Video projector, laptop (optional)

Lesson plan outline

	What	Time
1.	Preparation of the room & arrival	20 minutes
2.	Welcome & introduction	10 minutes
3.	Discussion of the five scenarios • Playing the first podcast • Open discussion about the podcast • Discuss & pin podcast-matching images to the pinboard • Repeat the process for the four other scenarios	15 minutes per scenario
4.	Break & rearrangement: position pinboards in the middle of the room	5 minutes
5.	Concluding discussion	10-15 minutes

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Lesson plan implementation

1. Preparation of the room & arrival

Before the participants arrive, set up the circle of chairs and place a sample picture on or under each chair. The pictures do not have to be covered. Participants may also swap the pictures among themselves, but each participant should have one at the beginning of the lesson. Prepare the pinboards as shown in the attached example pictures, but position the boards in the room in such a way that ideally the participants cannot see them yet.

2. Welcome & introduction

After the welcome, the moderator reads out the following text slowly and in a moderate volume:

„Today we are going on a journey through time to the year 2050 and not only that: we also want to listen to five different versions of the future. To do this, we will now hear the voices from the future describing their respective worlds. Please listen to the podcasts carefully, after each round we will talk about what we have heard."

3. Discussion of the five scenarios

The moderator plays the first podcast. (approx. 5 min)
Then he or she asks the group open questions. For example (approx. 7-10 min):

• *„What did this future feel like to you?"*

• *„Would you like to live in such a future?"*

• *„What detail did you like / what detail didn't you like?"*

Participants with particularly strong opinions or participants who kept quiet
can also be addressed directly.

• *„XY, how did you feel when you heard that?"*

• *„Did it scare you?" „Does it sound like a good future to you?"*

Afterwards, the moderator says:

• *There were pictures on your seats.
Does anyone have a picture that fits this scenario?"*

• *„Why do you think this fits?"*

The pictures are pinned to the pinboards without further comment. This process is repeated for all five scenarios. The scenarios and their discussion should take a total of 75-80 minutes.

4. Break & rearrangement

After this, a short break is useful (5 min). During the break, the room is rearranged. The pinboards are moved to the centre of the room. Depending on the size of the room, the circle of chairs may have to be removed.

5. Concluding discussion

Now is the time for the concluding discussion (10-15 min)

The Moderator:

• *„Which scenario did you like best?"*

• *„Which scenario did you not like / was frightening?"*

• *„Which of the future worlds would you like to live in?"*

• *„Do the future worlds seem realistic to you?"*

• *„What do you think the future will look like?"*

• *„What can we do to prevent the scary scenarios from becoming reality?"*

• *„What can we do to make the positive scenarios a reality?"*

These questions can also be combined with a standogram. For example, the first exercise can be:

„Stand in front of the pinboard where the scenario you would like to live in is listed."

Follow-up question:
    „XY, why did you choose this scenario?"

„And now stand in front of the pinboard with the scenario that you think is the most likely."

Follow-up question:
    „XY, why did you choose this scenario?"

Finally, a short evaluation can be added or the transition to a subsequent lesson (e.g. a future workshop) can be designed.

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Description of Future Scenarios

Downwards / Collapse

In the year 2050, there is civil war. The conflicts of technology supporters and the back-to-nature movement came to a head in the 2030s. In 2042, Greenpeace was renamed Greenwars and the Church of the Revival of Steve Jobs was founded. Not only the population, but also the administration, police and military were so divided that at some point the conflicts could only be dealt with by armed force. Since then, different factions have been fighting each other, and people die every day as a result. The state that regulated public life no longer exists.

Climate change was disregarded by the politicians, as well as the people who campaigned for it. The government was only focused on the economy and the associated hurdles. The result was that climate change could no longer be stopped. All the ambitious climate targets were missed, and climate catastrophe was inevitable. Due to the collapse of ecosystems and the increased sea level, there was a great climate migration. Many countries in Africa, but also countries on other continents, became uninhabitable due to deadly heat waves, UV radiation and water shortages. The Netherlands disappeared into the ocean, the dikes on the North Sea were useless; island states sank into the water.

Some people wanted to welcome the migrants, but racism had been growing stronger and stronger in the years before. People were afraid: „There is not enough for everyone", they claimed. A struggle for survival arose that people from the Global North had not yet known. It is true that their ancestors were responsible for this development, but even they could not cope with the consequences. Even the most privileged people are now also limited by the consequences of years of overexploiting the environment.

Life outside air-filtered rooms is harmful to one's health. The pollutants in the air mean that people can only go outside with a filter mask. In addition, the UV radiation is so high that people can only spend a short time in the sun. More and more people are getting cancer and dying early. Most of Germany is now divided into districts, smaller and larger gated communities. Laws, beyond the boundaries of the small communities, no longer have any validity, as each faction fights only for its own survival.

For the most part, the gated communities and districts differ in terms of basic political orientation and security aspects. Security in general is becoming a greater privilege. The wealthy are located in the centre of heavily guarded cities. The further one moves away from the city centres, the more misery and violence there is. Social advancement is no longer possible, as districts have been built with their respective currency to establish a centrally controlled order.

However, new types of currency are quickly establishing themselves, as there is an increasing shortage of raw materials and thus other resources are more in demand. It is clear that rare metals are one of the most valuable currencies for technology.

Upwards / Success

Mankind has made it. After the dire future prognoses at the beginning of the 21st century, mankind has managed to stop the impending collapse of the world's climate through a series of inventions and the next technological revolution. The most important tool in the fight against the global rise in temperature became the so-called climate engineering. For example, sulphur dioxide was introduced into the stratosphere to block the sun's rays and thus prevent a further rise in temperature. Numerous new chemical products, sprayed in the sky by aircraft, can somewhat mitigate the most violent weather phenomena such as typhoons and hurricanes. Climate change could not be stopped, but it could at least be mitigated. By 2050, humanity will have almost completely abandoned traditional agriculture. With over 9 billion people, there is no other way. Only the rich can afford organic food. Everyone else will eat nutritious foodstuffs from chemical factories.
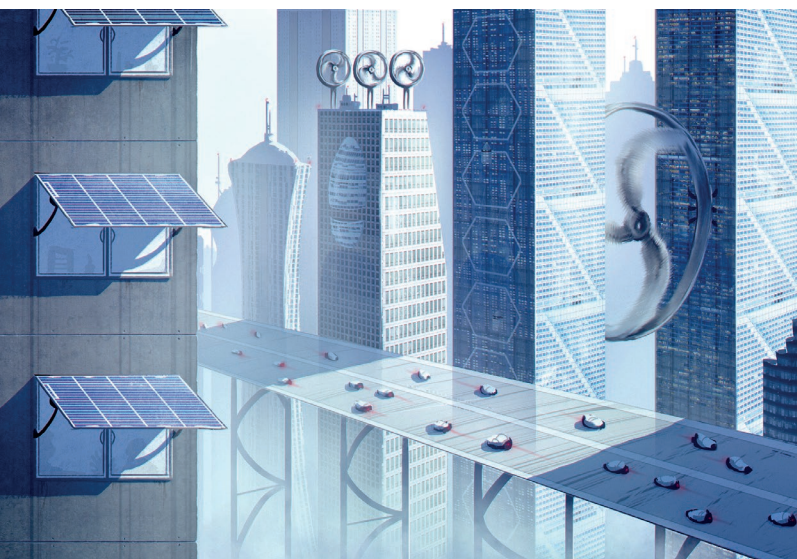
Medical advances have led to an increase in life expectancy and numerous diseases can now be successfully treated. Driven by international organisations such as the UN, a large part of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals could be implemented. This was made possible above all by numerous inventions in the 2030s and 2040s. This technological push has given humanity more time to meet the challenges of the present. But the price is high. Mankind's consumption needs are causing more and more raw materials to become scarce. Although society has become less dependent on oil, other raw materials such as silicon for computer chip production or sand for concrete are becoming increasingly rare.

Those with money can afford many leisure activities. People with less money can also participate in public life, but they pay for this with their personal data. Cultural institutions such as theatres and museums have become exceedingly rare. They are now mostly financed through sponsorship from the business sector, combined with the associated advertising. There are only a few nation states left in the world. Everyone is allowed to travel everywhere and thanks to resource-saving means of transport, humanity has become very mobile.

In 2050, the real power lies in the hands of global corporations. Politics and legislation are oriented towards their interests, but this does not bother the population much, because the people of 2050 are one thing above all: Consumers. Leading the way are the companies that develop and market artificial intelligence. A.I. is taking over more and more tasks in everyday life. It monitors the food supply, conducts legal disputes in court and creates art and culture.

Politics is used in particular to discuss administrative tasks. Algorithms support the large digital corporations in making important decisions. These are then decided in the supervisory board meetings of the corporations and directly implemented by the technical systems. The participation of the majority of humanity in this process often takes place through market research or advertising analyses.

Forward / Failure / Technological change and climate change

Climate change has once again accelerated significantly. The goal of limiting global warming to 2° Celsius has been clearly missed. The rise in temperature has greatly changed life on the planet. Climate catastrophes such as tsunamis, extreme drought, but also floods have greatly increased. But there are other phenomena as well: Every few years there are extreme cold waves in Central Europe that claim many lives. The weather is becoming increasingly difficult to predict, which is a particular challenge for agriculture. However, new technology has made it possible to grow more and more food in smaller and smaller areas. Genetically modified vegetables and farm animals are grown in huge underground catacombs, satisfying the hunger of an ever-growing world population. In 2050, nine billion people will live on earth. Many of them in abject poverty and constantly on the run from rising sea levels and extreme weather changes.

Canada and the Scandinavian states have reacted with tough lockdowns, and closed border policies. Almost every day, people die in the North Sea or Baltic Sea trying to get to Sweden or Norway. The borders are closed and defended against climate refugees by armed forces. This is mainly done with fully automated weapon systems that execute their kill orders based on facial recognition and algorithms. A civil society that criticises this no longer exists. Neither do democratically elected politicians.

Everyone's life is monitored and controlled by artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence is now everywhere: At home, at work, at school, in public places. Artificial intelligence decides when the level of pollutants in the air is low enough that the windows can be opened and which profession a person should enter in order to be as efficient as possible. AI determines which food is delivered to which neighbourhood and who is entitled to which holiday. Even the question of how many children one can have is also controlled by artificial intelligence. Most people in Canada and the Scandinavian countries have an acceptable standard of living in 2050 compared to the rest of the world's population, with enough food and winterized housing. But their lives take place mainly virtually. Physical work is almost exclusively done by machines and the few factories that still need people are located in other parts of the world. What even most people in Central Europe and North America do not know is that life has not changed for the richest people in the world. They have created biodomes in remote areas where they can live a carefree life in an almost paradise cultivated by machines. The organic strawberries grown on Spitsbergen, in the very north of Norway, are especially popular.

Backwards / Sideways / De-Globalisation / The End of Globalisation

The planetary economy has come to an end. A global reform is coming. Modern capitalism has existed since the 18th century, but after all this time, something had to change. Growth is not infinite; our planet has been overexploited for years. People have managed to slow down globalisation and start de-globalising. Only the most important goods are shipped or transported by air.

The economy in the Global South can also slowly build up, as the new way of life in the Global North means that people no longer live in absolute abundance. People in the Global South no longer have to farm for the countries of the Global North and can produce for their own needs.

Upcycling has now become a trend. People are becoming more and more creative. Even old devices like mobile phones are being reused with clever ideas. People have more time to deal with environmental issues and injustices, which in turn leads to new solutions.

For plans that affect larger units (such as long-distance trade, road construction, energy supply), there are grassroots democratic committees at the regional level.

Through this new cohesion, more is shared and less is traded. Citizens no longer own their cars but share them with each other. Socially, mutual help comes first, people no longer act in a profit-oriented way, but try to create a balance between the available resources and the needs of the people.

Citizens have also opted for a reward system that relates to the carbon footprint. Due to the very high carbon footprint of foreign holidays and travel, savings have to be made elsewhere to compensate for this. People should still be able to do this, but the annual emissions per capita must remain within the range of 2-3 tonnes. Those who want to travel climate neutrally can do so in their free time.

The basic needs of all people are met by society. Food, clothing, shelter, and transportation are available to all free of charge. Care work is shared equally between all genders, so that all people care for others, but are also cared for. The importance of consumption continues to decline, and mutual help and solidarity take the place of profit and growth as motivation. More and more people are willingly spending time and creativity to advance themselves and others and to make everyone happy. Most arrangements for living together are made in self-organised neighbourhood co-operatives.

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Keep it up

It is the year 2050 and mankind has not managed to stop the impending collapse of the world's climate. The consequences for the whole of humanity are drastic and even the gloomiest forecasts of researchers have now been confirmed.

Above all, the hunger for energy in the Global North, the even more intensive extraction of oil and natural gas, and the ever-increasing passion for consumption on the part of humans have led to changes in ocean circulation and thus to a rapid increase in the global temperature. This has dramatic consequences. Because the North Pole has lost a large part of its ice, the level of the oceans has risen sharply. Numerous island nations no longer exist and even countries with large coastlines have lost a lot of land to the oceans. Extreme hot and cold periods are occurring more and more frequently.

Many species have gone extinct and the globalised food supply collapsed.

The social consequences were predictable. Since in many southern countries, but also in Central Europe, the extreme weather conditions no longer made it possible to live, an unprecedented movement of climate refugees began. The northern countries, in particular, reacted by forcibly sealing themselves off in order to continue to secure their standard of living.

But the consequences are also radical in European and North American countries. Due to the still unrestrained emission of exhaust fumes from cars and industry, it is only possible to stay outdoors with protective equipment. Filter systems on buildings provide clean air, and water has to be chemically treated to be drinkable, as even the rain is hyper acidic. A large industry has emerged with the primary aim of helping people survive.

At the same time, global economic output has collapsed, because in many sectors of the economy, people are no longer physically able to work eight hours or more. Public health care tends to provide only painkillers and only the most necessary operations. Only those with a lot of money can afford longer stays in private clinics.

Industry, which refused to submit to politics and resisted any restrictions, still has great influence on political decisions in most countries. Global corporations move across the planet without restrictions and are hardly subject to national legislation anymore.

The dramatic social transformations have also led to a loss of confidence in democracy. In more and more countries, autocratic politicians are in charge, countering their country's declining prosperity with ever looser environmental policies. A wheel that is turning faster and faster.

Images of Future Scenarios

and their possible presentation

The outline presented here only serves as an orientation for the moderator.
The participants can make the assignment according to their own criteria.
It is also possible that the participants change „their" pictures in the course
of the exercise if they find a more suitable scenario.

Downwards / Collapse

Uncontrolled violence,
civil war
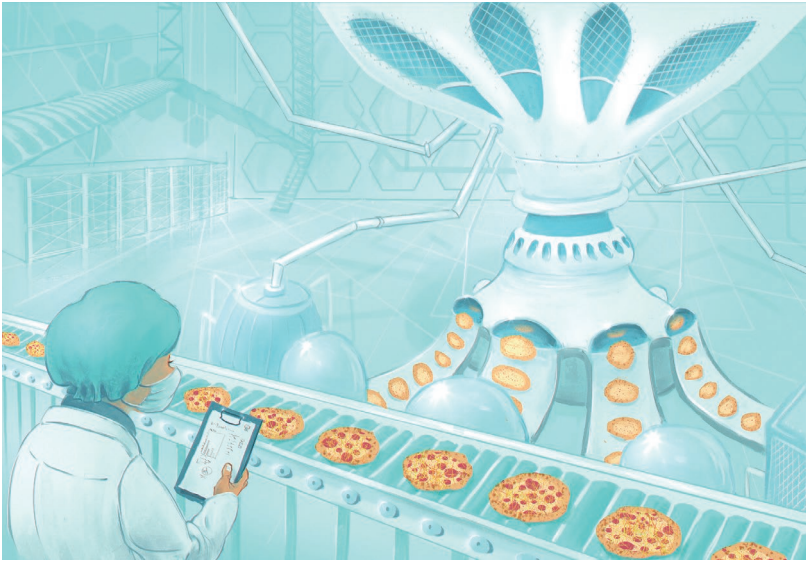

People fleeing drought

Gated communities,
view from outside

Gated communities,
view from inside

City: rich and poor district

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Upwards / Success

High-tech food factories
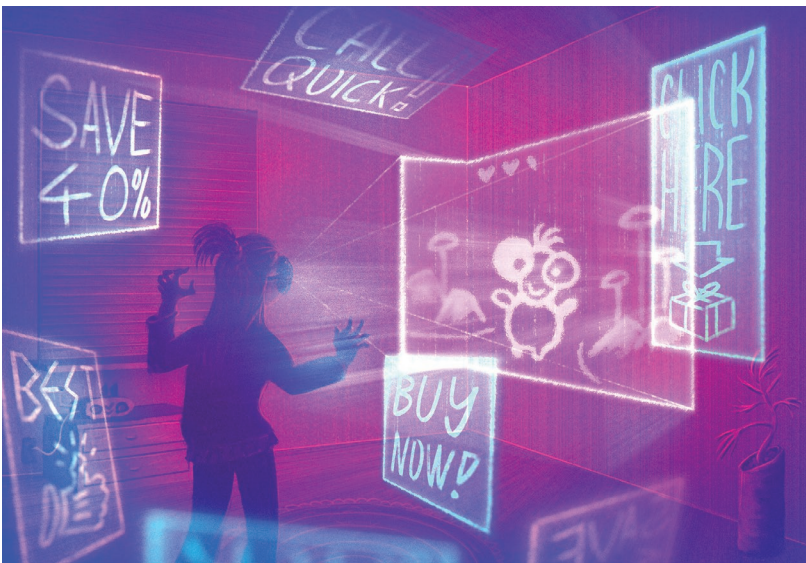
Virtual reality and holograms,
filled with advertising
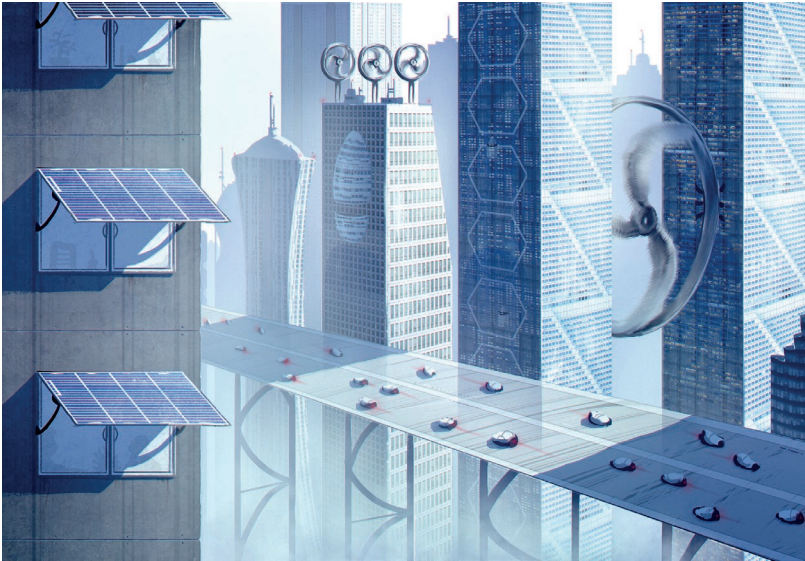
Renewable energy city,
autonomous driving
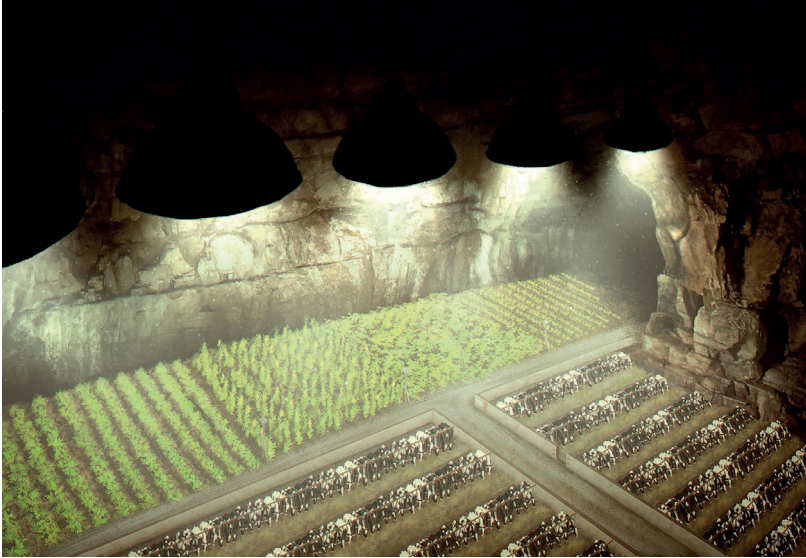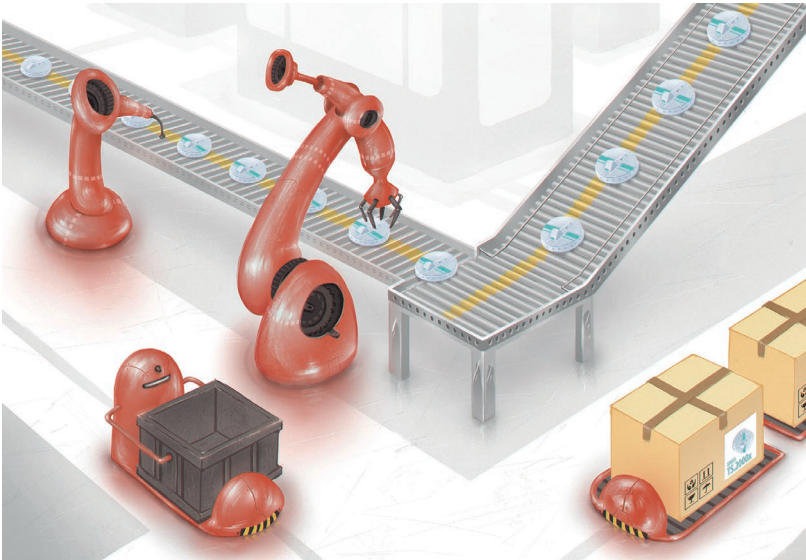

Robots creating works of art

Powerful corporations
with a lot of influence

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Forward / Failure /
Technological and climate change

Genetically modified vegetables
and farm animals are grown in
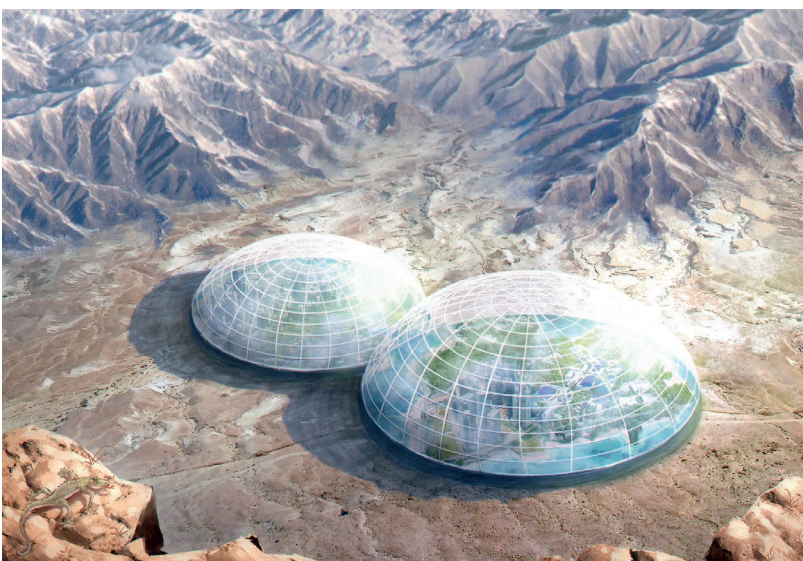huge underground catacombs

Physical labour is carried
out by machines

Artificial intelligence monitors all aspects of life

Dirty air, rising temperatures, drones and robots performing delivery services

Elites live in remote, paradise-like biodomes

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Backwards / Sideways / De-Globalisation / The End of Globalisation

Regional cultivation and trade, perfect idyll

Regional cultivation and trade, hard manual labour, even for ordinary citizens
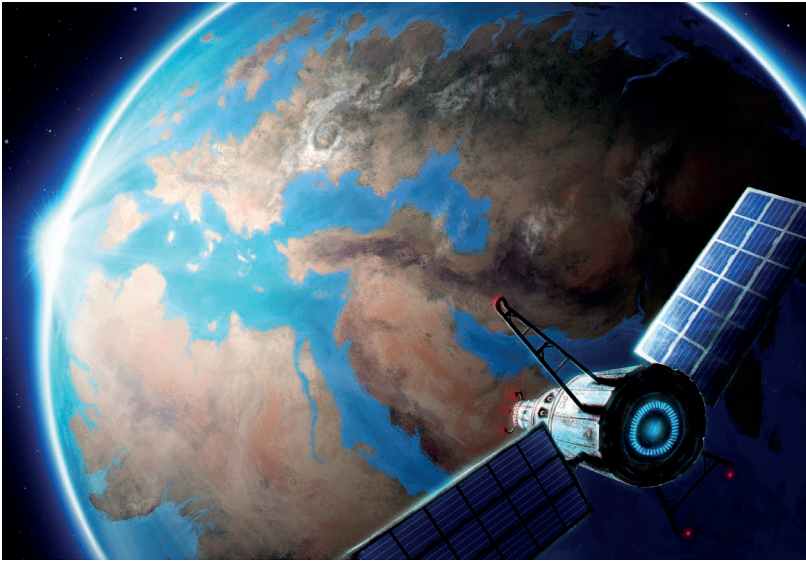
Upcycling

Old highways become
bicycle-only roads

Swap shop

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Keep it up

Rise in sea levels

Museum with
extinct species

Sealing off the West against climate refugees from the Global South

Staying outdoors only possible with protective equipment

Autocratic politicians

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