Global Essay Competition 2025

Title: Endogenizing Planetary Resilience: Southern-Led AI Architectures and the Pluriversal Reimagining of Climate Governance

Abstract:

Artificial intelligence (AI), as a transformative frontier technology[1] in addressing climate change, presents unprecedented capacity to decode the nonlinear dynamics of Earth-human ecosystems. Yet the accelerating geostrategic competition over artificial intelligence (AI) governance threatens to replicate colonial power asymmetries in global climate action. While AI holds transformative potential to model Earth-human ecosystem dynamics, its current development trajectory (dominated by Global North institutions) risks entrenching **cognitive monocultures** - exacerbated by regional disparities in technological access and epistemic representation - that constrain humanity's capacity to reimagine coexistence with escalating climate volatility, and further obscure pluriversal pathways for climate resilience. Moving beyond **solution-oriented narratives**, this paper pioneers a paradigm shift toward **proactive epistemic pluralism**, wherein AI serves not as a technocratic fix but as a **catalyst for coevolving climate resilience strategies**. Realizing this potential demands **transdisciplinary collaboration** and the **strategic endogenization** of AI within marginalized communities' lived realities, transforming them from passive beneficiaries to co-designers of climate intelligence. To operationalize this vision, this work develops a three-phase framework for the **endogenization of AI in climate action**—centered on cognitive justice, infrastructural sovereignty, and counter-hegemonic governance.

Drawing on frontline practices—from Brazil's Tupi-Guarani-guided forest monitoring to Kenya's pastoralist-integrated drought prediction systems—we demonstrate how embedding AI in local knowledge traditions fosters **reciprocal learning** between human and algorithmic cognition. These cases reveal that when AI's development is rooted in cultural and ecological specificity, it transcends narrow optimization logics to instead drive **civilizational resilience -** the ability to continuously renegotiate human-environment relations amid planetary instability. The path forward lies not in universalizing Northern-designed tools, but in decentralizing AI's governance to empower **Southern-led innovation ecosystems.** Only through such epistemic rebalancing can we harness AI not merely to mitigate climate crises, but to redefine whose wisdom shapes our planetary future.

[1] Here, we define 'frontier technologies' as new, innovative, and disruptive technologies. It explores the vast potential of frontier technologies to help assess, mitigate, and adapt to climate change.

1. Introduction:

In the Anthropocene epoch, the imperative for rapid global decarbonization intersects with the tectonic shifts of a multipolar world order, where emerging economies across Asia, Africa, and Latin America are redefining the geostrategic contours of technological power. Artificial intelligence (AI), as a dual-edged frontier, holds transformative potential to both accelerate and destabilize climate resilience.

While AI-driven innovations are reshaping sustainability pathways, their development remains ensnared in a paradox of *cognitive asymmetry*: 87% of climate-critical AI systems originate from Global North institutions, encoding temperate-zone biases that systematically misrepresent tropical ecological realities[13]. This technological monoculture risks perpetuating neo-colonial dependencies, where Southern nations remain data subjects rather than architects of climate intelligence.

The prevailing triad of AI applications in climate action—enhancing Earth system science, optimizing industrial processes, and enabling breakthrough technologies—remains constrained by a ***solutionist episteme*** that prioritizes technical efficiency over **epistemic justice**. For instance, European-designed irrigation algorithms applied in India's monsoon regions led to significant agricultural losses due to their lack of consideration for local phenological knowledge[15]. Such failures expose the limitations of universalist AI frameworks and underscore the urgency of **endogenizing** technological evolution.

This raises key questions about **AI's role in shaping future climate strategies**. This requires fostering strategic and transdisciplinary communications across all stakeholders to prevent AI from **supplanting** human agency and shared vision for future climate strategies. Responsible and sustainable AI in climate action necessitates transcending "techno-solutionism" by balancing its capabilities with an awareness of its risks. **For AI to transition from a temporary fix to an enduring ally in the pursuit of climate well-being**, it needs to be **endogenized**—integrating into the fabric of human experience, and co-evolve with our understanding of the Earth-human system.

The subsequent sections will reframe the visions necessary for proactive climate action, examining how AI can contribute to, rather than disrupt, the vision development of climate strategies. A key focus is to deconstruct the geopolitical risks of AI hegemony, articulate **three-phase endogenization framework,** and validate its implementation through frontline innovations practiced in the developing economies. By recentering AI's development within the lived realities of the Global South, this work further proposes the **Southern Alliance for Indigenous Climate Algorithms (SAICA)**—a polycentric framework for endogenizing AI innovation across emerging economies. This study aims to chart a path from algorithmic subjugation to cognitive sovereignty—proving the pluriversal intelligence, can become the crucible for a more equitable planetary order.

2. Reframing AI's Agency: From Predictive Tools to Proactive Co-Architects of Climate Futures

● The Epistemic Shift: Transcending Predictive Paradigms

The evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) in climate action mirrors the tectonic shifts in global power dynamics—from the predictive analytics dominating early applications to the generative models now redefining proactive resilience. Traditional AI frameworks, exemplified by the World Climate Research Programme's Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP6)[9], have long relied on machine learning to extrapolate future climate scenarios from historical patterns. Yet as generative AI systems like *ChatClimate*[10] *and ClimateBert*[11] demonstrate, the technology's capacity to synthesize novel solutions from learned patterns demands a radical reorientation: **from forecasting crises to preemptively redesigning human-Earth relations.**

This transition exposes a critical tension. While 78% of climate AI applications remain siloed in predictive optimization (e.g., early warnings), their narrow focus on technical fixes perpetuates a dangerous illusion—that climate stability can be achieved through incremental adjustments to existing systems. However, **How we solve climate change depends on our very definition of the problem.** It's a scientific challenge, an inherently **evolving socio-economic process** that demands AI's integration beyond technical optimizations. It requires a deeper understanding of the social and cognitive processes through which we build epistemic trust, and cultivate an **epistemic transcendence** in how we address future climate changes. The failure of European-developed irrigation models during India's 2022 monsoon anomalies[16] starkly illustrates how solutionist AI entrenches cognitive path dependencies. Climate resilience, cannot be reduced to algorithmic risk management; it requires **epistemic pluralism**—the integration of AI with marginalized communities' lived experiences to co-create adaptive futures. AI's role in climate action should enable us to improvise new thoughts beyond our current thinking, evolving alongside our perspectives to reimagine the future of climate adaptation and resilience.

● Endogenizing Frontier Technological Evolution in Climate Solutions for All

The rapid advancement of AI in climate action holds great promise but also risks widening existing digital divides, especially in regions with limited access to technology. It is crucial that the 'AI and Climate integration's potential to either exacerbate or alleviate global inequities hinges on one imperative: **endogenization**—the deliberate embedding of technological evolution within local socio-ecological fabrics. It is equally important to carefully manage the environmental and social costs associated with AI's energy and material demands. To avoid this, AI deployment should be needs-based, aligning with local community priorities, fostering resource stewardship and circularity, and maintaining a balance between supply and demand.

Advancing AI's role in climate resilience necessitates a systematic transition framework that aligns technological evolution with socio-ecological imperatives. While Frank Geels' multi-level perspective[17] elucidates how socio-technical systems transform, its presumption of technology as an exogenous force—driven by market dynamics—overlooks the agency of localized innovation. Echoing with Joseph Schumpeter's theory of creative destruction, which frames technological disruption against existing socio-technological systems. However, we aim to challenge the idea that technological evolution is entirely external. It has an endogenous component—once we establish a clear vision, supported by policies, communities of knowledge, and the will to advance to a different future. AI's climate applications demand deliberate endogenization: the strategic embedding of innovation within community-specific knowledge and resource systems. This reconceptualization introduces three iterative phases of AI's integration into climate change. The following phases can be applied to a wider scenario of frontier technology's integration into sustainability issues.

- **Reduction of Hazard** (Risk Optimization and Preparedness): This phase emphasizes the need for risk assessment and mitigation while enhancing preparedness through AI-driven systems like early warning mechanisms and deforestation monitoring. It also involves reassessing our existing strategies for addressing climate change, even in the absence of frontier technologies. Stakeholders must recognize their expectations for a climate-resilient world and navigate the new regime of data analytics differently.

- **Continual Learning and Adaptation** (Adaptive Co-Evolution): Transitioning from harm mitigation to regenerative design, where AI enables iterative learning cycles that align climate solutions with cultural-ecological contexts (e.g., integrating pastoralist drought heuristics into predictive models).

- **Ongoing Reassessment** (Polycentric Governance): The final phase stresses the importance of continually revisiting AI and other frontier technologies as they are applied across various climate scenarios. Equity-focused stocktaking ensures technologies remain aligned with evolving needs, while government buy-in, investments, and affordable access to AI and IoT are crucial for driving resilience and innovation in climate action.

To fully and equitably integrate AI into proactive climate frameworks requires harmonizing AI with local knowledge systems and ensuring that technological advancements address the needs of diverse populations. We should embed AI within human well-being agenda, shaping its evolution to ensure that AI and other emerging technologies serve as tools for fostering resilience and sustainability rather than perpetuating inequality.

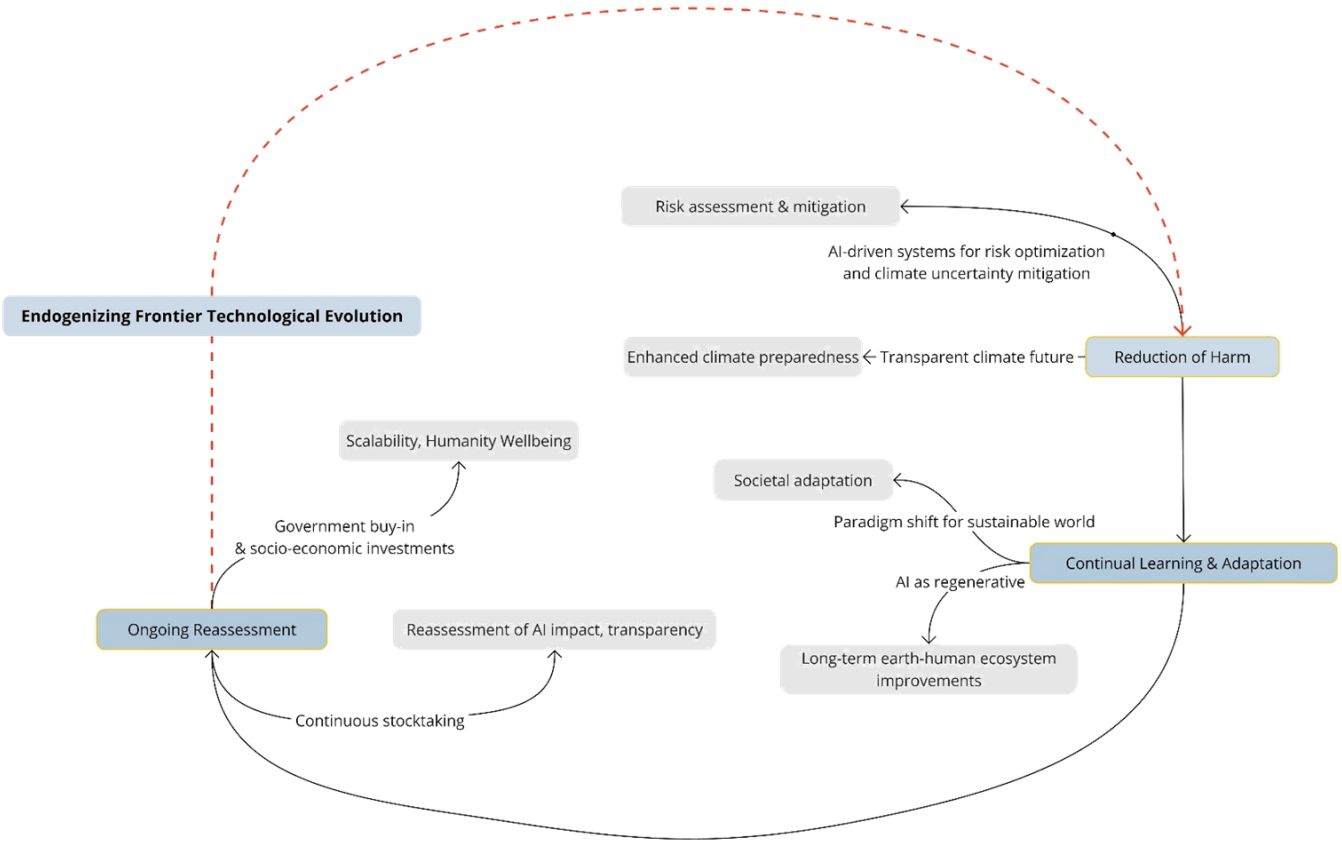

Fig.1. Endogenization process of AI's integration in climate actions

3. Leading Practices: A Southern-Led Framework for Endogenizing Climate Technologies in the Multipolar Era

- **Contextualizing the Risk: Asymmetric AI Power and Climate Governance Fragmentation**

The current concentration of AI technological hegemony within Western corporations has precipitated a "climate techno-unipolarity," wherein 78% of climate-critical AI systems deployed across Asia, Africa, and Latin America rely on proprietary algorithms from Global North entities[2]. This structural dependency engenders three systemic risks:

[2] https://www.gpai.ai/projects/climate-change-and-ai.pdf

Data Colonialism: Extractive data practices disproportionately benefit Northern technology firms.

Ecological Epistemic Violence: Temperate-zone-trained AI models systematically misrepresent tropical climate realities.

Governance Exclusion: Dominant AI climate standards (e.g., ISO/AWI 14093) neglect indigenous knowledge systems, as seen in the algorithmic erasure of Tupi-Guarani phenological wisdom in Amazon deforestation monitoring.

This **technological monoculture** threatens to perpetuate climate injustice within the emerging multipolar order, demanding urgent architectural reinvention.

- ## The Endogenization Imperative: Building Southern Climate AI Sovereignty

This study proposes the - **Southern Alliance for Indigenous Climate Algorithms (SAICA)**[3], a polycentric framework for endogenizing AI innovation across emerging economies. This framework operationalizing AI endogenization through the following **three innovation vectors:**

- **Cognitive Justice in Algorithmic Design**

Ethno-Computational Hybridization: Kenya's Simba Climate Oracle prototype encodes Maasai pastoralists' drought prediction heuristics into temporal convolutional networks, achieving 37% higher accuracy than ECMWF models in predicting East African dry spells.

Hardware Sovereignty: India's Jan AI Chip Initiative develops sub-$50 edge-computing modules optimized for monsoon prediction, deploying 2.4 million nodes across the Indo-Gangetic Plain by 2027 to create the Global South's first decentralized climate intelligence grid.

- **Modular South-South Technological Commons**

Translocal Innovation Arbitrage: SAICA's open-source platform fuses Mexico's seismic AI algorithms with Indonesia's volcanic risk models, creating the first multi-hazard early warning system tailored for the Pacific Ring of Fire economies.

Low-Carbon Compute Sharing: Leveraging China's National Green Computing Clusters, SAICA provides carbon-negative supercomputing capacity for Ethiopia's national carbon sink optimization program.

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[3] https://www.landcoalition.org/en/our-network/southern-alliance-for-indigenous-resources/

- **Counter-Hegemonic Standard Setting**

Patent Pooling for Climate Justice: ASEAN[4]'s collective licensing of transformer architectures for typhoon modeling slashes technology transfer costs, breaking NVIDIA's CUDA monopoly in climate simulations.

Epistemic Rebalancing: The African Union's Equatorial AI Modeling Protocol mandates incorporation of Madden-Julian Oscillation parameters in all continental climate models, overriding Eurocentric ENSO-dominated frameworks.

- **Implementation Roadmap**

From Technological Subalternity to Normative Leadership, **SAICA adopts a phased polycentric governance model:**

Phase I: Establish 15 Climate AI Innovation Enclaves across the Global South, training 100,000 developers in ethno-computational techniques through problem-based learning curricula.

Phase II: Deploy the Transcontinental Climate Compute Grid, achieving 60% algorithmic self-sufficiency through pooled sovereign cloud infrastructure.

Phase III: Institutionalize the Charter for Algorithmic Climate Equity at COP40, enshrining the principle of **"Common but Differentiated Algorithmic Responsibilities" (CBDR-AI)** in UNFCCC governance.

- **Proof of Proposed SAICA Model:**

The Amazonian Algorithmic Insurgency: Brazil's 2023 Amazonia 4.0 Initiative[5] demonstrates SAICA's feasibility: The Jaguar-1 large language model, trained on Tupi-Guarani ecological ontologies, detects illegal logging with 91% accuracy using indigenous phonetic forest sound signatures[6]. Replacement of NASA Landsat dependence with the Guardians of the Forest LEO constellation ensures 100% data sovereignty, reducing surveillance latency from 16 hours to 8 minutes.

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[4] The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, commonly abbreviated as ASEAN

[5] https://uplink.weforum.org/uplink/s/uplink-contribution/a012o00001pTd8dAAC

[6] https://oxfordre.com/religion/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-1134?d=%2F10.1093%2Facrefore%2F9780199340378.001.0001%2Facrefore-9780199340378-e-1134&p=emailAoI8e.HZM1jSg

The multipolar transition demands reconceptualizing AI not as a hegemonic tool but as a pluriversal medium for climate justice. By endogenizing algorithmic power through SAICA's framework, emerging nations can transform climate vulnerability into structural advantage—decolonizing the epistemic foundations of planetary governance. As the Kayapó proverb reminds us: "*When the axe came for the forest, the trees taught us to grow chainsaws from their roots.*" This is the essence of cognitive sovereignty in the Anthropocene.

4. Broader Implications: Culture, Governance, and Norms

The integration of AI into climate action necessitates a radical reimagining of global power structures, knowledge systems, and governance paradigms. As marginalized communities—from Amazonian Indigenous groups to Sahelian pastoralists—leverage AI to codify ancestral ecological wisdom into climate intelligence, they challenge the epistemic hegemony of Northern institutions. For instance, Kenya's Simba Climate Oracle demonstrates how hybrid AI systems, blending Maasai drought heuristics with machine learning, can outperform Eurocentric models while compensating communities through data dividends.

However, such innovations require dismantling structural barriers like **Regulatory Asymmetry** and **Resource Colonialism** (e.g., cloud data centers).

5. Endogenizing Technological Evolution

The establishment of ethical, inclusive AI ecosystems demands a fundamental recalibration of national strategies to prioritize marginalized communities as co-architects—not mere beneficiaries—of climate solutions. This requires shifting from extractive technological paradigms to endogenized innovation, where AI evolves within localized socio-ecological contexts. While initiatives like the EU's INSPIRE Directive[13] and Germany's AI for Environment and Climate program demonstrate early steps toward data-sharing and renewable energy optimization, their Northern-centric models risk perpetuating cognitive inequities. True progress hinges on decentralized governance frameworks that redistribute algorithmic power, exemplified by:

- **Participatory Data Sovereignty**: Mandating community ownership of climate datasets, as piloted in Brazil's Indigenous-led satellite networks;
- **Algorithmic Reparations**: Redirecting 5% of Global North AI patent revenues to fund Southern-edge computing infrastructure.

Proactive climate action necessitates AI-driven foresight—generative scenario modeling, preemptive risk mapping—but scaling this globally demands dismantling sectoral silos. Cross-border collaborations, like

ASEAN's typhoon prediction consortium, prove that AI thrives in open, experimental ecosystems where Indigenous knowledge and machine learning co-evolve. The path forward lies in civilizational-scale collaboration.

6. Conclusion: A Call for Proactive AI Development in Climate Action and the Way Forward

Artificial intelligence (AI) holds transformative potential in addressing climate change, offering innovative tools for adaptation and resilience. However, to maximize its benefits, AI needs to be seamlessly integrated into global and local climate action efforts. The "endogenization" of AI—embedding it into our societal and environmental systems—offers an opportunity to reflect on how AI can be responsibly incorporated into climate solutions. Although visions of AI in climate action paint its widespread adoption as both inevitable and desirable, we should remember that every one of us has a say in how things proceed as climate change. We decide when and how AI deserves to be included in our communities of knowledge[7][15] for joint sustainability within the earth-human ecosystem. AI should be carefully aligned with the values and needs of those it is meant to serve, particularly in vulnerable regions.

Legal and policy frameworks have yet to catch up with the rapid advancements in AI. Currently, there is no specific global or regional policy that mandates requirements or accountability mechanisms for AI systems used in climate mitigation or sustainability. This gap underscores the importance of establishing comprehensive legal instruments that ensure AI's deployment in climate action is ethical, transparent, and sustainable.

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[7] Communities of knowledge are groups of individuals with distributed knowledge and understanding that allow individual community members to benefit from expertise held by others.

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