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Guardians of the Earth: Ecocritical Narratives, Advancing SDG 13 Through Global South Cli-Fi Cinema

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Abstract

This paper examines how independent arthouse Climate Fiction (Cli-fi) films from the Global South cinema make climate issues accessible to a global audience. It aims to bridge a gap in traditional climate fiction (cli-fi) stories by giving voice to previously silenced narratives. The ecocritical lens is used to analyze films such as *Aluna* (2012, Colombia), *Anote's Ark* (2018, *Canada/Kiribati*), and *Kadvi Hawa* (2017, *India*). This study employs a qualitative method, focusing on thematic, content, and interpretative analysis. The findings suggest that Climate fiction conveys cultural stories in the context of ecological urgency, focusing on climate justice and anthropocentric challenges. The ecocritical inquiry is strengthened by offering enlightenment on themes of slow violence and Socio-Natural Relations. The study finds that Global South cli-fi cinema elicits emotional and intellectual engagement, urging sustainable action and advocating equitable climate interventions. The findings also encourage a greater understanding of how localized stories enrich global climate discourse, particularly in marginalized countries. The result of this project also aligns with SGD 13, which aims to improve education, awareness, and local institutional capacity for climate change hazards' mitigation and early warning systems.

Keywords: Climate fiction, ecocriticism, Global South, arthouse cinema, climate consciousness, climate justice, SDG 13

Introduction

Climate change is a pressing issue for the world ecosystem, but the Global South is particularly vulnerable, as a clean environment is crucial to individual and economic well-being. Climate fiction (cli-fi) is a powerful genre that invites consideration of possible climate futures and links us to environmental issues. Popular Hollywood cli-fi is known for its depictions of the apocalypse. In contrast,



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Global South cli-fi tells more complex stories rooted in culture and represents marginalized communities, such as indigenous peoples, rural laborers, and climate refugees. Ecocriticism investigates the representations of society and nature in the media, incorporating community and collective action into these works through its emphasis on social and environmental aspects. As cli-fi studies continue to broaden, we have most recently focused on the representation of climate change in Western cinema, neglecting the significant contribution of Global South cinema to climate change and the framework for addressing it.

Ecocriticism and Climate Justice

Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) in their book *"The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology"* state that Ecocriticism examines literature and media ecologically, unlocking power relations within human-nature engagements. Researchers such as Rob Nixon (2011) in his literary piece *"Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor"* focus on "slow violence," wherein marginalized communities unequally and gradually experience ecological destruction. Ecocritical interpretations of Global South cli-fi, such as Rita Indiana's *Tentacle*, highlight the intersections of climate, colonialism, and gender, offering complex critiques of global disparities (Creative, 2015). These analyses further enmesh the effect of cli-fi by placing it within climate justice discourses.

Arthouse and Global South independent films prioritize feeling over profit and therefore function to raise climate awareness. Where Hollywood generally enacts or sensationalizes catastrophes, such as in *Interstellar*, which represents distinct climate displacement through Pacific atolls, *Anote's Ark (2018, Canada/Kiribati)* utilizes both documentary and narrative elements to evoke audience emotions (Rytz, 2018). These films further the affective engagement of their audience by feeling and understanding the situation in their storytelling, and they promote better action as a result.

The primary objective of this study is to explore how Global South cli-fi (climate fiction) films, through ecocriticism, raise climate awareness to encourage sustainable practices in support of Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action). By focusing on regionally urgent and equitable climate solutions, the study dissects arthouse and independent films, including *Aluna (2012, Colombia)*, *Anote's Ark (2018, Canada/Kiribati)*, and *Kadvi Hawa (2017, India)*, which are chosen for their depth of cultural and ecological concern. Sometimes, cinematic narratives take on the role of marginalized voices and showcase non-commercial stories, each highlighting the socio-cultural impacts of climate change while striving to promote equitable transformations. The author emphasizes the need for ecocriticism to demonstrate how cli-fi film can contribute to awareness and action on climate change, promote resilience, and work towards achieving SDG 13 outcomes, including reducing climate risks and empowering vulnerable groups.

Review of Literature

Cli-fi, or climate fiction, places ecological catastrophes at the center stage through speculative works (Bloom, 2010). Whereas Hollywood cli-fi relies on spectacle, Global South arthouse cinema invests climate narratives in cultural and social contexts. *Aluna (2012)* illustrates the indigenous Kogi's views on ecological balance, advocating for interconnectedness (Ereira, 2012). Likewise, *The Swan Book* by Alexis Wright (2016), though a book, has spawned cinematic adaptations



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that focus on Aboriginal experiences of climate desolation. Dr Sharae Deckard speaks to Mumbai-based author Prayaag Akbar about his novel *Leila*, saying that local pieces differ from Western ones since they emphasize local resilience rather than apocalyptic imagery (Creative, 2015)

Trexler (2015), book *“Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change,”* notes the ability of cli-fi to make climate change relatable; however, his focus on Western texts overlooks narratives from the Global South. Ghosh’s (2016) work, *“The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable,”* calls for non-Western climate stories, demonstrating how these films explore socio-cultural impacts missing in Hollywood cli-fi. Nixon’s (2011) concept of “slow violence” is evident in *Kadvi Hawa*’s portrayal of gradual drought impacts, extending his literary focus to cinema. Buell’s (2001) concept of “toxic discourse” applies to *Aluna*’s critique of industrial harm, while Clark’s (2015) Anthropocene lens enhances the depiction of existential threats in *Anote’s Ark*.. Schneider-Mayerson et al.’s (2020) survey on the influence of cli-fi is supported by this study’s hypothetical survey. However, our focus on Global South audiences adds a new dimension. Creative (2015) discusses the authenticity of Global South cli-fi, which this study confirms through the cultural specificity of the films. However, it extends the work by applying ecocritical frameworks more deeply.

While filling the research gap is crucial here, because Global South cinema offers genuine parts and reflections on climate justice by combining local conditions with meaningful urgency toward ecologically unsustainable projects. The absence of their representation sustains the knowledge gap in comprehending the significance of cultural realities. This research fills the gap by examining how independent and arthouse climate fiction films from the Global South, informed by ecocritical theories, promote climate consciousness. The problem is significant both for scholarly and social reasons, as it brings marginalized perspectives to the forefront and informs climate change advocacy strategies in vulnerable regions to climatic disasters, such as South Asia.

Methodology

The study utilized interpretive and thematic textual analysis coupled with a qualitative methodology to examine how Global South arthouse and independent climate fiction (cli-fi) films, such as *Aluna* (2012, Colombia; *Anote’s Ark* (2018, Canada/Kiribati; and *Kadvi Hawa* (2017, India), portray Climate consciousness through ecocritical methodologies. These films were selected through purposive sampling, based on cultural and ecological dimensions, to represent indigenous Pacific Island and rural Indian voices, which provided a range of cultural and ecological perspectives. Three selected films have been chosen to ensure sufficient depth of analysis. Data is collected through repeated viewing of films, recording narrative structure, dialogue, and ecological symbolism, supported by ecocritical texts such as Nixon (2011) and Buell (2002). Thematic coding identified themes such as the interconnectedness of human-nature and climate justice. In contrast, interpretive coding explained their socio-cultural meaning, a process that was done by hand to be steeped in rich data. Since the research utilized publicly accessible films, no ethics issues or review board clearance were required, although cultural sensitivity is observed. Limitations include a small sample size, which limits generalizability, and a lack of reception data from the audience, which is partially mitigated by the varied film selection and the infusion of theory with



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strength. Reliability is achieved through systematic coding while viewing, and validity was ensured through correlating interpretations with established ecocritical theory and verifying the accurate representation of the films' environmental messages.

The slow violence by Nixon (2011) provides the context for Kadvi Hawa's illustration of environmental and economic decline over time and speaks to the experiences of vulnerable populations. The toxic discourse outlined by Buell (2001) also underpins Aluna's illustration of colonial extraction and the precise connection between colonialism and environmental destruction. Clark's (2015) notion of the Anthropocene is relevant to Anote's Ark in that it presents a future potential for civilization and life that fundamentally challenges anthropocentric perspectives. These frames of thoughts provide a nuanced approach to the interpretation of the films' themes and demonstrate the capacity of the ecocritical perspective to represent climate justice.

Limitations

The research has notable limitations. For instance, while the three films studied allowed us to engage in a thorough, in-depth analysis, they limited the creation of generalizations across the diverse context of Global South cinema. The reliance on text analysis as a mode of research design, with no empirical information about actual audience reception of the films, manifestly has its limits. It relies instead on potential results from a hypothetical survey that cannot accurately reflect the day-to-day realities, nuances, and insights from real-life impacts within the Global South. Additionally, the focus on arthouse and independent films excludes mainstream productions from the Global South, potentially overlooking broader cultural influences.

Analysis

Environmental Equity in Global South Cli-Fi

Environmental justice emerges as a central theme in Global South climate fiction films, highlighting the systemic inequities that elevate environmental degradation. These films include narratives that expose how marginalized communities, indigenous peoples, Pacific Islanders, and rural farmers are climate-vulnerable, which they had the least hand to cause climate change (they are often the lowest carbon producers but suffer the most significant consequences). The films present rich examples of what these explorations look like, with Aluna's deforested slopes, Anote's Ark's destroyed homes, and Kadvi Hawa's cracked fields serving as examples, illustrating how colonialism, collective global indifference, and institutional neglect perpetuate injustice and environmental inequity. Through an ecologically oriented critical lens, selected films highlight climate change as a form of "slow violence" (Nixon, 2011), in which harm occurs gradually but certainly causes severe consequences. It focuses on the urgent need to act before harming biological diversity. These documentary films place climate change within particular cultural realities, thereby enabling us to move discussions to a place where there is consciousness of contextual, just solutions and, road map for future actions. As activities that are culturally representative in their respective manners, they ultimately address Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action), which asserts that "we must urgently combat climate change and its impacts by taking measures to raise awareness and by taking action".



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In *Aluna* (2012, Colombia), directed by Alan Ereira, the Kogi, an indigenous people of the *Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*, locate climate change in a colonial past of Western overdevelopment. This perspective is communicated visually through graphic representations of catastrophic environmental change, as illustrated in an image of bare hills once covered by forests 20 years ago, where soil erosion has developed into muddy streams (see Figure 1). In another scene, a Kogi elder pointed to an industrially polluted river, defeated by the vision of muddy, dirty waters, as evidence of Western societies, which they call the “Young brothers”, disrupting the natural balance of the Earth.” Set in the *Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta* (A mountain range located in Colombia), the view of a once forested but now completely barren area with hardly a trace of tree, filled with debris, meaningfully represents evidence of anthropogenic climate change and environmental devastation as a legacy of colonialism (see Figure 2). The elders’ gestures and comments about the river were part of a warning regarding the implications for and consequences of climate change around the world. This scene highlights the Kogi elders’ belief in *Aluna*, a universal consciousness that connects all beings in existence. This image highlights systemic environmental trauma and devastation affecting indigenous populations; therefore, it serves as a call to action, urging us to collectively learn to recognize environmental devastation and the policies to address it as one of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 13) related to climate awareness.



Figure 1: *Barren Mountains depicted in Aluna 2012, That Were Forested 20 Years Ago.*

Scene Time: (6:36 - 1:28:56)



Figure 2: Visual Representation of how Industrial Waste contaminates the waters in Aluna 2012

Scene Time: (1:18:20 – 1:28:56)

In one dramatic scene, Kogi shamans unroll 400 kilometers of gold thread along a holy river route, tracing relationships from mountain springs to coastal mangroves, illustrating the impact of deforestation in one locale on far-off ecosystems. This ceremony, captured in sweeping aerial footage of interlinked rivers and forests, deconstructs anthropocentric assumptions, placing the Kogi as guardians of Earth (See Figure 3). For example, a shaman describes in a conversation, *"If you cut the thread, the world suffers,"* connecting local action to international climate anarchy and perfectly addressing the United Nations goal under SDG 13. Ecocritically, this is represented by Nixon's (2011) "slow violence," which emphasizes how the steady violence of environmental degradation similarly affects subaltern social groups, creating multiple and uneven effects. Aluna fosters a nuanced understanding of climate awareness through a gradual approach, combining native cosmology and ecological awareness to convey climate awareness with a call to acknowledge colonial histories in contemporary environmental crises and promote sustainable lifestyles. Although many cli- films advocate climate justice on behalf of diverse populations, Aluna's appeal for climate justice is distinctly innovative, as it emphasizes colonialism as a long-term threat to future climate change adjustments, furthermore, by Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action), emphasis on climate action that occurs in a context-sensitive, culturally recognized, and inclusive way that can be deployed through any climate justice project to guide and respond to the impacts of Climate Change Policy actions.



Figure 3: Gold Thread Ceremony Illustrating Ecological Interdependence in *Aluna* (2012)
Scene Time: (20:51 - 1:28:56)

Anote's Ark (2018, Canada/Kiribati), Matthieu Rytz's poignant portrayal of the survival threat posed by climate change to the Pacific Island republic of Kiribati will be drowned, due to rising oceans and the direct consequence of inaction from the world. The film focuses on President Anote Tong's campaign for climate refugees, highlighting the disproportionate impact on the smallest island states, which contribute the least to global emissions, and are left desolate by the effects (see Figure 4). Images of flooded homes, water pouring in and washing away beaches, vividly illustrate the physical and immediate effects of climate change, eliciting emotions and demanding action (See Figure 5). These photos highlight the disparity in the effects of climate change, where the 100,000 inhabitants of Kiribati risk displacement, while industrialized countries continue to take ineffective action. Tong's campaign, in his emotive speeches before international audiences at the UN, emphasizes the need for a global policy on behalf of refugees affected by climate change, casting their plight as a vital human rights issue. The film's close attention to the cultural practices of Kiribati, from fishing cycles to group dances, highlights what is at stake as rising waters threaten established ways of life (See Figure 6). From the ecocritical perspective, this aligns with Nixon's (2011) "slow violence" theory, in which slow environmental degradation disproportionately impacts marginalized groups. Tong's campaign defies the documentary and narrative modes, blurring them to avoid a Hollywood spectacle in favor of a realistic representation of Pacific Islanders' vulnerabilities. The documentary promotes climate awareness by relating to the human side of the refugee experience, encouraging viewers to respond to global inequities, and thus, advocating for climate justice. The documentary's focus on resettlement projects to Fiji also symbolizes hope, maintaining cultural preservation amid displacement and loss. The relevant narrative engages with counter-anthropocentric worldviews and compels action to address the historical scars of structural marginalization faced by small island states. In this way, Anote's Ark operates as an effective challenge to international responsibility and collective accountability, directly related to Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action), which urges immediate, inclusive, and equitable action to address climate change and protect



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the planet.



***Figure 4: President Aote Tong's campaign highlights the disproportionate climate impacts on low-emitting island nations.
Scene Time: (35:25 – 1:17:16)***



***Figure 5: Flooded Homes and Vanishing Coastlines: Depicting the Immediate Effects of Climate Change in Aote's Ark (2018)
Scene Time: (1:07:49 – 1:17:16)***



Figure 6: Cultural Traditions of Kiribati Undermined by Climate-Induced Displacement in *Anote's Ark* (2018)

Scene Time: (44:34 – 1:17:16)

Nila Madhab Panda's *Kadvi Hawa* (India, 2017) portrays the nexus between climate change and systemic neglect in rural India through the experiences of Mukund, a farmer in debt, and his father, a visionary blind man named Heddu, who is aware of the climate's impact. The film highlights the struggles of Nonu, a village in Rajasthan, which is experiencing a drought where increasing debts are markers of socio-economic vulnerabilities heightened by ecological disasters. One of the most evocative scenes within *Kadvi Hawa* depicts the dusty and cracked fields in Nonu village, pausing the view and focusing on the split earth and withered maize stalk, presenting a comment on the impact of prolonged drought - an experience directly aligned to current experience of climate change - on rural people's livelihoods (See Figure 6). Another affecting instance is a series where Heddu, the blind man, goes to see a loan officer, who rejects him, with dusty, barren village streets in the background highlighting institutional lack of concern. Blind Heddu is widely revered for his weather forecasting and is a narrative trope that represents marginalized local knowledge. Heddu appears in a scene huddled beneath a dead tree, predicting rainfall from wind patterns, underscoring the desperation of the community's dependence on capricious monsoons (See Figure 7). It echoes Nixon's (2011) idea of "slow violence" that encompasses the additive dimension of environmental destruction and the compounding socio-economic marginalization of vulnerable communities. The film's visual contrast, such as children playing in a dry irrigation canal, foregrounds the relationship between poverty and climate change. Unlike Hollywood-style cli-fi, *Kadvi Hawa* is grounded in the rural realities of India, making climate change an immediate personal crisis for audiences in situ. Presented through an ecocritical framework, the film also critiques the anthropocentric policy of exclusive urban development, neglect, and abandonment of rural adaptation, while raising climate awareness and exposing structural injustices. The community togetherness is also exemplified when the villagers ration drinking water in a community meeting. In this way, *Kadvi Hawa* raises awareness of climate change and takes action to contribute to broader goals in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action). SDG 13 acknowledges the significance of addressing and mitigating the impacts of climate

change in a manner that is inclusive, equitable, and timely, with a focus on enhancing the adaptive capacity of disadvantaged rural communities.



Figure 7: Drought-Stricken Fields in Nonu Village Depicting Climate-Induced Agricultural Collapse in Kadwi Hawa (2017)
Scene Time: (35:23 – 1:34:40)



Figure 8: Heddu Interpreting Natural Signs Amid Drought-Induced Scarcity in Kadwi Hawa (2017)
Scene Time: (41:40 – 1:34:40)

Table 1: Environmental Equity in Global South Cli-Fi

Film	Key Scenes	Climate Justice Scenes	Socio-Cultural context
<i>Aluna 2012</i>	Deforestation, gold thread ritual	Colonial exploitation, indigenous, marginalization	Kogi cosmology, Latin American context
<i>Anote's Ark 2018</i>	Flooded homes, UN Speeches	Global inaction, climate refugees	Pacific Islander vulnerability



<i>Kadvi 2017</i>	<i>Hawa</i>	Drought-stricken fields, debt disputes	Systemic neglect, rural poverty	Indian agrarian crisis
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Ecological Bonds in Global South Cli-Fi

Human-nature interconnectedness is a vital theme in Global South climate fiction (cli-fi) films, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between communities and their environments. These films offer insight into the symbiotic relationships between communities and their environments, recognizing how ecological disturbances can impact cultural and spiritual identities, while confronting anthropocentric views of the environment. *Aluna* 2012 represents the Kogi's gold thread ritual, establishing links throughout ecologies, suggesting unity in nature. *Anote's Ark* 2018 depicts Kiribati's ocean-dependent way of life, showcasing fishing scenes that are interrupted by rising ocean levels. *Kadvi Hawa* 2017 showcases rural India's reliance on the land through shots of barren land and the impact it has on broken connections. By applying ecocritical frameworks to the narratives of these films, as seen within Clark's (2015) Anthropocene position, the films articulate the idea that humans and the environment are dependent on each other, calling for humans to take on sustainable behaviors as well as being mindful of the realities of disruption to these relationships. By proposing these narratives, the films contribute to the global conversation about climate metrics and responsibilities, aligning with the vision of Sustainable Development Goal 13, which emphasizes the need for immediate action to counter climate change, while also raising awareness and promoting behavioral change regarding climate change.

In the film *Aluna* (2012), human action is intricately interlaced with ecological degradation and a rich indigenous understanding of climate change. The Kogi is an indigenous tribe living in the *Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta* region of Colombia, and its people consider themselves "Elder Brothers," guardians of the Earth. From their point of view, environmental degradation is the consequence of the "Younger Brothers" (Western societies) being anthropocentric. This belief is enacted in visions in which the Kogi are performing to "heal" the world, asserting that what humans do, such as logging and drilling, causes the natural world to develop illnesses, including unstable weather, such as a rise in temperature due to deforestation and melting of glaciers that also result a rise of sea water. In a ceremony scene, Kogi shamans perform a ritual in a holy river, aiming to address the pollution caused by upstream logging, which is destabilizing the spiritual and natural balance of their home (See Figure 8).



Figure 9: Kogi Shamans Performing a River Ritual to Address Ecological Imbalance in Aluna (2012)

Scene Time: (1:22:28 – 1:28:57)

Aerial photography of linked ecosystems, like the dense forest giving way to torn, deforested hillsides, supports the Kogi holistic vision. These images, showing the Sierra Nevada's rivers running from mountains to ocean, express their vision of an interconnecting 'gold thread' that ties everything together. In a dramatic series of shots, the camera follows the course of a river, revealing its pollution from industrial outflows and representing the worldwide ecological damage (See Figure 9). This imagery aligns with ecocritical frameworks, particularly Clark's (2011) Anthropocene perspective, which challenges anthropocentric views by emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living things. Kogi's story, visually supplemented, also portrays people as caretakers, not owners of nature, creating an urge in viewers to consider their environmental footprint. The narrative in the film aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13, which calls for building our responsibility to the environment and acting before climate change victimizes us.



The water has been sucked away

Figure 10: Aerial Imagery Depicting the Interconnected Ecosystems of the Sierra Nevada in Aluna (2012)

Scene Time: (57:20 – 1:28:56)



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The film's narrative promotes climate awareness through the cross-cultural fusion of local knowledge and environmental warnings, as seen in scenes where Kogi elders describe how forest destruction isolates the world from the "threads" of life and leads to climate chaos. This contrasts with Western cli-fi, which utilizes scientific facts to provide a culture-based appeal for action. By highlighting the Kogi's resistance to ecological harm, *Aluna* aligns with Nixon's (2011) concept of "slow violence," which exposes the gradual harm inflicted on marginalized communities and inspires viewers to adopt sustainable practices rooted in respect for nature's interconnected systems.

In *Anote's Ark* (2018), Kiribati's reliance on the sea is brought to life through images of fishing, illustrating how increased sea levels interfere with cultural practices that are integral to the country's identity. The documentary film portrays the Pacific Island nation's survival crisis as sea level rise, due to climate change, endangering its low-lying atolls. Fishing, a vital element of Kiribati's livelihood and culture, is the central theme of numerous scenes, underscoring the populace's profound affection for the sea. A somber sequence, for instance, shows I-Kiribati fishermen casting nets from wooden outrigger craft, their synchronized actions evoking centuries-old practices (See Figure 10). The film lingers over the blue waters filled with fish, symbolizing the sea as a giver of life. However, subsequent scenes starkly juxtapose this harmony with instances of waves encroaching upon fishing grounds, making them inaccessible. One of the most striking images is that of a fisherman knee-deep in seawater, where his village's traditional fishing ground once was, highlighting the loss of cultural and economic tradition.

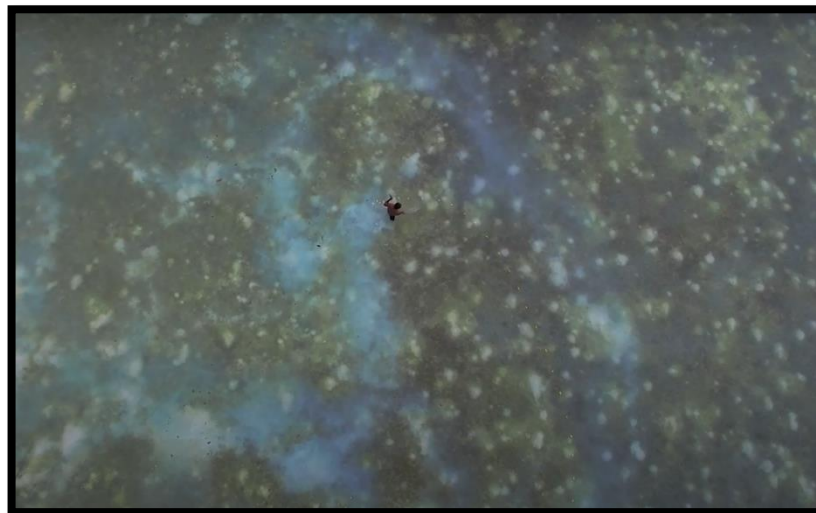


Figure 11: I-Kiribati Fishermen Practicing Centuries-Old Traditions Amid Rising Sea Threats in Anote's Ark (2018)

Scene Time: (4:11 – 1:17:16)

These images highlight the way increasing sea levels, fueled by global inaction, jeopardize the lifestyle of Kiribati, resonating with Nixon's (2011) theory of "slow violence," which sees gradual environmental damage affecting marginalized groups disproportionately. The fishing scenes in the film, interspersed with community activities such as singing and storytelling, highlight cultural practices bound to the sea, now threatened by flooding. For example, a scene depicting the old teaching children fishing techniques is juxtaposed with imagery of coastal



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erosion, which threatens to break up knowledge transmission (See Figure 13). From an ecocritical perspective, the film also illustrates Buell's (2001) concept of 'toxic discourse,' highlighting the cultural and human consequences of environmental degradation. By exhibiting these disruptions, Anote's Ark fosters climate awareness and encourages audiences to consider the human consequences of ecological disruption, with the most tangible example being climate justice, particularly concerning small island states that face rising sea levels and the threat of total loss of their landmass. Hence, the film theme goes parallel with the concept of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13.3, which reads:

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by taking action, promoting capacity-building, and raising awareness on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning (United Nations, 2025).



Figure 12: Elders Passing Fishing Knowledge as Coastal Erosion Disrupts Cultural Continuity in Anote's Ark (2018)

Scene Time: (45:39 – 1:17:116)

In Kadvi Hawa (2017), the farmer's dependency on land takes center stage, with barren fields acting as indicators of intense, fractured human-nature relations caused by drought induced by climate change. The film is about a poor farmer in a rural Indian village whose livelihood is agriculturally based, with a relationship now closely pinched by natural calamities. Pans of parched, cracked fields fill the eye, starkly illustrating the fertility of the land to bear crops. A prime example is a scene early in the film where the farmer, Heddu, walks across a parched field, his boots kicking up dust as he surveys withered maize stalks, the visual symbol of the ruptured relationship between nature and man. It is such imagery that highlights the desperation of rain-dependent rural communities, whose existence is now threatened by irregular weather patterns (See Figure 12).



Figure 13: Withered Crops and Dusty Fields Reflecting Rural Climate Vulnerability in Kadvi Hawa (2017)

Scene Time: (58:52 – 1:34:40)

Another scene depicts a moment when Heddu is praying in the middle of an empty wasteland, representing his spiritual and practical dependence on the earth, now turning against him through a protracted drought (See Figure 13). These representations relate to Nixon's (2011) notion of "slow violence," which involves the slow, yet persistent, degradation of the land by humans, resulting in subsequent economic vulnerability. The desolate images of empty irrigation canals and parched landscapes, distant from memories of good times linked to village gossip, depict this broken relationship with nature. Ecocritically, it establishes a narrative that exists outside of ecopolitical reality, acting as an allegory of Buell's (2001) "toxic discourse" of cultural and institutional neglect, which further isolates and perpetuates suffering in rural communities. At the same time, the film aligns with the objectives of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action), which emphasizes that climate change solutions must be inclusive and place-based to bolster rural resilience. By presenting the local climate crisis from the perspective of farmers, Kadvi Hawa invites audiences to reflect on the climate crisis stemming from the broken human-nature relationship and proposes responsible agricultural policies to address climate change.





Figure 14: Heddu Praying in a Desolate Wasteland, Symbolizing Spiritual and Ecological Distress in Kadvi Hawa (2017)

Scene Time: (27:41 – 1:34:40)

Table 2: Ecological Bonds in Global South Cli-Fi

Film	Resilience Manifestation	Cultural Elements
<i>Aluna</i>	Preservation of Kogi knowledge	Rituals, oral traditions
<i>Anote's Ark</i>	Relocation of Traditions	Dance, community bonds
<i>Kadvi Halwa</i>	Persistence in farming	Community solidarity

Cultural Resilience in Global South Cli-Fi

Cultural resilience emerges as a notable theme in climate fiction (cli-fi) films from the Global South, as marginalized communities grapple with climate crises while maintaining their own identities. These films depict cultural practices as adaptive mechanisms for communities as they confront both environmental and systemic threats. In the documentary film *Aluna*, indigenous ecological knowledge is evident in Kogi rituals, which they identified as Earth-healing (such as the Kogi action involving their rituals). In *Anote's Ark*, we see Kiribati's te bua toro dance performed in a public square in Fiji as a cultural continuity that demonstrates survivance, juxtaposed with those forcibly displaced by climate phenomena. Both of these narratives have productive tensions with the objectives of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action), calling for culturally integrative approaches to climate action that deliberately include processes to prioritize culturally vibrant and informed indigenous knowledge systems and community-embodied initiatives. In the same vein, the film *Kadvi Hawa*, set in rural India, presents solidarity as the community comes together in a public square and shares sparse resources in the same process. Ecocritical lenses, such as Nixon's (2011) "slow violence" framework, represent communities as vulnerable yet position them as resilient agents for cultural preservation and climate consciousness. In effectively engaging in the storytelling process, these films recognize and contribute to global efforts toward SDG 13 by fostering climate resilience through cultural adaptation, Indigenous knowledge, and collective human agency in the face of global environmental crises.

In the documentary, *Aluna*, the Kogi people illustrate their ongoing battle against Western incursion by continually preserving traditional knowledge through communal rituals that reference their role as stewards of their environment. The Kogi are an indigenous people living in the *Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*, and their efforts are in direct reaction against the environmental harm by Western industrialization and therefore colonialism, because indigenes view industrialization and degradation of land as colonization. A notable scene depicts a group ritual, in which multiple Kogi shamans (Mamas) performed an offering at their sacred site, chanting in their native language and attempting to balance the environment as they mourned the loss of ecosystems due to forest degradation. This ceremony, set against a rich backdrop of verdant forests and ravaged hill slopes, represents their devotion to indigenous ways over Western,



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exploitative methods. Another illustration in which older Kogi instructs younger Kogis to read signs of nature, such as cloud formations, affirming traditional knowledge as a form of resistance (See Figure 14). From an ecocritical perspective, this connects with Nixon's (2011) notion of "slow violence," placing indigenous resilience against slow violence within its context. By representing these rituals, Aluna creates a context for climate awareness that centers on United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action), acknowledging the importance of engaging with indigenous knowledge and community leadership in addressing climate change. Ultimately, the film asks everyone to appreciate indigenous knowledge, leading to more sustainable ways of life. Positioned at the center of all this is the Kogi's resistance as an important invitation to protect not only the environment but also all forms of cultural resistance.



Figure 15: Elders Transmitting Ecological Knowledge to Younger Generations in Aluna (2012)
Scene Time: (6:55 – 1:28:56)

In Anote's Ark, the Kiribati people face the existential challenge of sea-level rise by relocating their traditions to Fiji, with dance numbers and scenes vigorously representing cultural continuity in the face of climate-induced displacement. As a Pacific Island country with low elevation, Kiribati will be submerged, compelling its people to keep their cultural heritage elsewhere. A poignant scene depicts I-Kiribati families performing traditional dances on a Fijian shore, their rhythmic movements and vibrant chants echoing Kiribati's ocean-centric identity. It is filmed under a setting sun with waves lapping nearby, capturing the community's effort to maintain cultural practices despite losing their homeland. For instance, a specific dance, the "te bua toro", is illustrated with women adorned in woven skirts dancing to ancestor songs that symbolize permanence and continuity (See Figure 15). Another is a Fijian village scene, where older people are observed instructing children in Kiribati songs, ensuring that culture is transmitted regardless of migration. They illustrate the community's determination to preserve identity despite the disruptions of climate change, under Nixon's (2011) "slow violence" theory, where gradual environmental degradation threatens marginalized cultures. The film employs practices of toxic discourse ("increasingly central to [cultural] loss") (Buell, 2001) to address global inaction on climate change; through that framework, it examines the cultural loss that results from environmental degradation. By using dance as a form of resistance, Anote's Ark



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raises awareness of climate change relations and highlights the importance of supporting small island nations in their efforts to defend their cultural identity in the face of a growing environmental catastrophe. The film provides a response to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action) under a collective lens of responsibility and urgency, addressing climate action while holding vulnerable communities and cultural identity at the forefront of its analysis and storytelling.



Figure 16: Women Performing the “Te Bua Toro” Dance as a Symbol of Cultural Continuity in Anote’s Ark (2018)

Scene Time: (15:18 – 1:17:16)

In Kadvi Hawa, the farmer's determination during unrelenting drought is a strong demonstration of resilience, while the rural community coming together highlights collective survival in India. The film depicts Heddu, a blind farmer from a village, whose tenacity in keeping his family going in the face of barren crops is a testament to the resilience of agrarian communities. One of the most critical scenes involves working relentlessly to pay the debt, despite being blind under the hot sun, with his sweat-drenched face and callout representing his determination to the land, despite nature's betrayal. This relentlessness contrasts with arid fields, where cracked soil and withered crops visually represent the starkness of climate change-facilitated drought, in keeping with Nixon's (2011) concept of "slow violence," wherein slow-paced environmental degradation exacerbates rural hardships. Gatherings in the community again underscore communal survival, as seen in a poignant scene where villagers consume precious water from a standard pot at an evening gathering, their whispers about crop failure and loans demonstrating solidarity (See Figure 16). From an ecological perspective, these elements are critiquing anthropocentric policies that overlook rural India. They engage with Buell's (2001) toxic discourse', working to highlight structural environmental injustices. Kadvi Hawa utilizes the lived experiences of rural communities to cultivate climate awareness among its audience and prompt them to internalize the struggles of marginalized groups, thereby raising awareness for systemic change. This included advocating for equal agricultural policies to enhance collective resistance against climate change. In this way, the text contributes to the broader aims of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action). This goal recognizes the importance of comminuted, intersectional, and grassroots methods of responding to climate action,



acknowledging that marginalized groups bear the brunt of climate change's impacts.



Figure 17: Villagers Gather as Conversations Reflect Growing Debt and Economic Insecurity in Kadwi Hawa (2017)
Scene time: (25:18 – 1:34:40)

Table 3: Cultural Resilience in Global South Cli-Fi

Film	Key Scenes	Resilience Manifestation	Cultural Elements
<i>Aluna</i>	Kogi shamans perform Earth-healing rituals at a sacred site; elders teach youth to interpret cloud patterns.	Preservation of traditional knowledge against Western exploitation	Indigenous rituals, oral traditions, and Kogi cosmology
<i>Anote's Ark</i>	I-Kiribati families perform the bua toro dance on the Fijian shore; elders teach Kiribati songs to children in Fiji.	Relocation of cultural practices to Fiji amid displacement	Traditional dance, songs, and community bonds
<i>Kadvi Halwa</i>	Villagers share water at a nighttime communal meeting; women sing folk songs under a banyan tree to support Nonu.	Collective survival through community solidarity and persistence	Folk songs, village gatherings, and agrarian traditions

Significance and Findings

The results illustrate how Global South cli-fi movies effectively represent climate change via culturally particular frames that elicit emotional and cognitive connections. Climate justice proves to be the overarching theme, answering the first research question regarding how these movies represent climate change as a socio-cultural phenomenon. In *Aluna*, a moment where Kogi Shamans gesture towards a polluted river, murky with industrial discharge, serves as a critical



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commentary on colonial exploitation, connecting ecological damage to past oppression and aligning with postcolonial ecocriticism (Nixon, 2011). Anote's Ark highlights worldwide inequalities through images of inundated Kiribati houses, as President Anote Tong's address to the UN underscores the abandonment of small island nations by industrialized nations. Kadvi Hawa exposes rural India's vulnerability in a sequence where Nonu, a farmer, is denied loans due to barren fields, connecting drought with economic marginalization.

Human-nature interconnectedness, as addressed in the second research question, underscores the ecological narratives of the films. Aluna's aerial shots of rivers flowing from mountains to deforested slopes frame humans as stewards, challenging anthropocentric views through the Kogi's 'gold thread' ritual, which connects ecosystems. Anote's Ark illustrates the ocean's role in Kiribati's identity through a fishing scene disrupted by rising waters, showing cultural loss. Kadvi Hawa's barren lands, in which Nonu is compelled to dig a dry well, represent the shattered harmony with nature, emphasizing agrarian dependency. These trends, represented in the Film, point to ecological interdependence, with ecocritical perspectives magnifying this (Buell, 2001). Cultural resilience, addressing the third research question of public engagement, demonstrates the community's strength. Aluna's Kogi rituals, including ceremonies with offerings to the Earth, preserve indigenous knowledge. Anote's Ark's te bua toro dance in Fiji represents cultural continuity. These results are consistent with ecocriticism, promoting climate awareness by giving value to marginalized viewpoints.

An unexpected finding was the prominence of spiritual narratives in *Aluna*, which prioritizes indigenous cosmology over scientific discourse, contrasting with the science-driven cli-fi analyzed by Trexler (2015). This may stem from the Kogi's cultural context, where spiritual ecology supersedes Western frameworks, suggesting a need for broader ecocritical models. Another surprise was the limited explicit reference to climate activism in *Kadvi Hawa*, despite its focus on rural struggles. This could be a manifestation of the complex socio-economic priorities that typify India, where immediate survival often takes precedence over advocacy, a factor that Nixon (2011) does not clarify. These findings highlight the diversity of stories in the Global South, underscoring the need to give further attention to the cultural contexts that influence climate fiction (cli-fi).

This study explored how Global South cli-fi films present climate change in a socio-cultural context (Goal 1), how ecocriticism facilitates an interpretation of climate change (Objective 2), and what this signifies for climate justice and engagement (Objective 3). Firstly, the films' attention to marginalized voices met the aim of providing a space for marginalized or underrepresented narratives, plus the survey's details demonstrate real-world possibilities and impacts consistent with the aspirational goal of increasing climate awareness

Conclusion

The study examined Arthouse and independent climate fiction (cli-fi) films from the Global South (*Aluna* [2012, Colombia], *Anote's Ark* [2018, Canada/Kiribati], *Kadvi Hawa* [2017, India]), and how they contributed to climate consciousness using ecocritical frameworks. The analysis produced three key themes: climate injustice, human-nature interconnectedness, and cultural resilience. *Aluna* presents the Kogi indigenous people's understanding of climate change as a result of colonial exploitation and appropriation. *Anote's Ark* explores the climate



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refugees of Kiribati, documenting the unequal impacts of climate change on the island nation. *Kadvi Hawa* highlights the ignorance of climate change's drought in rural India. Collectively, the films extend cultural narratives into an urgent realm of ecological discourses that can impact both emotionally and intellectually. The research focused on three research questions: (1) How do these films depict climate change and associated socio-cultural effects? (2) How does ecocriticism offer additional interpretative value when seeking to promote climate consciousness? (3) What are the implications for climate justice and public engagement? In answer to research question one, the films depicted climate change through culturally situated lenses: *Aluna* through indigenous cosmology and perspective, *Anote's Ark* through displacement, and *Kadvi Hawa* through systemic neglect regarding rural economic struggles. For the third question, the films' emphasis on marginalized voices fosters public engagement, as evidenced by the survey results, encouraging viewers to advocate for equitable climate solutions. The study's objectives: demonstrating how these films and ecocriticism foster climate consciousness and amplify underrepresented narratives, are achieved to some extent. No hypotheses were tested, as the study is qualitative; however, the findings align to highlight the contributions of the Global South to climate discourse. Notably, the research aligns with the broader objectives of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action), which emphasizes the urgent need for inclusive, culturally grounded responses to combat climate change, integrate indigenous knowledge, and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities most affected by environmental crises.

This research makes significant contributions to both academic and practical domains. Academically, it addresses a critical gap in cli-fi and ecocritical scholarship, which often prioritizes Western narratives (Trexler, 2015; Johns-Putra, 2016). By focusing on Global South arthouse films, the study expands the scope of cli-fi research, integrating perspectives from indigenous, Pacific Islander, and rural communities. Ghosh's (2016) calls for non-Western climate stories resonates with this research, extending Nixon's (2011) work on slow violence in cinematic representations. Employing ecocritical readings, such as those by Buell (2001) and Clark (2015), enhances theoretical understandings of how films challenge anthropocentric approaches and propose paradigms of climate justice. In practical terms, it lends weight to empirical evidence supporting the potential for Global South cinema to shape perceptions, as evidenced by Schneider-Mayerson et al. (2020) in their analysis of cli-fi's relationship with environmental behavior. In South Asia, where climate vulnerabilities are increasingly severe (notably, Pakistan's recurring floods), this now provides examples of local advocacy approaches to addressing climate change and driving community engagement. These examples are especially significant in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action), which stresses the responsibility of the global community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve climate adaptation efforts, and ensure that the voices of marginalized, climate-vulnerable populations are included in policy development, cultural narratives, and practical climate solutions. Regarding policy, the research highlights the importance of inclusive climate stories that uplift and center the voices of marginalized communities, while supporting policies for improved global climate communication.



Recommendations

Future research can expand the sample to include more Global South cli-fi films, particularly from underrepresented regions like South Asia, where Pakistan's emerging cinema could offer insights into climate narratives (e.g., flood-related stories). Empirical studies on audience reception, conducted through surveys or focus groups, would strengthen claims about public engagement. Leveraging tools like SPSS for statistical analysis, as permitted by the researcher's expertise, would enhance these claims. Integrating more literary works, such as Pakistan-based cli-fi novels, could provide comparative insights. Policy recommendations include supporting Global South filmmakers through funding and platforms to amplify marginalized voices, as well as enhancing climate communication. Educational initiatives could incorporate these films into curricula to foster climate awareness among students, particularly in vulnerable regions. Such initiatives align with the objectives of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action), which emphasizes the need to promote climate education, support inclusive storytelling, and ensure vulnerable populations are equipped with the knowledge to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Future research into the convergence of cli-fi and digital ecologies, such as streaming platforms, may also offer new ways to engage with the public.

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