Proceedings of ICEMGD 2025 Symposium: Innovating in Management and Economic Development
DOI: 10.54254/2754-1169/2025.LH24180

The Role of Technology in Combating Climate Change

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Abstract: Climate change has been one of the most pressing issues of this century, and it requires urgent and concerted global action. In the meantime, technology has become a critical tool in mitigating and adapting to its impacts. This essay, through a method of literature review, explores how various technological innovations, such as renewable energy, carbon capture, artificial intelligence, and smart infrastructure, play a role in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, fostering climate resilience, and promoting energy transitions. Through case studies and secondary research, this paper demonstrates how a wide range of technological innovations help reduce carbon emissions and strengthen climate resilience. The findings underlined the importance of technological innovations in transitioning to a low-carbon economy while also revealing some existing barriers such as high cost, policy gaps, and social resistance. Finally, the essay argues that global cooperation, a strong policy framework, and equitable use of technological solutions are essential for further success.

Keywords: climate change, climate mitigation and adaptation, technology, energy transition, artificial intelligence

1. Introduction

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of the 21st century. Since the late nineteenth century, global surface temperatures have risen by about 1.1°C due to increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide, now exceeding 420 parts per million [1]. If emissions continue unchecked, the planet could warm by 2.5°C by century's end, triggering more intense heatwaves, droughts, rising seas, and extreme weather events. Regions such as the Sahel, Australia, and South Asia are already experiencing such impacts. Delayed mitigation will increase economic costs as adaptation becomes more difficult and expensive.

Historically, technology has contributed to both economic growth and emissions. Today, it must serve as a transformative tool for climate action. This paper argues that technology is indispensable in combating climate change through mitigation and adaptation. Drawing on secondary research and real-world case studies—including Denmark's wind revolution [2], AI-driven flood warnings in Asia [3], and Norway's carbon capture initiative [4]—this paper explores how innovation supports climate goals and informs future policy and investment.

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2. Categories of climate technologies

2.1. Mitigation technologies

2.1.1. Renewable energy

The key to climate mitigation is transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy. For example, solar photovoltaics (PV), onshore and offshore wind, hydro, and geothermal power can produce electricity with minimal emissions. In many regions, the costs of these energies have dropped significantly, with solar PV often cheaper than coal or gas plants [5]. Moreover, innovations such as perovskite solar cells are reaching new efficiency thresholds, but they still face challenges regarding material stability. Wind energy has also made significant progress through offshore wind farms. Countries like China, the United States, and Germany have been at the forefront of wind energy capacity. Similarly, hydro and geothermal power offer stable electricity in regions with suitable resources. Geothermal plants, particularly in volcanic regions such as Iceland, deliver continuous and renewable power with minimal emissions. Despite high initial costs, the lifetime of these installations and lower operational expenses often yields considerable returns on investment.

2.1.2. Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS)

There are certain sectors like cement, steel and chemicals are "hard to abate" due to the reason that direct electrification is impractical and costly. Under these circumstances, Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) addresses this problem by capturing CO_2 at point sources or directly removing it from the air. Once captured, CO_2 can be injected into geological formations for long-term storage or converted into products like synthetic fuels for reusing it in industrial processes [6-8].

However, CCUS faces challenges related to cost and scalability. Large-scale deployment requires vast infrastructure for transport and storage, and there are queries about the long-term stability of CO_2 repositories. Moreover, the energy required to capture, compress and transport CO_2 may reduce the net benefit of CCUS if not sourced from low-carbon electricity.

2.1.3. Energy efficiency

Energy efficiency addresses the demand-side problem by reducing overall consumption. For example, real estate sectors might represent a major opportunity: advanced insulation and intelligent heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) controls can cut energy use drastically [9]. In the transport sector, electric vehicles (EVs) are more efficient than combustion engines. Industrial efficiency, through improved motors, process optimization, and waste heat recovery, can also reduce emissions significantly. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that improving energy efficiency could achieve nearly half the emissions reductions needed by 2040 if widely implemented [9].

2.2. Adaptation technologies

2.2.1. Climate resilient infrastructure

A substantial amount of carbon dioxide has already been emitted into the atmosphere and affects the climate, necessitating the adaptation measures. For adaptation, infrastructure must be upgraded to tolerate extreme events such as flooding and storms. For example, Singapore has reinforced drainage systems to accommodate heavier rainfall. These climate-resilient structures integrate "nature-based solution,"such as preserving mangroves or coral reefs to buffer coastal zones. Building codes are also adaptive. In flood-prone regions, new homes may be elevated, while cities prone to heatwaves explore reflective building materials to moderate urban temperatures.

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2.2.2. Agricultural technologies

Agriculture is very vulnerable to climate change. For example, climate change may result in extreme weather events such as fluctuating rainfall, extreme heat, and shifting pest patterns, which may significantly impact the food supply. Technologies like soil sensors, GPS-enabled drones, and AI-based analytics can help farmers optimize irrigation and fertilizer use. For example, drip irrigation can save water in arid regions. In livestock systems, adapted cooling designs or selective breeding for heat tolerance mitigate stress on animals. These innovations help maintain yields and food security even as extreme weathers occur [6].

2.2.3. Disaster early warning systems

Rising global temperatures have also led to increasing natural disasters like floods, droughts, and wildfires. AI-driven early warning systems use remote sensing and computational models to predict events more accurately. For example, Google's Flood Forecasting Initiative applies machine learning to hydrological and precipitation data for river basins in India and Bangladesh, providing communities critical time for evacuation [3]. Wildfire detection also has similar frameworks – analyzing satellite imagery and real-time weather to anticipate fire outbreaks. Early warnings can drastically reduce casualties and economic losses, demonstrating how adaptation technologies save lives and support livelihoods.

2.3. Enabling technologies

As technology evolves, emerging innovations like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and blockchain are increasingly supporting climate governance through both mitigation and adaptation strategies.

AI has become a critical tool in recent decades by processing vast datasets to optimize energy systems, detect inefficiencies in buildings and industrial processes, and enhance climate modeling. Its predictive capabilities allow for more accurate projections of rainfall patterns and temperature anomalies, which can guide infrastructure planning and disaster preparedness. Moreover, AI accelerates the development of new materials and clean technologies through machine learning, driving innovation in climate solutions.

Meanwhile, blockchain offers transparency, traceability, and security in climate-related transactions. It underpins carbon credit trading systems by ensuring each credit is verifiable and resistant to fraud. Blockchain-enabled smart contracts automate and verify payments for emissions reductions, while supply chain tracking tools can assure consumers that goods such as palm oil or timber are sourced sustainably. Although blockchain's energy-intensive "proof-of-work" mechanism has raised environmental concerns, the adoption of more sustainable consensus models like "proof-of-stake" has significantly reduced electricity consumption, making the technology more compatible with climate goals.

Together, these technologies present promising opportunities for strengthening climate action, improving accountability, and fostering innovation in both environmental monitoring and sustainable development.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Case study: Denmark's wind energy

Denmark has offered a representative example of the scalability of renewable power development. Supported by policies and R&D investment, the wind industry in Denmark has grown dramatically. By 2020, over 50% of Denmark's electricity will be derived from wind and solar [2]. This is further

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expanded to the coastal area through the offshore wind farm in the North Sea. Denmark's success shows that high penetration of renewables is feasible with robust grid management, strong policy frameworks, and public support.

3.2. AI in climate modelling and early warning

Google has been at the forefront of the climate adaptation area. Its Flood Forecasting Initiative in South Asia provides an example of how AI can improve disaster resilience [3]. By combining machine learning with hydrological models and satellite imagery, vulnerable communities can receive alerts days before a flood. This system has managed to help save lives and properties in India and Bangladesh. This initiative also expands to other countries, which signifies the scalability of AI-based adaptation. It illustrates the value of partnerships between private tech firms, government agencies, and local stakeholders.

3.3. Norway's Northern Lights CCS projects

Norway's Northern Lights CCS network offers an example of decarbonizing the hard-to-abate industries [4]. Captured CO_2 from cement or waste-to-energy facilities is shipped and stored beneath the North Sea. Although the technology is expensive and requires large-scale financing, it addresses the problem for some emissions sources that are not easily electrified. Moreover, through a shared infrastructure model, Norway aims to reduce costs and potentially expand the network to other European industrial sites. The project symbolizes a serious attempt at large-scale CCS, but its ultimate success also depends on supportive policies, carbon pricing, and expanding capacity.

3.4. Failure or limitations: the Solyndra example

While previous sections highlighted successful cases in climate-tech adaptation and mitigation, not all ventures in this space lead to positive outcomes. A notable example is Solyndra, a U.S.-based solar startup that filed for bankruptcy in 2011 [1]. Solyndra developed cylindrical thin-film solar panels that were initially seen as a cutting-edge alternative to traditional flat panels. The company secured over $500 million in federal loan guarantees and was considered a flagship of the Obama administration's green energy push.

However, several factors contributed to Solyndra's downfall. First, the global solar market experienced a significant price drop due to rapidly declining costs of crystalline silicon panels, especially from Chinese manufacturers. Solyndra's innovative but expensive design could not compete with these lower-cost alternatives. Second, much of Solyndra's financial model relied on continued government support. The shift in political sentiment and increased scrutiny over federal spending on clean-tech investments added further pressure. Lastly, Solyndra scaled production just as the global financial crisis hit, tightening credit markets and weakening demand. The company also bet on high raw silicon prices to maintain its cost advantage—a gamble that failed when prices fell sharply.

This case illustrates three key limitations in the climate-tech landscape. First is market volatility—even promising technologies can be disrupted by global supply chain shifts or aggressive price competition. Second is dependency on policy—overreliance on public funding or favorable regulation makes ventures vulnerable to political changes. Third is technology risk—not all innovations scale efficiently or align with the pace of competing technological advancements.

Despite Solyndra's failure, the broader solar energy sector continued to thrive. In fact, the bankruptcy underscored the importance of market-driven cost efficiency and sparked important discussions about more effective and responsible public investment strategies. It led to the development of improved funding models and more rigorous due diligence frameworks for climate-

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tech startups. In this sense, Solyndra's collapse wasn't just a failure—it became a catalyst for maturation in the green tech investment landscape. It served as a reminder to innovators, investors, and policymakers alike that economic viability must accompany innovation to ensure long-term success in addressing climate change.

3.5. Key findings

These examples demonstrate that renewables and efficiency solutions are already practical on a large scale and can reduce emissions cost-effectively [5,10]. Digital technologies significantly support both the progress of climate mitigation and adaptation. Meanwhile, projects in CCS show opportunities for high-emission sectors resistant to simple electrification. However, technology alone cannot resolve climate change—it requires policy support, financing, and societal acceptance to continuously flourish. With all these elements, technological interventions can transform energy systems, reduce climate risks, and lead a pathway to net-zero emissions.

4. Discussion

4.1. Challenge and limitations

Despite rapid advancements in climate technologies, several challenges persist. Economic and financial barriers often hinder large-scale projects. Cutting-edge solutions, such as green hydrogen, advanced carbon capture, or long-duration energy storage, remain expensive and capital-intensive. This presents a challenge, especially for those developing countries, as this requires large scale of financing. [7,9].

Technological constraints also slow the pace of the low-carbon transition. While solar, wind, and energy efficiency are widely feasible, other approaches (for instance, carbon capture, utilization, and storage, or direct air capture) remain early-stage and require substantial R&D to achieve commercialization [4,6]. Moreover, many emerging solutions depend on finite resources (e.g., rare metals in batteries), raising concerns over long-term supply and sustainability.

Social acceptance poses another challenge. Communities may resist the deployment of wind farms, pipeline routes, or new industrial sites (NIMBYism). Equity concerns exacerbate these issues: Low-income regions often lack the financial, technical, or institutional capacity to adopt climate technologies quickly, potentially widening the development gap [9].

Geographical and societal disparities may further present challenges. A solution effective in one region, such as coastal barriers in the Netherlands, may prove inapplicable to other tropical nations with distinct climate threats. Similarly, negative-emission options like BECCS raise questions about land use and biodiversity, showing that technology is no panacea when ecosystems and livelihoods are at stake [6]. Recognizing these limitations is essential for realistic strategies: different locales will require tailored mixes of mitigation, adaptation, and enabling technologies.

4.2. Policy recommendations

Governments should implement supportive policies such as subsidies, tax incentives, and public procurement programs to lower the upfront costs of renewables and energy efficiency measures. Robust building codes, efficiency standards, and investments in infrastructure like EV charging networks and modernized grids are also vital.

International collaboration is critical. Developed nations must fulfill climate finance commitments to support clean tech in emerging economies. Initiatives like the UNFCCC's Technology Mechanism and joint research programs foster technology transfer and harmonize standards, accelerating global adoption.

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Private sector engagement is essential for rapid scaling. Public-private partnerships, carbon pricing, and climate risk disclosures incentivize innovation and direct capital toward sustainable solutions. Corporate net-zero pledges can transform supply chains and influence global markets.

Finally, raising public awareness supports behavior change and social acceptance. Community-based programs, participatory planning, and educational initiatives foster trust and help households see tangible benefits, like reduced energy costs and healthier environments.

Together, these recommendations create a synergistic policy ecosystem where government leadership, global cooperation, private innovation, and public engagement work toward a shared climate agenda.

5. Conclusion

Climate change is an urgent existential challenge, yet the analyses in this essay suggest that technology holds a central key to addressing it. From Denmark's wind dominance to Norway's pioneering CCS project, and from AI-driven flood forecasting in Asia to the future promise of green hydrogen, we see how targeted innovations cut emissions and build resilience. Critically, such technologies do not operate in isolation: they require strong government frameworks, adequate finance, public acceptance, and international collaboration.

However, one limitation of the essay is the lack of extensive quantitative data or cost-benefit analyses. Without rigorous numerical modeling or empirical case evaluations, it can be challenging to determine the precise economic viability and real-world applicability of certain technologies. In future research, the author plans to incorporate in-depth data analysis, scenario modeling, and comparative metrics to better inform policymakers and stakeholders on the most effective technology pathways.

Although technology alone cannot "solve" climate change, it is the key in any viable mitigation and adaptation strategy. With integrated efforts—policy alignment, global cooperation, robust data analyses, and continuous innovation—these tools can support us toward a stable climate and a sustainable future for all.

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