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16<sup>th</sup> Eric Wolf Lecture

# Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Climate Change: Some Anthropological Questions

**Akhil Gupta** (Department of Anthropology, UCLA)

24.10.2023, 19:00 Uhr  
Kleiner Festsaal,  
Universität Wien



# ABSTRACT

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Depending on your perspective, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is either going to save the world or destroy it. In this talk, I look at the promise and perils of using AI in the arena of climate change through an analysis of the energy and infrastructural sectors. AI can help mitigate climate change in different ways but also enables the main actors of the carbon economy, including the tech companies, to promote misconceptions about climate change for their own benefit. AI “solutions” to the climate crisis are ultimately dependent on the categories in which data is collected for algorithmic operations. What are the implications for AI of the anthropological truism that different cultures and societies classify the world in different ways? How would a postcolonial and decolonial AI challenge the basic presuppositions on which solutions to the climate crisis are being thought?

## AKHIL GUPTA

is a professor of social and cultural anthropology at UCLA, working on questions of artificial intelligence, transnational capitalism, infrastructure, and corruption. His research projects have led him from studying agriculture to state development agencies to multinational corporations. By combining cultural and sociological analyses of institutions and social life with questions raised by postcolonial theory, he uses rigorous and intensive ethnographic research as a basis to rethink some major questions in social theory dealing with space, place, and temporality. His publications include *Red Tape* (2011), *The Promise of Infrastructure* (2018, co-edited with Nikhil Anand and Hannah Appel), *The Anthropology of Corruption* (2018, co-edited with Sarah Muir). His forthcoming book on the outsourcing industry in India is titled *Future Tense* (co-authored with Purnima Mankekar).



The IFK will host a discussion with Akhil Gupta the following day:

25.10.2023, 5pm @ Reichsratsstraße 17/6th floor, 1010 Vienna

Registration: [registration@ifk.ac.at](mailto:registration@ifk.ac.at)

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