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AnthillHacks 2024: ReMedia - Rethink, Reimagine, Redefine

Date: 20th - 31st Dec 2024

Introduction

Janastu has been dedicated to empowering low-literate and semi-literate communities, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. Grounded in the principles of decentralization, Janastu reimagines technology as a tool for freedom, collaboration, and empowerment. At the heart of this vision is AnthillHacks, a unique gathering where artists, technologists, environmentalists, and community leaders collaborate to solve real-world challenges through creativity and innovation.

Since 2015, AnthillHacks has celebrated inclusivity by bridging diverse worlds: urban and rural, women and non-binary individuals, the digitally literate and the low-literate. Participants live, work, and create together in a unique environment, fostering collaboration and sparking new ideas. This year's theme ReMedia, is a call to rethink, reimagine, and redefine art, crafts, technology, and media to create sustainable, decentralized solutions for the communities we serve.

Rethinking Art & Crafts

The global obsession with profit-driven systems has fueled consumerism and the rise of fast fashion, producing synthetic, non-biodegradable materials that contribute to pollution, waste, and climate change. Industries driven by fast fashion accelerate air pollution, chemical runoff, and carbon emissions, becoming significant contributors to global warming.

In contrast, rural communities possess generational knowledge of traditional crafts and local materials that are inherently sustainable and eco-friendly. These crafts provide an alternative to mass-produced goods, offering solutions that are both environmentally conscious and culturally rooted. However, these skills are at risk of being lost due to industrialization and lack of recognition.

Janastu's CrafterSpace initiative aims to revive these crafts and empower rural women. By creating spaces where traditional knowledge is valued and practiced, CrafterSpace not only promotes environmental sustainability but also addresses women empowerment. Women artisans, often restricted by societal norms, gain economic independence, confidence, and visibility. CrafterSpace provides them with opportunities to generate income, improve their livelihoods, and voice their concerns.

This year's AnthillHacks will explore how art and craft can counter the impacts of industrialization and consumerism. Participants-artists, designers, environmentalists, and activists-will discuss, innovate, and build creative solutions that address human needs sustainably. The event also seeks to develop a decentralized framework or model that communities across the country can adopt. By leveraging local materials, skills, and cultures, this decentralized approach ensures that solutions are scalable, inclusive, and adaptable to different regions.

Rethinking Technology

The design of technology often excludes marginalized people based on gender, caste, and socio-economic status. Participatory design—where communities actively contribute to shaping technological solutions—can help bridge this gap. Yet, mainstream technology design rarely prioritizes inclusivity or considers the lived experiences of rural and low-literate communities. This exclusion perpetuates inequalities, reinforcing systemic barriers rather than dismantling them.

In a country like India, where digital literacy and internet penetration remain uneven, forcefully imposing technological interventions in areas like welfare delivery has further widened the digital divide. Systems dependent on OTP verifications, smartphone access, or constant internet connectivity have inadvertently excluded large populations from accessing their fundamental rights. This exclusion exemplifies the urgent need to democratize technology and rethink its role in society.

The dominance of a few corporations in the AI landscape is another critical concern. AI systems, requiring immense computational power and vast datasets, are largely controlled by big companies. This monopolization not only stifles innovation but also exacerbates existing inequalities. Data biases within these systems often reinforce caste and gender disparities, embedding societal prejudices into algorithmic decisions. These biases challenge the notion of AI as a neutral tool and underscore the need for alternative, community-driven AI models.

AnthillHacks 2024 invites participants to explore questions such as:

- What is the role of technology in society?
- Is technology shaping society, or is society shaping technology?
- How can we reimagine the entire technology landscape from the perspective of marginalized rural women?

Through a participatory lens, we envision systems that are intuitive, localized, and inclusive. Our decentralized Community-Owned Wireless Mesh Network (COWMesh) exemplifies this vision, providing connectivity without relying on centralized internet infrastructure. By leveraging tools like LibreMesh and OpenWrt, we empower communities to manage their networks, fostering self-reliance and resilience.

AnthillHacks will also focus on democratizing AI—developing accessible, open-source AI tools that respect privacy, anonymize data, and bridge the digital literacy gap. For example, voice anonymization can enable rural individuals, particularly women, to safely share concerns on platforms like community radio. By grounding AI in local contexts and ensuring that it serves the people, we aim to challenge the centralized power structures dominating this field.

This year's event will critically engage with the intersections of technology, social justice, and inclusivity. Participants will collaboratively explore sustainable, decentralized alternatives that reflect the needs and aspirations of all communities, particularly those at the margins.

Rethinking Media

There is a pressing need to rethink and redefine media, especially its role as a two-way communication bridge between governments and citizens. Instead of fostering dialogue, media has become increasingly centralized, profit-driven, and reliant on a top-down approach. This shift raises urgent questions about the role and participation of rural women in the current media landscape.

Today, the media is dominated by profit-driven agendas, often sidelining marginalized voices. While corporate media prioritizes reach and profits, independent media faces challenges with scalability and overcoming inherent biases. There is an urgent need to address these imbalances and create media systems that truly represent and serve all segments of society.

Janastu's work with community radio offers an alternative: a participatory, community-owned platform where narrators and audiences are the people themselves. Community radio allows rural voices to share stories, discuss issues, and preserve local knowledge in accessible formats. By integrating AI anonymization tools, these platforms can ensure safety and privacy for vulnerable individuals while maintaining the integrity of their narratives.

This year's AnthillHacks will further explore how decentralized, community-driven media can replace centralized systems, fostering genuine communication and representation.

Conclusion

AnthillHacks 2024 is a space to collectively rethink media, art, crafts and technology, addressing the needs of low-literate and marginalized communities. By integrating traditional knowledge with decentralized technology, we aim to build sustainable systems that empower rural voices, foster inclusivity, and challenge centralized power structures.

Through collaboration, innovation, and empathy, AnthillHacks envisions a future where media, art, craft and technology intersect to create a world that values equity, empowerment, and sustainability. We invite participants from all walks of life to join us in this transformative journey. Together, we can rethink the systems around us and co-create solutions that inspire and endure.

To learn more about AnthillHacks and its vision, visit <https://anthillhacks.in>.

We invite session proposals that align with our theme, ReMedia – Rethink, Reimagine, Redefine, particularly in the areas of art, crafts, technology, and media. Sessions could include workshops, discussions, or hands-on projects that challenge existing paradigms and explore sustainable, inclusive alternatives.

AnthillHacks is a 10-day event that takes place during the last 10 days of the year with build-days for 5 days prior to the main event. The venue is iruWay farm, Durgadahalli, Karnataka.

Support us by sponsoring the event.

- 1. Cash support - sponsorship, donations. It will help to support some unavoidable cash payments.**
- 2. Material support - tents, beds, blankets, winter essentials (jackets, shawls, etc), umbrellas, stall tents, carpets, tarpaulins, etc.**
- 3. Food essentials - groceries, vegetables, people with cooking interest, etc.**
- 4. Sports equipments**
- 5. Cycles**
- 6. Travel support**
- 7. Volunteers during the build days and event days.**

[Click here](#) to know about sessions and schedules