

Future of the Commons Collective

Can the Commons Correct the Machine? Anivar A. Aravind

July 24, 2026 | 4:30 – 6:00 PM IST | <https://foc.oki-india.org/>

The Future of the Commons (FoC) is an informal, online collective, which invites community organisations, academia, technologists, archivists, creative practitioners, policymakers, GLAM professionals, open knowledge enthusiasts, Wikimedians and more, to come together to listen, brainstorm and debate the digital commons. Inspired by the eponymous work by Elinor Ostrom and others, the collective aims to critically analyse current developments, affordances and crises of the commons. We aim to foster a deeper understanding of how commons-based approaches can address contemporary challenges in technology, governance, culture, and sustainability of open, shared and community-based knowledge infrastructures.

The collective was set up following a series of engaging conversations on the intersections of artificial intelligence, archives and Indian languages at a conference on the digital commons, organised in July 2024 by the Centre for Internet and Society, Bengaluru. We organize monthly talks and discussions featuring experts from diverse fields related to the digital commons, including but not limited to free and open-source movements, digital media, cultures and infrastructures, emerging technologies, and Indian languages. Our events are open to all and designed to foster dialogue and collaboration.

Abstract and Speaker Profile

Every Wikimedia project runs on a quiet guarantee: anything can be corrected. Any edit can be reverted, any decision re-discussed, the entire archive downloaded and rebuilt somewhere else. This talk gives that guarantee a name, corrigibility, and asks whether it survives the arrival of AI. A recently published framework ([corrigibility for public infrastructure, extended to AI systems](#)) distills three traditions this collective already inhabits: Ostrom's commons governance, the free software movement, and the cybernetics of feedback and correction. From them it derives five structural tests that any public system must pass for its errors to be correctable by the people it affects: the ability to leave, to inspect, to verify, to bind the rules, and to rebuild. Wikipedia passes all five. Most national digital infrastructure does not. The language models now being trained on our commons pass almost none. They absorb two decades of Indic-language volunteer work, from fonts and input methods to Unicode migration, Wikisource proofreading, and Wikipedia articles, and return systems whose categories no contributor can see, contest, or reproduce: which dialects get merged, whose spelling becomes canonical, what a word is allowed to mean.

Can affected language communities govern the categories through which models see their languages? Who keeps a model corrected at the speed at which a living language moves? Drawing on the speaker's two decades in Indian-language free software computing, the talk sets out in builder's terms what an AI that answers back to its commons would require: community-held evaluation sets,

contestable category schemes, and reproducible small models. It argues that the institutional capacity needed to build this already exists in this movement.

An Engineering Executive, systems thinker, and researcher, **Anivar A. Aravind** works at the intersection of AI, governance, and digital infrastructure. With over two decades of experience across open technology ecosystems, internet governance, language technologies, and public digital infrastructure, his work explores agentic governance, digital identity, computational institutions, and the frameworks needed to ensure accountability, legitimacy, and human agency in increasingly autonomous systems. He is the author of the corrigibility framework and writes [The Layer 8](#), a publication on the institutional consequences of technology.