



# LEARNING SOCIETIES UNCONFERENCE

VIII

2013

**14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**UWC Mahindra College, Pune, Maharashtra, India**



**Co-hosted by**

- Shikshantar
- UWC Mahindra College
- Sadhana Village Pune
- Multiversity
- Abhivyakti
- Swaraj University
- CoEvolve
- Swashikshan – Association of Indian Homeschoolers
- Digital Empowerment Foundation
- Banyan Tree
- Soul Spaces
- Infopace Management
- Wiser.org - Pune

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With immense pleasure and enthusiasm, we invite you to participate in the 8th Learning Societies unConference 2013. The unConference will take place from June 14 - 19, 2013 at [UWC\(United World College\) Mahindra](#) in Pune, Maharashtra. It will be hosted in Hindi, English and regional languages.

Participants are requested to join for the entire duration of the unConference so as to explore, express and nourish our creative energies together. However, those who can come for only one day are encouraged to attend the open house on June 16th or 17th.

This intergenerational gathering will bring together leading “thinker-doers” from around South Asia who are active in challenging the monopoly of factory-schooling and nurturing diverse learning communities, vernacular traditions, intercultural dialogues and swaraj.

There will be organic farmers, artists, artisans, activists, designers, filmmakers, healers, alternative educators, entrepreneurs, homeschoolers, unschoolers, barefoot innovators, parents, youth, spiritual seekers, and more. As with all learning societies events, the unConference is open to families and children.

We hope to build upon the reflection, dialogue and co-motion that have been initiated in the Learning Societies network already. There will be a lot of space in the unConference to explore radical ideas, proposals and projects. This is a fantastic opportunity to really think (and DO!) outside the box. Most importantly, the central purpose of this gathering is to build strong friendships and critical connections. Previous unConferences have been held in Himachal Pradesh, Udaipur, Mumbai, Brazil, Jordan, Pakistan and Iran.





## Visions

The LSuC is a decentralized gathering of different minds and hearts working in various sectors, so there isn't one single vision statement though there are many common threads. Here are voices from some of the past participants expressing their vision of what LSuC is.

"LSuC provides a fertile, open space to explore Inter-dependence - Opportunities and Barriers ... towards evolving a world that is just and inclusive."

-- Reena Ginwala



"A place where intersecting communities meet and experience each other; where the 'other' is more like myself than the people I meet elsewhere, so I have a glimmering of what 'oneness' is all about, and an opening towards infinite possibilities."

-- Urmila Samson

"The gathering is to challenge and walk out from the grips of modernity."

-- Jinan KB



"A confluence of people who want to bring a change in their lives and around them to create a new world. In other words, a group committed to making space for human evolution."

-- Shammi Nanda

"A space created by the people and the dynamic interactions between us, that allows me to get clear on, and live my life - a life as an experiment. A space to move from 'mind-based' living to a more 'embodied' living." – Biren Shah



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"To allow unbound self expression and co-facilitate for co-creating possibilities and break through for people to connect to their inner strength and potential; namely by self reflection, abundance of friendship and Love as a dynamic cohesive learning community"

-- Kishor Jagirdar

"I see the Learning Societies gathering as a group of people who are taking bold decisions and concrete steps to create a future that is more beautiful, alive for themselves, their families, for mother earth : one with healthier livelihoods and vibrant communities enjoying diversity. We are discovering the truth of who we are beyond all our identities, stories and emotions... what are healthy relationships and what is Love. This is a space to co-create this future in the present."

-- Kiran Gulrajani



"I am wanting to see if there are possibilities to open our hearts to include diversities which seem conflicting but are not... What is the underlying truth that can connect human beings at a more solid and authentic level so that compassionate communities are formed and nurtured."

-- Dola Dasgupta

"A space for people to share and explore radical ideas and visions in education, with people who are not official "education experts", and meet more people looking for how to move from a schooling society to a learning society, where different learning ecosystems can be supported and nurtured"

-- Manish Jain





## Some of Our Past (and Continuing) Explorations

Some exciting inquiries and explorations have emerged over the past 10 years, such as:

- How do we understand 'human learning' from our own experiences?
- What new models and processes around community living and community learning are we exploring? What are challenges with it?
- How do we bring more contemplation, compassion, creativity and courage into our life and work?
- What kinds of unlearning and uplearning experiments are significant and necessary for the times we live in?
- What is the learning ecosystem and commons of each of our diverse communities? What challenges is it facing? How can we regenerate it?
- How do we connect learning with healthy food, community media, zero waste, local economy, cultural creativity, and other essential aspects of harmonious living?
- What harm has factory schooling done to us? How do we heal ourselves from this harm, individually and collectively?
- How do each of our individual learning journeys relate to one another?
- What can we do in our own lives and work to challenge the Education and Development systems which are violent, exploitative and dehumanizing?
- How can we recognize diverse forms of power, resistance, regeneration, and engage and strengthen them?
- What are the ways to deepen and expand intercultural dialogue, trust and gift culture?
- What kinds of support structures can we create for ourselves and one another to live and learn in healthy ways?

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## What is an unConference?

In an unConference, the participants co-create the agenda together. We believe each participant is a resource person, even a child is. There will be a lot of open space for participants to self-organize in groups around questions, experiences, experiments, workshops, play, music, dance, sports, cooking food, treks, art, etc., in the spirit of deep dialogue and friendship. We encourage you to actively participate in the pre-conference online interactions in June. We feel that this process will help us to better self-organize ourselves into a vibrant learning community when we all meet ('self-organizing communities' is one of the core themes for exploration of the learning societies network). We will be using mailing groups and facebook for this. After you register online, you will receive a mail inviting you to join our mailing list. You can also join our Facebook Page [on this link](#).



## Registration and Contribution

The contribution for the unConference is requested on the principle of 'Gift Culture'; which is another core theme of exploration for the learning societies network. Our request is 'pay for yourselves plus a little more to take care of someone else' towards the costs of food, accommodation and materials (fyi, the rough cost for food and accommodation is coming to about Rs.3200 per person, children under 7 are free). If you are staying off-campus, the costs are about Rs 2400. We request you to book your accommodation directly. Refer to the FAQs. Please note that in both cases, travel costs are excluded.

We also request you to deposit the amount that you are comfortable with in lieu of your registration by 1st June, to meet our need for ease, efficiency and support. The details are mentioned below:

### by Wire Transfer:

Name: The Mahindra UWC of India.

Bank: Union Bank Of India, Mulshi (Paud), Pune - 412108

Account No: 322102010011111 ; IFSC Code: UBIN0532215

**Important:** Please email [reenaginwala@gmail.com](mailto:reenaginwala@gmail.com) and [outreach@muwci.net](mailto:outreach@muwci.net) the details of your transaction.



## The Venue

[UWC Mahindra College](#) occupies 175 acres of beautiful, greenery on the shoulder of a hill overlooking the Mulla river valley in the Western Ghats some 40 kilometers to the west of the city of Pune, and about 7km from Paud, the nearest village.

Pune can be reached by air, road and rail from many cities throughout India, and is about 120km from Mumbai.

Please go through the transport details in the FAQs section for options.

### **Accommodation:**

There are clusters of rooms called 'wadas' with common facilities like gas stove, fridge, oven and washing machine. The rooms will be allocated on sharing basis.

The campus is quite sprawled out, but there is intercom system, and wifi internet.





### **1. Do I have to be present throughout the event?**

The unConference process is very different from a normal conference. It takes time to really get into these deeper relationships to emerge with the connections we form here. We strongly request you to come for all the 6 days, to receive and give real value to it. If you can come only for a day or two, we suggest the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> June. The contribution is Rs.600 per person per day for accommodation and meals.

### **2. I don't have money to travel to / participate in LSuC. Is there any support available?**

The LSuC does not take funding from corporations, international donor agencies or foundations. It is an event that is self-financed by the people attending it. At the same time, it is very critical for us that this does not become an elitist event. So we have a gift culture model wherein the participants pay what they can, and those who can, are invited to help cover the costs for those who can't. If you need financial support, please write to us on [lsunconference@gmail.com](mailto:lsunconference@gmail.com), share what is your situation, why is it important for you to come here, what amount of financial support are you looking for. We will consider the requests on a case by case basis and will get back to you.

### **3. What is unique about an unConference?**

An unConference is based on processes like Open Space, in which individuals and groups self organize through following their hearts and sharing their passions, offering conversations and participating in sessions that matter to them. An unConference is co-created by the participants. If people come with the intention of being fully present, self organization and co-creation happens naturally, organically, seamlessly.

### **4. What is gift culture?**

Gift culture is an invitation to discover the beauty of giving and receiving spontaneously and without conditions, unlike transacting with money. Gift culture encourages us to experiment in creative ways of relating, offering and receiving the natural gifts that we have, which are immeasurable. An authentic gifting experience dissolves the separation between the giver and the receiver, because in giving, we are simultaneously receiving as well. An example of gift culture could be a random act of kindness, Seva Cafe, paying it forward, and sponsoring someone's participation in the LSuC ;)

### **5. Can I offer something that I am passionate about at the LSuC?**

Yes. That is the whole idea. You can offer your gifts (like healing techniques), share your skills (music, art, storytelling, web design) or experiences (your projects), host a conversation on something you're passionate about, feel free, the space is yours.





## 6. Where can I read more about earlier LSuCs?

You can visit [Shikshantar's website](#) to review the previous learning societies books which contain over 60 essays from around the world. You can also see films and photographs on our [facebook page](#) or the [website](#).

## 7. How can I offer something at the LSuC?

All sessions are offered in the spirit of invitation to participate. The scenario is like that of a mela, offering exciting opportunities for learning/sharing. You may even announce your offering online, in the pre-conference dialog once you register. Each morning, special time is allocated to announce the offerings for the day, so that people can create their own learning experience. You can excite people about your session at that time. You can even make charts or something creative to tell people about your offering.

## 8. Can I contribute to this event in ways other than money?

Sure! You can share resources, like a vehicle to transport people between Pune and the venue, your time at the registration or information desk, help organize meal times more smoothly. Share the idea of gift culture to encourage people to contribute. Spread word about this unConference, on social networks and to friends and family you think would be interested. Please contact us and let's make things happen!

## 9. How do I reach the venue?

Please see <http://www.uwcmahindracollege.org/where> for detailed directions. Taxi service can be booked on TravelTime (020-66000000) for pickup and drop from Pune. We will let you know of other options in early June, and you can co-ordinate with other participants.

## 10. Are there any alternative options for accommodation?

Beaver Golden Fields (Rs. 300/500/1000 + Rs.400/day for food at UWC Mahindra College) opposite the college's gate. Contact [website](#) or Ms.Savita Gopi, 09822873637

## 11. Is there anything about connectivity that I should know?

Only Vodafone network works at the venue. But there is wireless internet access, and STD/ISD booth available.

## 12. What should I bring with me?

Light woollens, rain wear, umbrella, towel, toiletries, water bottle (avoid plastic), bedsheet, walking shoes, slippers, swimming costume with cap, mosquito repellent, torch, any musical or sports, game equipment that you would enjoy, stationary, resources you want to share.

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In case you haven't registered yet, please do so on [this link](#) by May 25, 2013.

There are limited resources available to help cover travel scholarships for some participants within India. Please write to us at [lsunconference@gmail.com](mailto:lsunconference@gmail.com) if you require some assistance for your expenses – lack of funds should not stop you from attending. Your insights and experiences will greatly enhance the discussion on learning societies in South Asia.

While making travel bookings, please note that we will be starting at 11:00am on 14th June and concluding by 3.00pm on 19th June. There is an exciting learning journey (optional) planned on 20th June which will involve visiting inspiring people and projects in Pune city.

If you have any questions, please write to us at [lsunconference@gmail.com](mailto:lsunconference@gmail.com) or call **Shikshantar (Udaipur): 0294-245-1303, Vidhi Jain (Udaipur): 9829724189, Reena Ginwala (Pune): 9823034544**. For more information, please visit our [website](#) or [facebook page](#).

We look forward to welcoming you at the 8th Learning Societies unConference 2013!

Yours sincerely,

**Manish and Vidhi Jain, Shikshantar  
UWC Mahindra College  
Claude Alvares, Multiversity  
Nitin Paranjape, Abhivyakti  
Khojis, Swaraj University  
Kiran Gulrajani and Rohit S, CoEvolve  
Urmila Samson and Dola Dasgupta,  
Representatives - Swashikshan -  
Association of Indian Homeschoolers  
Kishor Jagirdar - Infopace Management  
Reena Ginwala – Soul Spaces  
Murtaza Bootwala – Wiser.org, Pune  
Sadhana Village Pune  
Digital Empowerment Foundation  
Banyan Tree  
Shammi Nanda  
Osama Manzar  
Shaifali Chikarmane**

