

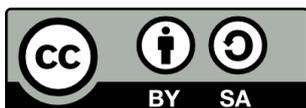
LeNS India
**Sustainability for All
Manifesto
2019**



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LeNS Lab, Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, 2019

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The **LeNS India Manifesto - Sustainability for All** emerged from three workshops conducted as part of the **LeNS World Distributed Conference - 'Designing Sustainability for All'** held at Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore from 3-5 April 2019

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LeNS International Network

The LeNS International Network comprises of over 16 regional networks and 192 institutes of higher education across Europe, Asia, Africa, Central America and South America; that adopt a learning-by-sharing approach to knowledge generation and dissemination, with an open and copy-left ethos. Over the last decade the LeNS Network has developed theoretical frameworks, practical tools and methodologies as well as a wide repository of case studies in the field of Sustainable Product Service Systems and Distributed Economies. The LeNS Network has also conducted pilot courses, conferences, seminars and has developed an online learning platform

<http://www.lens-international.org/>

LeNS India Network

LeNS India is regional network of educational institutions, non-profit organisations and practitioners in India who envision a sustainable and life affirming world based on patterns of mutuality and interdependence. This network aims to be an enabling, open and interactive platform for all. It focuses on knowledge generation, dissemination and informed action that translates values of sustainability into living practices.

LeNS Lab at Srishti

LeNS Lab at Srishti fosters research and collaborations in the area of sustainability. It provides a space for researchers and practitioners to form transdisciplinary collaborations on projects, research and knowledge generation. LeNS Lab at Srishti has also set up an open maker space funded by the European Union as part of a network of 10 such spaces across the world that have resources and equipment to experiment, make, incubate and research issues related to sustainability.

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Website: <http://srishti.ac.in/centers-and-labs/lens-lab>

Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology

Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology was founded in 1996 with the objective of providing art and design education in an environment of creativity to maximize the individual's potential. Srishti's programs offer opportunities to make creative impact at different levels of practice through capabilities developed in the areas of law, environment and policy, media arts and sciences, education and development, and business and the humanities.

Website: <http://srishti.ac.in>

Need for a Regional Manifesto

The Indian subcontinent is diverse in contexts, possibilities and problems. Individuals, organisations and governments across the region are recognizing the threat of global climate change and the need for a sustainable future. The idea of sustainability has often been interpreted in widely divergent ways, leading to a lack of coherent vision and collective action.

The need to address issues of sustainability is, however, crucial to the future of humanity. Our precarious environmental situation has prompted action at the global scale and this has been enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, ratified by 170 countries across the world in 2016. These global frameworks can work only if they are adopted, contextualised and implemented at local and glocal levels.

With this manifesto, we have brought together diverse voices from across India, in a process that recognises that ‘Sustainability for All’ is not a singular vision, it is as diverse as the people who make the ‘All’. We recognise that it is essential to shift our reductive ways of knowing to perspectives that are contextual and transdisciplinary.

In the spirit of the popular adage, ‘little drops of water make the ocean’, we wish to evoke Rumi’s perspective -

“ You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop. ”

The LeNS World Distributed Conference

This Manifesto is a collective effort of 150 voices from diverse backgrounds and regions across India who came together for the third **LeNS International Conference - Designing Sustainability for All**. People across the world are taking steps towards a more sustainable future and this regional manifesto brings together ideas to build a shared vision and an actionable agenda to accelerate this transition in the Indian context.

'Designing Sustainability for All' Workshop

A series of three workshops were conducted during the conference with the aim to contextualise sustainability in the Indian subcontinent. The workshops were designed to construct powerful ideas and drive discussions towards 'Sustainability for All'. The workshops were part of the LeNS World Distributed Conference that was hosted at Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore, between 3-5th April 2019. The workshops included 150 participants from diverse backgrounds including academics, industry professionals, practitioners, members of the civil society and students.

The larger vision of the workshop was framed as an enquiry -

**How do we, a community of learners
for sustainability, nourish change
by examining the opportunities and
challenges presented by our regional
contexts in relation to the SDGs?**

With this guiding question, the workshops curated five themes to reflect the key areas of concern in the region. Taking off from the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the themes brought together two tangible aspects with one intangible value to provoke and drive conversations beyond problem seeking and to look for relationships and interactions between the seen and the unseen.

The 5 themes were -

- **Mobility, Ecosystems and Equity**
- **Water, Soil and Wellbeing**
- **Habitat, Construction and Health**
- **Tourism, Community and Power**
- **Resources, Waste and Traditional Knowledge**

Workshop Structure

Three workshops were held during two days of the conference and the outcome of each workshop became the starting point of the next in the format of a relay. This allowed the groups of participants to build on ideas and discussions from a broader conceptual level to a more focused, deliberated and actionable vision built on collective consensus.

Workshop 1 | Conversation Cafe

Engage with issues, trends and patterns under each theme

A semi-formal conversational structure that allowed knowledge sharing and nurtured diverse voices. Using the themes as starting points and facilitated with thematic provocations by the group facilitators, this method allowed participants to pitch opinions, questions, arguments and experiences and to construct a gallery of ideas.

Workshop 2 | Concept Studio

Seek synergy across themes

A mapping process to synthesize diverse ideas across themes to develop collective insights. The key ideas from the previous workshop were distilled into actionable items that cut across themes and they were used as prompts to discuss each theme in a more structured and focused manner. This allowed participants to sift, link, collate and assimilate ideas across the five themes and develop a primer for action.

Workshop 3 | Decision Room

Emerging strategies for action

A visualizing process to classify collective insights that have emerged from workshop 1 and 2 as a matrix of drivers and outcomes. Using the Hoshin Kanri method for inspiration, the participants developed a relationship and priority matrix between the action items to identify drivers and outcomes. The workshop allowed participants to collectively analyze, debate and prioritize action towards building consensus for a manifesto.

The LeNS India Manifesto

Sustainability for All

The LeNS India Manifesto is based on the shared insights of workshop participants engaging in discussions, deliberations and debates. A team of academics and researchers mapped these inferences and deduced indicators, drivers and outcomes. The actionable items that scored high on the priority matrix for the Indian context formed the basis of this document. We are sharing the manifesto propositions for the consideration of all the workshop participants and wider audiences to adopt for our collective journey towards a sustainable regional future.

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**Adopt the
Attitude of
a Custodian**
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**Shift the
Locus of
Power at
Multiple Levels**
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**Seek &
Share True
Cost**
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**Foster
Community as a
Force for
Systemic Change**
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■ ■
**Share Knowledge
& Practices
of Inclusive &
Regenerative
Systems**
■ ■

■ ■
**Co-create
a Shared
Future**
■ ■

Adopt the Attitude of a Custodian



The Earth today is largely perceived as a commodity to be consumed rather than nourished. We require a cultural shift in this attitude; moving from a relationship that is exploitative to one that is nurturing, and a way of thinking that is linear to one that is circular. This fundamental paradigm shift is crucial to informed and responsible decision making and action at both individual and community levels. Therefore, we need to shift our attitude and behavior from:

Consumer to Custodian

Traditionally, communities took stewardship of common resources, collectively striving for a balance between consumption and regeneration. There is a need to re-inculcate that sense of shared ownership and responsibility in the way that we interact with the systems that sustain us. A consumer seeks to derive value from resources, treating them as disjointed commodities for immediate consumption. A custodian understands the value of resources and their interdependencies, and protects and nurtures the systems that they are a part of. Custodians are driven by the responsibility of collective ownership across generations and species.

Tourist to Traveller

The idea of travel is an excursion into an unfamiliar ecosystem. Tourists are voyeuristic participants, entering the ecosystem with the notion of an engagement that is short-lived and extrinsic. This leads to an exploitation of their surroundings and leaves behind a destructive footprint of impact. Travellers seek mutual experiences that are intrinsic and contribute not just to their own growth but also to the ecosystem with which they engage. They build a deeper conversation and understanding with their surroundings through a sense of belonging and empathy.

Plunderer to Protector

The Plunderer consumes resources exhaustively, disproportionately and builds on an exploitative, use-and-throw culture and driven by an endless profit motive. The Protector's attitude is one of guardianships, where resources are valued as an essential part of an ecosystem and they are used carefully and equitably while understanding and upholding the carrying capacity of the system.

These shifts in value systems and attitudes will stem from overcoming the sense of entitlement to individual ownership in favour of a shared responsibility for the human and natural systems that we are embedded in.

Seek and Share True Cost



Any policy, decision or project at government, business or individual level will have systemic socio-ecological impact. The true cost of an action or decision goes beyond the tangible or measurable parameters of its immediate impact and includes indirect and externalised consequences that are often undisclosed and unaccounted for. These costs also tend to be borne by vulnerable communities and ecosystems. Making the true costs transparent empowers communities to make and insist on informed decisions and responsible actions that incorporate ideas of socio-ecological justice and equity.

Seek

Knowing the true cost of an action fundamentally changes our approach towards it and enables us to think from a systems perspective. This will also change the way in which we design, use and interact with our environment and with each other. Seeking true costs is the key to enabling informed decisions and necessary responses and lead to social awareness and empowerment. This will bring socio-ecological accountability in industry and governance, and drive more prudent, democratic and equitable regulations.

Share

Institutions, organisations, communities and individuals must actively monitor the short and long term impacts of their actions on the environment and society. This information must be shared and disseminated responsibly, and made easily accessible in the public domain. It is through sharing the true cost of actions that we can ensure accountability, enable political conversation, map unrevealed impact, and achieve public support and participation.

The complexity of measuring and understanding true impacts requires a collaborative and trans-disciplinary effort. There is a need for us all to seek and share true costs and actively develop a collective ecological intelligence.*

* Goleman, Daniel, Ecological Intelligence (Camberwell, Vic.: Penguin, 2010)

Share Knowledge and Practices of Inclusive and Regenerative Systems



Knowledge is embedded in communities and their environments and develops and transfers through inter-generational lived interactions. Many of our traditional knowledge, values, customs and practices were native, regenerative and inclusive with a larger goal of community enhancement and long-term sustainability. In an increasingly global world where many of our wicked problems are shared across continents, it is important to seek solutions in these plural knowledge systems including traditional knowledge and practices.

Share and Enable

The extensive magnitude of embedded knowledge can serve to address present challenges and build a shared gallery of knowledge practices. Translating knowledge systems and recognising their importance inculcates pride, encourages sharing and allows communities to learn from each other. These ways of knowing need to be strengthened so that communities find value in continuing and sharing the traditional knowledge base they inherit. It is necessary to provide platforms for this knowledge to be developed, adapted and shared within and across communities in local and glocal networks.

Adapt and Evolve

While traditional sources have extensive knowledge of ecosystems and the ways of interacting with them in a sustainable way, the nature of these systems is dynamic and requires the continuous evaluation, adaptation and innovation of these practices to respond to new contexts. It is essential to be able to tap into the wealth of existing knowledge systems and ways of living in conjunction with new and emerging ideas and technology to find the most suitable solutions to socio-ecological and systemic challenges.

Shift the Locus of Power at Multiple Levels



For transition towards a configuration of stakeholders which can foster social, ecological and economic sustainability, there is a need to be inclusive in identifying actors and providing them with not just a voice but also the power to contribute to decision and action at multiple scales. Power can be conceptualized as “the (in)capacity of actors to mobilize resources and institutions to achieve a goal.”*

Understanding power dynamics is essential to creating ecosystems that nurture all other principles of sharing knowledge, collaboration and community building. In traditional governance structures, a linear chain of power implies a dynamic of dependence with agency concentrated at one end of the chain. While a more distributed power structure can create dynamics of cooperation, coexistence and synergy; it also engenders competition and antagonism.

The key is to enable political conversation and decentralisation of authority in order to actively involve people. In this shift towards a more inclusive and distributed approach, there is also a need to encourage stakeholders to recognise this agency and inculcate a sense of responsibility. We need to plant the seed structures that can grow into a community driving a movement to establish itself as a force for political change and shift the locus of power to citizens and civil society.

*Flor Avelino, “Power In Sustainability Transitions: Analysing Power And (Dis)Empowerment In Transformative Change Towards Sustainability”, *Environmental Policy And Governance*, 27.6 (2017), 505-520 <<https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1777>>.

Foster Community as a Force for Systemic Change



“Systemic Change refers to an intentional process designed to alter the status quo by shifting the function or structure of an identified system with purposeful interventions.* Systems change aims to bring about lasting change by altering underlying structures and supporting mechanisms which make the system operate in a particular way. These can include policies, routines, relationships, resources, power structures and values.**

Think Systems

It is essential to think systemically if we are to transition towards sustainability at a global level. Changes in a system can be multiple and simultaneous and reflect the interdependencies and interconnectedness of its different components and their relationships. Systemic change is an iterative and dynamic process of innovation, experimentation and feedback. There is a need to recognise this to stay aware of the possible impacts our decisions can have within the dynamics of the system.

Build Community

While the scale of a problem and implications of present hierarchical structures make it difficult for individuals to voice their perspectives, they could rely on the strength and legitimacy of community. A strong community can be seen as a positive first step to demanding change and inspiring people to come together and build momentum to challenge, reimagine and reinvent the underlying structures and relationships in the system. We need to enhance community capacity for self organisation and collective resolution of local issues and activate local citizen groups.

Innovate and Transform

Innovations often stem from reconfiguring interactions and behavior within existing systems. Communities can incubate, support and expand on these innovations to amplify their transformative potential. Communities interface between different scales of the ecosystem, which allows them to keep track of impacts and reflexively change the course of action. They must therefore be enabled and empowered to become agents that drive systemic change.

Developing distributed and transdisciplinary networks of communities and engaging in a shared vision for the future will create robust, reflexive processes of shift towards dynamic and resilient systems.

* Pennie G. Foster-Fishman, Branda Nowell and Huilan Yang, “Putting The System Back Into Systems Change: A Framework For Understanding And Changing Organizational And Community Systems”, American Journal Of Community Psychology, 39.3-4 (2007), 197-215

** Foster-Fishman, P. G. (2002). How to create systems change. Lansing, MI: Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council.

Co-create a Shared Future



Co-creation is the coming together of different stakeholders to collaboratively engage in a process and result that is mutually valued. Co-creation goes beyond (dis)empowering structures towards an ethic of shared responsibility and collective decision making. It can be seen as a model of sustainable development where the community and decision makers work with each other in being custodians of common resources and enablers of a common vision.

Involve and Empower

A co-creation approach incorporates diverse viewpoints and reactions, and creates a sense of agency and shared responsibility. This brings a deeper understanding of complexity, leading to more resilient and holistic solutions. For co-creation to be an effective development model, we need to build practices of shared resources, shared spaces, platforms for open and accessible information, and transparent processes that invite discourse and participatory decision making. We need to facilitate enabling environments that provide different actors with the agency to represent and influence decision making and work collectively towards an inclusive model of governance.

Shared Futures

Decisions and actions, irrespective of which stakeholders drive them, result in a future that every one of us shares. This recognition drives the understanding that it is in our interest to be active participants of this shared future and acknowledge the stakes that we have in it. A shared future envisages equitable and balanced local, glocal and global partnerships and networks; working towards the common goal of a negotiated space that builds on the principles of sustainability, harmonious coexistence, a non-extractive economy and inter and transgenerational equity.

Going Forward

Contribution from Stakeholders

We have long been deferring action to the amorphous faceless figures of community, business and government. This manifesto reminds us that we are part of these institutions, so whether we are employees or practitioners, policy makers or academicians, we are the agents of change in our communities, our companies, our cities and our governments. We all play multiple roles in our lives and what we believe in as individuals drives our engagement. Implementation of these manifesto propositions is a collective and continuous process that invites an active collaboration across all stakeholders.

Some of the ways in which your engagements can make a difference towards implementation of this shared vision are identified as a way forward, to take the manifesto forward.

Though the list of stakeholders and the contributions that they can make is not exhaustive, this provides a starting point from which multiple potentials can be explored to achieve the larger vision of 'Sustainability for All'.

As Policymakers, you can -

- As representatives of the people, create a culture and ethic of stewardship of natural and cultural resources and ensure regenerative practices by all stakeholders.
- Participate in and actively encourage political conversations and debates around concerns such as true cost, decentralised power and community empowerment, leading to healthy and transparent governance.
- Bring about reforms in planning and policy where people have a say, and are able to claim their rights to the commons.
- Encourage and acknowledge the role of multiple stakeholders as partners in the decision making process to empower them.
- Make businesses and individuals accountable for the social and environmental consequences of their actions through enforcement of environmental regulations.
- Collectively work with diverse stakeholders towards co-creation of a shared intent in meeting the SDGs for wellbeing of the ecosystem.

As Practitioners, you can -

- Shift away from extractive and exploitative practices towards models of co-creation.
- Be conscious of the impacts of the actions and choices made across the value chain of systems or products.
- Explore and adapt the wisdom of traditional knowledge with changing times and context.
- Make learnings and experiences accessible to larger communities to enable mutual learning and sharing of skills, knowledge, resources and recognition.

As Industry Professionals, you can -

- Transform business models away from extractive and exploitative practices towards a circular economy, respecting environmental carrying capacity and social sustainability.
- Invest in research in the fields of supply chain management and systems thinking to evaluate the true costs of ongoing operations and innovations in business processes.
- Be genuine and transparent in disclosing certification data and processes to empower end users and enable informed and sustainable choices.
- Make a positive systemic change in the status quo of industry practices by voluntarily opting for compliance and certifications to enhance value and inculcate accountability.
- As a responsible business practice, promote and encourage community and student engagement for inclusive development.

As Advocacy Groups, you can -

- Make individuals aware of their role and the impact of their choices in context of larger ecosystems, to empower them as change makers.
- Provide platforms where information is monitored, verified and made available, for transparent governance and informed decision making.
- Develop a support system for particularly under represented communities to voice local issues and amplify their concerns to larger audiences.
- Work with policy makers for implementing robust accountability and feedback mechanisms tracing socio-ecological impacts.
- Evaluate, promote new benchmarking tools and compliance models to analyse consequences of actions for businesses and individuals to be held accountable.
- Facilitate and enable political conversations and debates for all stakeholders to voice their suggestions towards inclusive governance.

As Academicians, you can -

- As custodians of knowledge, be inclusive of traditional knowledge systems in redefining our relationship with the planet.
- Inculcate an attitude of information seeking and critical thinking in the community of learners, nurture them to be change-makers for a more transparent, accountable and inclusive future.
- Facilitate research into new monitoring, benchmarking tools to evaluate social and environmental consequences of proposals, actions and policies.
- Develop pedagogical methods for exchange of knowledge between learners and communities.
- Assist the dispersal of applied knowledge and ideas to wider communities and stakeholder groups.
- Evaluate and adapt the education system and curriculum to include 'education for sustainable development' and develop sustainability research and action within educational domains.

As Students, you can -

- Lead by example by nurturing the behavior change towards promoting the custodian attitude in everyday actions and decisions.
- Seek accountability and be a positive force of change-makers and influencers.
- Assist the dispersal of applied knowledge and ideas to wider communities and stakeholder groups.
- Seek systemic changes and challenge the status quo.
- Adopt a transdisciplinary learning model to explore the possible linkages and connections between stakeholders and strive to bring them together on a common platform.

As Citizen Groups or Individuals, you can -

- Embrace the need for a shift in attitude and culture - behavior change from consuming to nourishing; and from individual to collective ownership.
- Make conscious choices by recognizing yourself as part of a larger ecosystem and being informed about the impact of products and services you use.
- Participate consciously in political conversations to seek inclusive and transparent governance with citizens as equal stakeholders in the decision making process.
- Be an active member of your local community and strive to co-create healthy and vibrant neighborhoods and communities with a long term vision.
- Recognise responsibilities and duties as citizens.
- To gain momentum, individuals with similar ideology need to come together for a shared vision and demand the collaborative and inclusive model. When required stand up and gather a collective voice against malpractices or threats to social, cultural and environmental sustainability.