

Collective Dreaming

Democratic Visioning in the Vikalp Sangam Process

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The process of Vikalp Sangam (Alternatives Confluence) involves visioning of an ideal built on grounded initiatives, spanning the full range of alternative approaches to justice, equity, and sustainability. The focus is on India, but the lessons and visions emerging are relevant globally. It attempts to document, network, and create collaborations amongst movements and groups involved in such alternatives.

One of the tragedies of modern life is that we are scared to daydream. Put forth a utopian idea, and immediately it is shot down as unrealistic and impractical, especially in activist-academic-development circles. Of course, by definition utopias are unrealistic, but does that make them useless? From school onwards we are told that we have to be practical; that indulging in flights of fancy is a waste of time. And yet, the continuing hold of a Marx or a Gandhi or a Bob Dylan or a Rosa Luxemburg or a Kabir in the public mind and heart, suggests that something deep in us is still willing to indulge in idealistic visions of a better society. So, does being practical have to necessarily be in contradiction with having utopian ideas? Is there a way to integrate the exigencies of our daily existence with a conscious visioning of the future, whether we are a struggling worker or an activist trying to make sense of the disasters around us? A visioning that could even help to guide our practical actions?

This article briefly describes one such attempt, ongoing since 2014, called Vikalp Sangam (vs) or Alternatives Confluence.¹ It describes the objectives and processes used in the initiative, some of its early outputs and achievements, and its key weaknesses. Of its various objectives and outputs, collective visioning has been perhaps most innovative and important; this is described and analysed further down in the article. In this connection, a brief comment is made on the possibilities of such an initiative as an alternative way to co-produce knowledge, perspectives, and visions.

One upfront caveat is in order. As one of the originators of the vs process and still one of its key pegs, I lay no claim to objectivity (if there is such a thing at all) in this article. It is necessarily biased, and even though I have tried to bring in as much self-criticism as possible (with inputs also from other colleagues central to the process), it is likely to be softer than if an independent critical observer were to attempt a similar description and analysis.

What Is the Vikalp Sangam?

The vs process has its origins in an increasing restlessness in some of us, with the activism and academics of protest. As engaged researchers or as social activists we have been for decades fighting a system (or systems, if one considers patriarchy, capitalism, statism, casteism, racism and other forms of power asymmetry and marginalisation as connected and yet independent) that is ecologically devastating, economically iniquitous and socially disruptive.² It is a worthwhile, necessary

With helpful inputs by Sujatha Padmanabhan and Shrishtee Bajpai of Kalpavriksh. Comments by the editors of this volume were instrumental in a number of improvements to the original draft. Insights from the ongoing project “Academic-Activist Co-generation of Knowledge on Environmental Justice” (ACKnowl-EJ, <http://acknowlej.org>), which has taken the Vikalp Sangam methodology and approach as part of its learning process, have also been useful.

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fight, and must continue. But while we do this with all the combined might we can muster, and get better and sharper at saying no, we also need to come up with what we are saying yes to. Resistance that attempts to save the existing ways of life insofar as these remain relevant to our search for a better world is very much part of how to say yes. However, there have been inequities and marginalisations in many of these ways of life; patriarchal dimensions, for instance, are nearly universal and casteism continues to feature prominently in India. Further, many of these ways of life are no longer able to meet the basic needs or legitimate aspirations due to a host of factors including hostile policies; witness for instance the mass distress amongst small-scale or artisanal farming, fishing and pastoralist communities, and traditional craftspersons.³ Therefore, there is a real need for addressing issues of deprivation and injustice, across the world, and that cannot come only from protest and resistance. Constructive, creative alternatives for meeting needs and aspirations have to be revived from the past and created anew.

So the vs initiative started with the following and other myriad questions about the “yes” we are asserting: What is our vision of a better future? What are our answers to questions of poverty, hunger, energy insecurity, and other deprivations? How do we meet human aspirations, and can it be done in ways that do not destroy the earth or leave half of humanity behind? Are there truly sustainable pathways of development or well-being? If we do not want patriarchy, capitalism, statism, casteism, racism, what do we want?

Answers to these questions have been attempted for many years and in many parts of the world. However, most of these have been focused on one or few sectors; for instance the organic and sustainable farming movement is growing steadily as a response to the destructive chemical-dependent green revolution model propagated by governments and corporations. Or the rights movements have moved decisively to gain a number of legislations providing a range of rights—to information, education, food, employment, forest resources, child and women’s empowerment, and health.⁴ But attempts to bring these different movements and initiatives together are either missing or very weakly articulated. And so we have the unfortunate phenomenon of the sustainable farming groups not regularly linking with the community health movements, even though both recognise that a crucial part of preventive health strategies is to have access to nutritional, organic food. Many environmental action groups do not even think they have common cause with groups struggling on the rights of women and the differently abled, and even less so with Dalit movements, despite the growing evidence that environmental problems affect these sections often more than others,⁵ and conversely that their empowerment can be a powerful force for ecological revival and conservation (such as in the case of the Chipko movement, or the Dalit women farmers’ agricultural revolution through Deccan Development Society [DDS]). The fact that we all are victims, in one way or the other, of the system(s) mentioned above, and that we need to find common pathways out of our individual or sectoral crises, has not yet sunk in to many of us.

With this context in mind, the vs initiative attempts to (i) help document, understand and make more visible ongoing practical and conceptual alternatives in all fields of human endeavour; (ii) provide a platform for people working in these to come together for sharing, learning, and collaborating, especially across sectors; (iii) be a forum for collective visioning of a better future and pathways to it; and (iv) contribute to the possibility of a critical political mass that can more effectively challenge and change the system(s) or systemic forces mentioned above. Of these, the first three can be said to be ongoing processes, beginning early on in the process and continuing for its life; while the fourth is a more long-term objective, unlikely to be met in any significant way within a short span of a few years. A self-critical assessment of what the vs process has achieved or not, follows later in this article along these four objectives.

What Has Worked and What Has Not?

What has been achieved along these four dimensions, and what has not? It has been somewhat less than three years since the process started. While this is not an adequate time span for a process like this, especially regarding the ultimate aim of systemic transformations, one can make a preliminary assessment at least for the first three objectives. (It may be noted that building up to a national Sangam in November 2017, a small group of people are trying to consolidate some key learnings and lessons from the 10-odd Sangams held so far; however the results of this will only be available later in 2017.) I deal with these below.

Documentation and outreach: Alternative initiatives in India suffer from a serious paucity of documentation; consequently very many, perhaps the vast majority, are not known outside of the people engaged in them. Documentation and outreach is therefore a core objective of the vs process, and has been proceeding at a fairly good pace. The vs website (www.vikalp-sangam.org) was launched in early 2014, and by mid-2017 it has about 700 stories and perspective pieces, across the full range of human endeavour. Additionally, its repository of resources has been building up continually,⁶ and it regularly announces programmes that are relevant in any part of the country. From its inception it was decided that the website would not be populated only with material that was generated afresh in the vs process (especially since that would be resource-intensive and time-consuming), but would also pick up relevant material from any other source.

A word about the selection of material to be uploaded to the website is in order here. The vs website is focused on transformative alternatives, that is, those that are in some way different from the mainstream and not simply reformative tinkering around within the system. The team handling the website uses the vs Alternatives Framework (more on this below) as a thumb rule of selection, and focuses, in particular, on the political, economic, cultural, social and ecological spheres of transformation. In the process it is very likely that stories, perspectives, events and resources that are in the fuzzy dividing line between transformation and reform would also figure as

the selection is not a systematic analysis; the policy is that unless very clearly something merely reinforces the status quo, we would carry it in the website if it is positive and providing solutions to crucial problems.

While the vs website is the principle vehicle for outreach, there are numerous documentation and outreach processes connected to it. The vs initiative has actively solicited and commissioned stories, case studies, and video clips on alternative initiatives, in a number of languages, and produced a mobile poster exhibition in English and Hindi. The posters have also been reproduced as a 20-page booklet, in Hindi and English, for wider distribution, including in schools, colleges, and with other sections of the public; this is available both in print form and digital for download, and other documents are expected to be online by 2017. Additionally, the vs website material is also used for presentations made at schools, colleges, and other institutions.

A related ambitious process to envision India in 2100 from a large range of perspectives was initiated in 2015, and has resulted in a book with 35 essays, many of which balance a dream of an ideal society along with grounded assessment of possibilities and pathways (Kothari and Joy 2017).

Sharing and collaboration: The above activities are mostly passive means to spread information and experiences, but the vs initiative includes a more active, interactive means of sharing and collaboration. These are the actual Sangams—physical confluences or gatherings of people in different parts of the country. Typically these Sangams are of three–four days, consisting of 50 to 100 people from movements, groups, and personal initiatives on alternatives. They take place regionally or thematically. As of mid-2017 the regional ones have been held in/for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Ladakh, Kutch, and Kerala, and a preparatory mini-Sangam for western Himalaya; and the thematic ones on energy (focusing on electricity), food, and youth.⁷

The Sangams focus predominantly on alternatives, with a mix of serious discussions on key topics relevant to the region or theme (including cross-sectorally, on which more below), practical activities (such as theatre, art, weaving, mudblock building, learning crafts and so on), displays and sales of alternative products, exhibits, and trips to relevant alternative initiatives in the area. For instance, the Energy Sangam included a visit to Dharnai in Bihar, where a solar-based microgrid has been made to light up the village; the Ladakh Sangam participants visited the alternative learning centre, the Student’s Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), and the Kutch Sangam involved a trip to sites where revival of crafts is taking place. At the Maharashtra Sangam, participants got a lesson in using the charkha from schoolchildren of the local Anand Niketan School which uses Gandhi’s Nai Taleem principles for teaching.

In the 10 Sangams so far, about 1,000 people have participated. There is no analysis yet of the spectrum from which they come, but from what is available, it is clear that a significant number have been from civil society organisations

working on livelihoods, rights, environment, gender and sexuality, learning and education, technology and economics, governance, health, food and agriculture, law, and other areas. In several Sangams members of farming, pastoral, crafts-based, Adivasi or non-Adivasi communities have been prominent (though overall, not as much as hoped, on which more below). Members of political parties or government officials have joined a few in their individual capacity. Other kinds of participants include professionals such as teachers, researchers and health workers. Gender balance has not been ideal, but at all Sangams, women have participated actively. Adivasi and Dalit presence too is not as much as one would have liked, but they have indeed been able to make themselves heard at some of the Sangams.

Amongst those absent or very weakly present have been industrial and service sector workers, a number of formal sector professionals and businesspersons. One of the questions under debate is whether to invite people from the corridors of power, those who are seen as “the enemy,” including corporates. In general the feeling is that in this initial phase of the vs process, it is important to come to some common understanding even amongst people who are of a similar broad political spectrum, since there have been only rare occasions on which such a diversity of people have attempted to come together. In this sense it is a fragile space that is being nurtured, and this could be endangered if those fundamentally opposed to progressive ideas or working in the belly of the beast, so to speak, are part of the process from the start itself. At a later stage, however, the attempt to dialogue even with these could be valuable.

While a report is generated from each Sangam (as far as possible in both local language and English), all Sangams have also been filmed, with the Centre for Education and Documentation (CED) or other film-makers faithfully recording almost every minute and then producing clips about different aspects of each Sangam.

A key aspect of the Sangam structure is the encouragement of cross-sectoral exchange and sharing. As mentioned above, civil society groups and movements and academics tend to move within their own circles, only occasionally venturing into territory they are not at all familiar with. At the Sangams there is an attempt to break this siloisation. I recall vividly a discussion circle at the Tamil Nadu Sangam where a member of the civil society group Nirangal talked about issues of sexuality and discrimination against various genders, with other participants listening wide-eyed and later expressing that they had never thought about these aspects. Or a member of Ektha (working on disability and a wheelchair user himself), asking at the same Sangam whether any of us felt we were free of disabilities, and asserting that the so-called disabled were as abled (or not) as any of us, all in different ways. Or the expressions of pleasant surprise by groups in Kutch who often work together but, were unaware of the range and depth of each others’ work, and the possibilities of further collaboration based on this new understanding expressed at the Sangam. Amongst the “earthy” outcomes of such exchanges is that the wildlife conservation group Snow Leopard Conservancy India

(a co-host of the Ladakh Sangam), recognising the connection between wildlife and other sectors, organised (with Ladakh Ecological Development Group) its own mini-Sangam on agriculture, food, and health involving a few villages in Ladakh. It is difficult to see if other such “cross-overs” have happened as a result of the Sangam process, due to poor follow-up processes (on which more below), but it would be surprising if they have not. People are often hungry for ideas on what they can do and how they can do things. Many are disillusioned with today’s “deadening” life and wanting livelier things to do. Gatherings such as the Sangams help such people to take their search wider and deeper. One of the more hopeful outcomes of the vs on youth is that several subsequent Sangams and related processes will hopefully have a focus on youth.

Participants of the various Sangams are also linked up through an e-list, on which news, stories, events, analyses, and conversations are shared. At the time of writing this article, there is a lively discussion relating to a proposed “*Mohabbat ka Karawan*,” which aims to visit families of those affected by the horrific “lynchings” of Muslims that have shaken India’s conscience.⁸ The discussion focuses on the need to also recognise the times when members of the majority Hindu community have come to the aid of minorities, sometimes at risk of their own lives. The vs process and its list is already proving useful in that through this many members have spread the message of this Karawan, or planned to join it, as also given critical inputs on how to make it more meaningful and inclusive.

However, weak follow-up has significantly hindered the ability to learn about such collaborations (or other impacts of the Sangams). The vs model relies on the co-hosts and participants of each Sangam to take the process forward in their own region or relating to their subject. Though it is very likely that some such follow-up is happening, it has been very hard to get participants to report on it. Also the e-list through which participants are supposed to keep in touch (within and between regions and themes) is predominantly run in English. This inevitably keeps out a number of non-English speakers; and as

a written medium, of course it also keeps out those who use only oral communications.

Collective visioning: The third major objective of the vs initiative, collective visioning, has been perhaps its most important and innovative element. It relates to what this article started with—our modern-day inability or unwillingness to dream and envision utopias. It attempts to break through this, not so much by recalling the visions that the significant figures like MK Gandhi, Karl Marx, B R Ambedkar, Rabindranath Tagore, etc, had set up, but instead through visioning from below without discounting the former. Interactions at the Sangams and occasionally in discussions on the vs e-list have focused not only on practices of alternatives, but also on concepts and visions.

There has been an assumption in much of academia and even in much of civil society, especially those belonging to the urban and middle classes, that intellectual, conceptual, ideological and theoretical outputs are produced predominantly from within such classes. This stems, at least partly, from the overwhelming bias towards the written word to the exclusion of the oral. Given that much of Adivasi or other local community knowledge and wisdom is transmitted and passed down orally, their ideas, philosophy, world views remain hidden to the world of formal intellectuals. The farmer, the pastoralist, the fisherperson, the industrial worker, the craftsperson are considered practitioners, whereas those who study them are the intellectuals and theorists.⁹ In India this is likely exacerbated by the caste and gender hierarchies, built on the strong belief that Dalits and other lower castes, and women in general, are not capable of (or should be kept away from) intellectual conceptualisation.

Another possible reason for the neglect of folk ideologies and concepts is their neglect in official processes of planning and visioning. Overwhelmingly, governmental processes of planning at various levels, or at producing visions for the future of cities or particular sectors, involve only officials, academics, and urban civil society members, and only very

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rarely, the common person. Typically, for instance, agricultural planning and visioning does not involve farmers; educational planning and visioning does not involve students, and so on.

The vs process has consciously tried to break away from these trends. At the first Sangam in Timbaktu (Andhra Pradesh) in 2014, Kalpavriksh introduced a note “In Search of Alternatives: Key Aspects and Principles” for discussion. This note was a synthesis of the understanding of the key trends, principles, and strategies emerging in myriad grassroots initiatives in the various sectors mentioned above. It includes wisdom and concepts expressed by ordinary people in communities and movements. This draft note has since then been discussed at most of the Sangams, as far as possible in local language versions. Between 2014 and 2017 several hundred people have been part of these discussions, and the current (fifth) version (as of mid-2017) of the note includes key elements from the very rich insights that have been obtained.¹⁰

What is an alternative? The note titled “In Search of Alternatives” contains sections on what constitutes an alternative (especially to distinguish between what are only small reforms within the system, and what are transformations that shake the system) (for example, simply recycling plastics vs questioning the kinds and amounts of plastics being produced and used); what are the various spheres of radical alternatives; how these translate or could translate in various human sectors; what are the fundamental values and principles underlying these; and what strategies are necessary to get towards a just and sustainable future. A number of open-ended questions are also raised, pointing to how the ideological and conceptual base for transformation needs to be further explored.

Even as this note will continue evolving through the next few Sangams, it has spawned a by-product in the form of an “Alternatives Transformation Format (ATF).”¹¹ This format is meant to be used by actors within an initiative where transformations towards justice and sustainability are being attempted. This can be done with or without external facilitation, enabling these actors to see how holistic, coherent, and comprehensive their initiative is, where they are lacking, and what more they can do. As of the time of writing this, the format has begun to be field-tested in Kutch in India and will be used in Lomerio in Bolivia, and possibly Yeni Foca in Turkey, as part of a global project “Academic-Activist Co-generation of Knowledge on Environmental Justice” (ACKnowl-EJ). Based on this it will be modified for further and wider use.¹²

Some organisations are also considering using the vs framework note and the ATF for critical self-reflection. At the Western Himalaya mini-Sangam, a few participant groups explored, in front of other participants, how they were doing along the five spheres. At the Kutch Sangam, there was self-questioning about the economic and ecological sustainability of livelihood approaches that help transform the economies of craftspersons (and especially women), but rely on distant markets to do so.

Porosity of ideological boundaries: One of the most interesting observations is that in the Sangam space, conventional

ideological barriers seem to become more porous. The Maharashtra Sangam, for instance, had participants with strong Gandhian, Marxist, and/or feminist perspectives. A process to put together a Sangam on Alternative Economies (to be held in 2018) has involved a preliminary discussion, where participants from Gandhian and Marxist backgrounds debated the issue of non-violent economies; while interesting differences of semantics and substance emerged (for instance, the question of whether it is economics that can be non-violent, or a belief in non-violence that can lead to a different economics), there was also a broad agreement that an alternative economy (or economies) need to have non-violence as a crucial ethic, while class struggle involving marginalised workers would have to also be a core element.

There may be several possible reasons for this porosity of ideological boundaries. First, that the participants coming for the Sangams are already oriented towards being more open, more receptive, more respectful of diversity. Second, there is a positivity of a discussion on alternatives as contrasted to the negativity of a discussion focusing on problems and criticism. This may lend itself to greater openness, more dialogue than debate, and more willingness to engage in a constructive rather than destructive criticism (a spirit that is explicitly emphasised at the beginning of each Sangam). Third, and possibly most important, experiences from the ground are impossible to silo-ise into ideological or sectoral boxes; the experience of a Dalit woman farmer breaking out of caste and gender and class barriers and achieving food sovereignty lends itself magnificently to holistic, out-of-box ideologies. She would much rather not be classified into being part of a Marxist, or a Gandhian, or an Ambedkarite revolution, but perhaps all rolled into one and much more. The evolving vs framework note perhaps reflects this holism in its own humble way.

Political critical mass: Finally, the fourth objective of creating a political critical mass is intended to influence the structures of power towards progressive policy changes as also greater capacity amongst people to practise direct democracy and other aspects of alternative transformation. This has been envisaged as a long-term objective from the beginning, its importance underlined by the need to not only protest destructive development approaches but also show that there are viable alternatives. At a few Sangams the outcomes have been oriented towards this. At the Ladakh Sangam, for example, the local co-hosts were keen on bringing out a set of earthy recommendations they could use to do advocacy with the Ladakh Hill Council. At the National Food Sangam in 2016, participants issued a declaration in favour of community-based sustainable agriculture, and opposing attempts to introduce genetically modified mustard.

At a more general level, a start has been made by helping to initiate a Sangam of Sangams (SOS) process along with several other networks, to bring together movements, groups and individuals working on basic political, social, cultural transformation towards a more just society. As its background note states: “People in India, in particular, a majority section of the

oppressed communities, are facing multiple crises, including deprivation from basic needs, discrimination, intolerance and hatred, increasing inequalities of various kinds, ecological destruction, and dispossession from livelihood and survival resources. There is also a recent upsurge of religious, cultural and economic right-wing and fascist forces. No single organisation, movement, group or network has the strength, depth, scale, and ability to tackle all these crises and the forces causing them. It is in humble recognition and deep realisation of this that the idea of an *vs* was initially proposed, to bring together various networks dealing with these issues. The basic idea is to eventually come up with a common action agenda to affect larger social, economic and political change, while retaining the individual identities of each network.

As of mid-2017 two meetings of this process have been organised. A proposal being actively considered is the production of peoples agendas in a number of areas, including food and agriculture, livelihoods, ethnic and social justice, the economy, alternative development or well-being, poverty and deprivation. These could be used to stimulate and back up grass-roots mobilisation and experimentation, as also in political forums such as the 2019 national elections and various state elections before and after that.

Is the Structure Fit to Purpose?

The *vs* process is just that, a process. It is not a project, it is not an organisation, not even a formal network (though it does function like an informal one). Its loose structure has a national core group (consisting of over 40 movements and organisations as of mid-2017), and for the first three years its hub has been Kalpavriksh—a role that will hopefully rotate periodically. Each Sangam is organised by one or more hosts, usually from amongst groups that have volunteered to organise a Sangam or been requested to. As emphasised from the start, as a process or a platform, *vs* is open to be used by anyone who broadly agrees with the kind of conceptual framework that has evolved (described above).

While in theory there is this openness, a significant dependence on Kalpavriksh (consists) for initiating or holding things together. This is beginning to break with the Youth *vs* (February 2017), whose follow-up has been taken on by other groups, and the Madhya Pradesh *vs* (September 2017) where there were three other co-hosts. This trend towards decentralisation needs to be encouraged, with other groups taking the coordination role, and the national core group ensuring that basic values and orientation are not compromised.

For follow-up, there has been some debate on whether a somewhat more formal structure may be necessary. This has been proposed for instance by some participants of the Energy *vs*, who want to convert the participants' e-list into a formal network that could regularly take up issues of energy alternatives. The upcoming national *vs* in November 2017 will discuss such issues, and more broadly on whether any changes are needed in the structure to enable it to better fulfil the *vs* objectives.

Conclusions

The *vs* initiative attempts to be a celebration of the ability of ordinary people to innovate, persevere, collaborate, and find solutions to what may seem intractable problems. It puts back faith in communities and individual citizens, who are not waiting for experts and administration to lead the way to sustainability and justice. But it also shows that transformative initiatives can come from anywhere, from civil society and communities, from government officials and research institutions, from social enterprises and businesses. It shows further that the visioning of a better society, of a future we want to strive towards, is not the prerogative of formal “experts.” It can be done by putting together the wisdom, knowledge and experience of people anywhere. People in different stages of life, in whatever culture and livelihood, at whatever level of learning and education, in nature or in the farm or in classrooms. People who have shown themselves capable of doing the most extraordinary things.

Over a decade ago, many of the current members of the *vs* Core Group, including myself, were involved in a nationwide exercise to prepare India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. Over 50,000 people participated in discussions, public hearings, rallies, fairs and festivals, seminars, walks, and myriad other activities to help prepare about 100 local, state, regional, and thematic plans, all culminating in the national one. Unfortunately at the last moment the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, which had commissioned the exercise to Kalpavriksh to coordinate, rejected its outputs (and three years later produced an apology of an action plan) (Kothari and Kohli 2009). But the process created a momentum that many local communities and groups carried forward, for example, through a significant expanse in food sovereignty and biodiversity documentation exercises by Dalit women farmers of the *DDS* in Telangana, or biodiversity celebrations and enterprise-based livelihoods amongst women by Vanastree of Uttara Kannada, Karnataka.¹³ It also created a large body of information and analysis, in the form of the 100-odd reports and plans, all of which was made publicly available.¹⁴ And it had a number of unanticipated outcomes, such as newspaper columns on biodiversity for children, the spawning of a series of biodiversity festivals not only showcasing local diversity but also encouraging its continuation and revival, and others.

For us, the major lesson was that even as the final products are important, they are not more important than the process by which those are produced. The more democratic, participatory, diverse, and exciting one can make the process, the more the likelihood of at least some aims being met, and unanticipated benefits being incurred. The information and capacity that truly participatory processes generate have their own value. Also that even as some of our activities may be oriented at trying to influence state policy, ultimately it is peoples' empowerment that will carry forward transformation. It is these lessons that have been carried forward in the *vs* experiment: create forums for people to meet, share, jointly create, and transmit further, and trust that something good will come out of it.

NOTES

- 1 For a description of the process, and reports of the various gatherings held under it, please see <http://www.kalpavriksh.org/index.php/alternatives/alternatives-knowledge-center/353-vikalp-sangam-coverage>.
- 2 There is considerable literature on these impacts; for a detailed consolidation and analysis, see Shrivastava and Kothari (2012).
- 3 These impacts are spelt out in detail in Shrivastava and Kothari (2012); see in particular chapters 3 and 6.
- 4 See, for instance, Roy et al (2017); Gopalakrishnan (undated); and <http://www.righttofoodcampaign.in>.
- 5 There is considerable ecofeminist literature on the relationship between women and environment, including varying perspectives by Vandana Shiva and Bina Agarwal in the Indian context, see Shiva (1988) and Agarwal (1994); on the neglect of Dalit issues by environmentalists, see Sharma (2012).
- 6 Note that the Resources section of the website is not restricted to India, while the Stories, Perspectives, and Events sections are predominantly from or pertaining to India.
- 7 Reports, video clips, and other materials generated at these Sangams are available at <http://www.kalpavriksh.org/index.php/alternatives/alternatives-knowledge-center/353-vikalp-sangam-coverage> and <http://www.vikalpsangam.org/resources/>.
- 8 www.karwanemohabbat.in; www.facebook.com/karwanemohabbat. It should be recognised that while the *Karwan's* immediate focus is the "lynchings," its larger context is the general atmosphere of hatred and intolerance that appears to be growing (though by no means started) during the BJP's rule at the centre, with Muslims, Christians, and Dalits in particular being targets of "hate crimes."
- 9 There seems to be little written material about this in academic circles, though it is a frequent topic of discussion in civil society. Some related issues are dealt with by Shambu Prasad (2011) and authors in Basole (2015).
- 10 <http://www.vikalpsangam.org/about/the-search-for-alternatives-key-aspects-and-principles/>.
- 11 http://www.vikalpsangam.org/static/media/uploads/Resources/alternatives_transformation_framework_revised_20.2.2017.pdf.
- 12 Talking of the influence of the vs outside India, the first non-Indian vs was also held in early June in Beirut, Lebanon, bringing together several groups and individuals working on resistance to destructive development and/or alternatives.
- 13 See "Deccan Andhra" substate biodiversity action plan at <http://www.kalpavriksh.org/index.php/conservation-livelihoods/72-focus-areas/conservation-livelihoods/biodiversity-and-wildlife/national-biodiversity-strategy-action-plan/225-bsaps-ftp-sub-state>; see also <http://ddsindia.com>, and <http://vanastree.org>.
- 14 For the full documentation arising from this exercise, including a detailed process document, see <http://www.kalpavriksh.org/index.php/conservation-livelihoods/biodiversity-and-wildlife/national-biodiversity-strategy-action-plan>.

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