



Every grassroots practice and movement - whether of sustaining livelihoods and participatory governance, of conserving agriculture and forests, of transforming education and urban spaces, or of empowering women and other oppressed segments of society - has contained within it a diverse heritage of ideas, cultures and worldviews. Can these seemingly isolated perspectives and visions be brought together to form a comprehensive framework that poses fundamental alternatives to today's dominant economic and political system? Can we then collectively evolve a vision of an alternative future?

For this, it is essential that a platform exists for people and groups and movements that practice alternatives to come together in regional and national gatherings to constructively challenge and learn from each other, build alliances and evolve alternative worldviews. We call these Alternatives Confluences or Vikalp Sangams.

The first two regional Vikalp Sangams were held at the Timbaktu Collective in Andhra Pradesh in October 2014 and at the Centre for Experiencing Socio Cultural Interaction (CESCI) in Tamil Nadu in February 2015. Several more regional and thematic Sangams will be held over the next few years.



*The joyous gatherings at the Timbaktu Collective (left) and CESCI (right).*



*The Hexagon (above left), with its conical straw and bamboo roof, was the main meeting hall at the Timbaktu Collective. Participants had opportunities aplenty for renewal, including hikes into the restored forests surrounding the campus (above middle). On the final day, local dancers gave an energetic and memorable performance of traditional dances (above right), reminding participants of India's enormous cultural diversity.*



*The Sangam at CESCI near Madurai was an exciting combination of serious discussions and sharing in an airy hall, with joint art, music, and theatre activities, bringing out the creativity of alternative explorations in Tamil Nadu and surrounds.*