

EXTERNAL EDITOR'S NOTE



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Navigating the materia-verse.

In this issue of Kalpa, as we embark on an exploration of the 'materia-verse,' I urge readers to transcend a reductionist perspective on materials and conceive of them as integral components of a holistic entity. Moving away from 'sustainability' as a noun invites critical thinking on the multi-faceted connotations inherent in the notion of what it means to 'sustain.' To do so, one must shift from the 'container' idea of space and recognize space outside of it. Essentially, by thinking of 'space as a continuum,' where space encompasses everything—matter, emptiness, and energy—an idea similar to the way Ar. Dilip Da Cunha conceptualized the world as different degrees of wetness.

The inaugural section addresses questions of scale, community, and adaptability. The example of Kumbh Mela underscores its cyclical nature, its deference to topography, and judicious use of resources. Against the backdrop of contemporary climatic exigencies, Kumbh Mela provides a pivotal context for comprehending the insights presented by Ar. Anushree Parkhi on deployable structures, delineating their adaptiveness and transportability, along with Ar. Nishant's article that scrutinizes valuation methodologies for tangible and intangible heritage resources. In a complementary vein, Nipun Prabhakar's interview emphasizes the need for design practices to operate or be part of 'collectives' with shared values in the built/unbuilt environment, leading to rigorous questioning of the architect's role and what it means to 'build' today. Rooted in grassroots engagement, their practice attempts to look at sustainability holistically, respecting the agency of the communities they design for.

The subsequent section explores collaborations between students and faculty and their varied engagements to understand materials tangibly—their properties, lifecycles, efficiency, embodied carbon, among others—and use them to design community spaces. Mr. Harish Borah highlights the significant ramifications of the construction industry on the global economy and the environment. While he acknowledges progress in the development of energy-efficient and carbon-free buildings, he calls for a comprehensive and accelerated approach to solving the climate crisis.

The third section engages in meticulous examinations of specific materials by individual contributors, underscoring the necessity of a change in the construction sector towards the selection of ecologically sound materials and methodologies. All the articles emphasize how crucial it is to study the physiographical setting of a place when determining the optimal building materials. Nuanced discussions ensue regarding the intricacies and constraints inherent in working with local materials and artisans, acknowledging challenges in standardization, and expressing aspirations to harness latent material potential through technological advancements.

The concluding section deals with the realities and challenges of working within the construction sector, the ways in which material properties influence design and the connotation of luxury through material expressions. An analysis by Dr. Shikha Verma leads to a conceptual framework advocating a shared GIS database, facilitating collaboration between C & D waste processors and users of processed C & D waste. Simultaneously, Senthil Doss and Edifice consultants elucidate how the selection of a material as a starting point of a project influences its design, construction, and decision-making processes. They demonstrate that understanding a material in its local context holistically begets a distinctive design language, thereby resulting in specific manifestations in the built form.

We hope these diverse perspectives offer new avenues to students and professionals to embrace a more holistic and conscientious approach to the ever-evolving 'materia-verse,' articulate what it means to sustain and contemplate the intricate relationship between materials, design, space, and time.

Happy Reading!