

# **Post-extractive Material Practice: the case of quarried stone**

abstract

Humans have extracted materials from the earth for millennia, but only recently have our extraction practices had planetary consequences. The scale, intensity and violence of current practices is theorized as ‘extractivism’, and as a number of recent publications and exhibitions have made clear, a post-extractive future is urgently needed. But how and under what conditions can we address such an imperative? Is it possible to aim toward a pre-modern notion of extraction as a custodial practice of care in relation to earth’s resources?

Following recent projects to re-introduce load-bearing stone, known loosely as ‘The New Stone Age’, this argumentative essay explores a post-extractive future through the case of quarried stone. We see it as a poignant case of how we might move from extractivism to a more custodial form of extraction, and showing the potential to reduce our need for materials such as steel, concrete and wood, industries that are driven in large part by extractivist principles. Based on Timothy Morton’s notion of ecological thought, we argue for a new way to understand stone extraction as an ecology of interconnections. On the one hand, great potential emerges in the circularity and reversibility of stone construction, along with its extremely long life cycle, and on the other we see a strong potential to recover the historical connections between architecture and the anthropogenic landscapes of stone extraction. In the end, we position the issue of material extraction within its multifaceted entanglements of landscape, construction, socio-cultural and economic contexts.