



# ‘Halt Extraction’ investigates how construction materials transform the Earth’s resources into our built environment through global and local supply chains and the norms that regulate their use. It deploys that as a brief to explore how a post-extractive architecture could emerge and become prevalent.

Halt Extraction

Spring 2025 Design Studio  
More on IS-Academia

Halt Extraction  
Spring 2025 Design Studio

Mondays and Tuesdays

Monday: 10:00-12:00, 13:00-19:00  
Tuesday: 10:00-12:00, 15:00-19:00

Office Hours as requested

Credits: 12 ECTS

Location: Varies, See Studio Schedule  
Studio Space: SG 2211 - Studio Space

This class is taught in English

Teaching Team:  
Charlotte Malterre-Barthes (charlotte.malterrebarthes@epfl.ch) Elif Erez-Henderson (elif.erez@epfl.ch), Antoine Iweins (antoine.iweinsdecckhoutte@epfl.ch), Kathlyn Kao (kathlyn.kao@epfl.ch)

SAs:  
Carolina Pichler (carolina.pichler@epfl.ch)  
Eva Oustric (eva.oustric@epfl.ch)

## Course Description

Nota Bene: This studio is part of the ‘Moratorium on New Construction’ cycle, one of RIOT’s meta agenda, following a series of topics seeking to center systemic change in architecture and the building industry. This means the class will prioritize radical designs that engage with repair, remediation, care, tactical interventions, system design and policy making, and interrogate architecture as the sole ‘art of building buildings.’ Architecture is here at the forefront, considered both as a problem and as a powerful tool for change, if and when it is used as such.

“You know that we are living in a material world,” Madonna, Matthew E. Marston / Paul Christopher Brown © Sony/atv Songs Llc, Imagem Publishing Ltd.

‘Halt Extraction’ scrutinizes the intersection of design disciplines with extractivism and resource exploitation, focusing on developing post-extractive architectural and urban design strategies. The studio investigates how construction materials transform the Earth’s resources into our built environment through global and local supply chains, and how design can contribute to post-extractive architectures. Grounded in arguments explored in the

book “A Moratorium on New Construction,” we seek to address the political problems of construction as designers. The course progresses through two main phases: 1) The research phase establishes a comprehensive understanding of how design disciplines intersect with extractivism and resource exploitation through mapping the global and local chains of construction materials and uncovering the normative systems in place that regulate their use in design strategies. By investigating construction materials (i.e., plaster, wood, concrete, brick, steel) and their political economy (how value is extracted from them), we hope to unpack how the industry translates the Earth’s resources into our built environment. We also seek to

understand the normative regulations, specs, and legal frameworks that dictate how these materials are deployed in construction. 2) Framed by these regulatory limits and equipped with critical thinking, we will devise design strategies that do not rely on destruction and exhaustion to produce spaces. During the design phase, building on this foundation, we will engage with mainly existing structures rather than defaulting to new construction, using current market conditions as testing grounds for alternative approaches.

This studio is based on a conception of urban design as a multidimensional trans-scalar discipline. Not only political, economic, cultural, and geo-tectonic forces affect and shape the built environment at the planetary and global scale, at the territorial and landscape scale, at the neighborhood and urban scale, down to the architectural and material scale—and to the body of the human and more-than-human, but space and its arrangements have a reciprocating effect on these forces, humans, and non-humans acting upon them. We will design within these gradations, positing that each constituent scale is distinct and can be considered on its own, yet the piece as a whole is only complete with each scale, resulting in the sum of all the small scales producing a large-scale total. The studio engages with complex issues surrounding the political economy of space production, the actors, forces and mechanisms that generate the spaces we inhabit. We will also think around temporal scales to challenge “impatient capital” as it dictates architectural, urban, and landscape projects for immediacy, exploring seemingly contradictory notions of ephemeral and impermanent, durable, and longevity as frameworks for operation.

The studio seeks to bridge the gap between material extraction and architecture and to articulate questions about designers’ role in inventing futures liberated from the destructive systems construction relies upon. In the face of an unprecedented social and climate crisis, we seek to critically engage with the tensions brought by modernity, without relying on romanticized pre-modern materialities. On the one hand, we will deploy and expand the ‘classic’ tools of spatial representation at our disposal (sketches, 3d, plans, ). We will use drawing as a research device, in particular, to uncover supply chains and architectural precedents. On the other hand, we will seek to expand our design toolbox to engage with the complexities of what a post-extractive architecture can be and new tools (various media, narratives, performances, etc.). The course recognizes that construction materials are deeply embedded in complex historical and contemporary contexts. Through research, readings, and field work, we will get insights on how materials used in construction today are grounded in “past, present, and future extraction and production processes (...) extracted from lands with a long history of unjust exploitation of colonized

or marginalized groups—racialized and gendered bodies—processed through energy-hungry, mechanized methods that have disastrous impacts on ecologies and populations globally, then and now.”[1]

[1] Malterre-Barthes, Charlotte. *A Moratorium on New Construction* (Berlin, London: Sternberg Press/MIT Press, 2025).



[A] Andeer, granite quarry, 1976. Schmid, Walter. ETH Library Zurich

[B] “Andeer is a green, moderately to strongly, schistose gneiss of medium grain size with small white inclusions. Andeer is quarried in the three quarries: Bärenburg (Crap da Sal), Cuolmet and Parsagna in Graubünden in slightly different varieties and exported worldwide. Andeer became well known thanks to Hans Hollein’s Centrum Bank in Vaduz, whose roof and façade are made of the material. Andeer is very resistant to weathering and is characterized by high abrasion resistance. Andeer is used for floor and step slabs, façade cladding and portal surrounds as well as for kitchen tops and fireplaces. In gardening and landscaping, it is used as wall and paving stone as well as for block masonry. It is also processed into road and railroad ballast or used in the concrete industry. In the 1990s, around 4000 m3 of Andeer was quarried annually, in 2010 it was 17,000 m3. The original rock of Andeer, a granite porphyry (fine-grained granite with inclusions), was formed around 270 million years ago from magma (molten rock) that penetrated the earth’s crust from the mantle and slowly cooled.