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# Non-Extractive Architecture: On Designing without Depletion Vol. 1

## V-A-C Zattere

Dorsoduro 1401,  
30123 Venice

## For more information:

[helen.weaver@v-a-c.org](mailto:helen.weaver@v-a-c.org)  
[press@v-a-c.org](mailto:press@v-a-c.org)

Published by **V-A-C** and **Sternberg Press**, edited by Space Caviar with an introduction by Joseph Grima and contributions by Dele Adeyemo, Benjamin Bratton, Stephanie Carlisle, Emanuele Coccia, Keller Easterling, Swarnabh Ghosh, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Phineas Harper, Elsa Hoover, Jane Hutton, Interiors Agency, Elisa Iturbe, Luke Jones, Chiara Di Leone, Armin Linke, Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, Nicholas Pevzner, Maria Smith and Mark Wigley.

**Non-Extractive Architecture: On Designing without Depletion Vol.1** was released on 15 March to coincide with V-A-C Foundation's live research and exhibition project *Non-Extractive Architecture: On Designing without Depletion*, running at its Venice headquarters this year. This illustrated volume has been designed as an accompaniment to the research that will be carried out during the year-long project at V-A-C Zattere—which will result in a second volume set to be published in early 2022. This reference handbook sets out to find a new approach to architecture, one based on long-term thinking, material resources and their subsequent landscapes, and the integration of community values into the construction industry.

Launched in March 2021, the project *Non-Extractive Architecture: On Designing without Depletion* is led by Joseph Grima and design research studio Space Caviar. It has transformed Palazzo delle Zattere into an active laboratory for the definition and development of *Non-Extractive Architecture* forming parallel strands of research, residences, public programmes and publishing initiatives.

As the true urgency of the environmental crises we face becomes clear, architecture requires fundamental reinvention. The assumption that the building industry can only fulfil humanity's needs with the irreversible exploitation of the environment, of people, and of the future needs to be reconsidered. Through a series of essays by architects, geographers, historians, economists, urbanists, and philosophers, **Non-Extractive Architecture: On Designing without Depletion Vol.1** explores whether an alternative paradigm in design is possible, and what values it might be founded on. Could architecture be understood as the practice of guardianship of the environment, both physical and social, rather than an agent of depletion? Could the role of the architect deal less with form and more with integration, circularity, reuse, material research, and community-building? Could supply chains be made shorter, and could buildings be more closely tied to the economies they exist within? What are the models and metrics that such a paradigm could adopt?

The book **Non-Extractive Architecture: On Designing without Depletion Vol.1**, draws on a multiplicity of voices and perspectives to examine architecture as an expanded field that connects people and places well beyond the conventional definition of "site". Including texts by philosopher Emanuele Coccia on architecture and its connection with all living beings, architect and mapmaker Elsa Hoover on Indigenous communities and rituals of land stewardship, photographer Armin Linke documenting materials and their connected extractive landscapes and critic Elisa Iturbe on how carbon modernity has been a foundational force in the development of the modern world through the case study of Magnitogorsk city.

Both the project and the book are an attempt to question some of the assumptions underlying contemporary architectural production from a material and social perspective, and rethink the construction industry in the belief that better alternatives exist.

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The book is divided into five main sections, each addressing a structural topic:

**Part I. Architecture as Extraction: Historical Notes.** Investigating the deep history of architecture's relationship with material cultures and economies in order to understand its present dependency on extractive practices. Dele Adeyemo recovers a history of global capitalism emerging through transatlantic slavery that investigates how these power relations and networks live on today; Elisa Iturbe explores how carbon modernity has been a foundational force in the development of the modern world and its architectural identity; Mark Wigley steps back to the very genesis of architectural practice as a concept in order to consider its possible futures.

**Part II. Invisible Cities: The Origins of Matter.** Exploring the invisible counter-landscapes, supply chains, submerged economies and labour marketplaces that support the construction industry and architectural process. Luke Jones considers whether a post-carbon architecture might in fact echo some of the fundamental material principles, such as all-timber construction; Charlotte Malterre-Barthes seeks to uncover how the politics and territoriality of resource extraction are materialized at the architecture scale; Stephanie Carlisle and Nicholas Pevzner argue that fundamental change in the way we think about materials and the role of the designer is needed.

**Part III. Immaterial Extractivism: Community, Society, Labour.** A non-extractive understanding of architecture must consider the true expense of its realisation, maintenance, and decommissioning, not only in material but also in human terms. Keller Easterling examines how problems of resource depletion and climate change are entangled on multiple levels with issues of racism, a lack of political representation, and administrative short sightedness; Macarena Gómez-Barris argues that non-extractive modes of thinking, being, and doing can be redefined and must reckon with colonial memory; Swarnabh Ghosh calls for a wider dialogue about the role of labor in architecture in schools, in architectural offices, and on construction sites.

**Part IV. The Long Now.** The form of the designed environment is in many ways a function of the broader economic framework within which it exists. Is it possible for architecture to be a driver of prosperity in a broader sense, not solely by material consumption and resource extraction? Benjamin Bratton looks at the entangled relationship between geotechnologies and geopolitics, arguing the need to redesign our economy and geostrategic frameworks; Chiara Di Leone proposes a new geoeconomics that aims to shift the conversation from a single metric—growth or degrowth—toward a more fundamental spatial and temporal understanding of economics; Maria Smith and Phineas Harper argue in favor of a degrowth economy that could unlock a positive, reciprocal relationship between humanity and the environment.

**Part V. Toward a Non-Extractive Architecture.** The first thing in need of being redesigned is architecture itself. This book is the beginning of a process investigating the material and social dynamics underlying the production of the designed environment, with the aim of encouraging architects to be both more responsible and more ambitious in their thinking as designers and custodians of the built environment. Elsa Hoover writes of a journey that illustrates the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the fragile integrity of landscapes in which we build; Emanuele Coccia imagines ways of reforming architecture in order to recognize that all living beings are ultimately connected; Jane Hutton reflects on reciprocal relations and solidarity as possible starting points to imagine what non-extractive material practice could look like.

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**Visual Interludes.** Featuring photographs by Italian photographer and filmmaker Armin Linke with a focus on materials and landscapes of extraction. Featuring an Exhibition Schema for Non-Extractive Architecture—a visual handbook for repurposing the grid by Interiors Agency.

**Product Details**

Publisher: V–A–C and Sternberg Press

Language: English

Paperback: 296 pages, 49 illustrations

ISBN 978-3956795916

Price: 26.00<sup>eur</sup> / 32.00<sup>usd</sup> / 42.00<sup>cad</sup>

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**Notes to editors**

**V–A–C Foundation** produces new culture together with artists and audiences alike. It is a platform for open discussion aimed at redefining the contemporary landscape. Working with local communities, V–A–C promotes its exhibition, publishing, performative and learning programmes beyond all disciplinary boundaries and thus constantly resets the coordinates for dialogue within a new global geography. This methodology is employed in all V–A–C initiatives, taking place in its Venetian space, through international, cross-institutional partnerships and in its future home for arts and culture in Moscow, GES-2.

**GES-2** is V–A–C's new major cultural venue for the city of Moscow, housed in an historic power station. Designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop, GES-2 opens to the public in 2021.

**V–A–C Zattere** is the Foundation's Venetian headquarters launched in spring 2017. This renovated building, situated on Zattere overlooking the Canale della Giudecca, can accommodate exhibitions, events and residencies. Originally dating back to the mid 1800s, the building's interior was renovated at different times from the 1950s to the 1990s. The Foundation commissioned local architect Alessandro Pedron of apml architetti to carry out the more recent renovation project, transforming Palazzo delle Zattere into a new centre for contemporary culture for the city of Venice. The entire space covers 2000 m<sup>2</sup> over four levels, half of which is exhibition space.

**Joseph Grima** is an architect and curator based in Milan, Italy. He is the Creative Director of Design Academy Eindhoven and Chief Curator of Design at Triennale di Milano, and is also co-founder (together with Tamar Shafir) of Space Caviar, an architecture and research practice operating at the intersection of design, technology, critical theory and the public realm.

Grima was previously the editor-in-chief of Domus magazine and director of Storefront for Art and Architecture, an independent gallery in New York City. In 2014 he was appointed co-curator of the first Chicago Architecture Biennial, and in 2012 he co-directed the first Istanbul Design Biennial. He was also the artistic director of Matera European Capital of Culture 2019.

He has taught and lectured widely at universities in Europe, Asia and America, including Strelka Institute of Media, Architecture and Design in Moscow, and has served on numerous international juries, including the jury of the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2010 directed by Kazuyo Sejima.

**Space Caviar** is an architecture and research studio operating at the intersection of design, technology, politics and the public realm. Founded in 2013 by Joseph Grima and Tamar Shafir, the office uses built work, exhibitions, publishing, writing and film to investigate and document contemporary modes of habitation and the spatialisation of social and political practice.

Space Caviar's work has been shown at the Venice Architecture Biennale, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Biennale Interieur, Vitra Design Museum and Nilufar Gallery, among others.

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