



Landscape processes and systems

It is essential for designers to have an understanding of the natural processes that make and influence the landscape. It is also important to understand how people have changed and continue to alter landscapes through agriculture, industry and settlement. Landscape architecture modifies or harnesses natural processes (for example, the growth of plants, rainfall) for human purposes through construction and management. The aims of design are often to conserve, protect or enhance natural environments or to regenerate natural systems in places which have been contaminated or laid waste. The primary natural systems and elements that form the context for, and may be altered in, landscape design are briefly:

- local climate
- local hydrology
- local geology and geomorphology
- local soils
- local vegetation
- local air
- local fauna
- local ecosystems (the interaction of all of the above).

All of these aspects need to be surveyed and evaluated before landscapes can be changed in design. The 'natural' elements of water, topography and vegetation are the 'material' of design along with processed substances.