



Recycling versus *tabula rasa*

Sweeping away old landscape for new is sometimes confused with creativity and originality in design. A *tabula rasa* approach to landscape architecture, where existing site conditions and landscape elements are cleared or ignored, is inappropriate in nearly all contexts for several reasons. First, recycling and conservation of materials, structures and vegetation is desirable for sustainability reasons. Second, landscapes accrue meanings and distinctive qualities over time and through use. Landscape design can be seen as a process of adding other

layers of form and meaning that integrate or juxtapose to older layers and meanings. Third, vegetation (particularly trees) takes many years to mature and to offer environmental and aesthetic benefits so, wherever possible, trees and vegetation of ecological value should be conserved. Fourth, landscapes – however degraded – often have uses and meanings for local people. The landscape architect must always seek to find out about and understand site uses before developing proposals for a site.