



Decolonising our cities

A VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON SCIENCE TEACHING RESOURCE

“TOI TU TE WHENUA – WHATU NGARO
NGARO TE TANGATA

AS PEOPLE PASS ON – THE LAND WILL
ALWAYS REMAINS”

WHO?



A collaboration between Victoria University of Wellington and Ngāti Toa, led by Dr Rebecca Kiddle.

WHAT IS DECOLONISATION?



When one nation is colonised by another, its development is driven by the culture of the coloniser rather than the original peoples. This process is often violent and tries to dispossess people of their land, culture, identity and practices.”

Decolonisation is the process through which an indigenous people are able to reconnect with their identity and have greater control of their nation’s development. It requires a shift not just in what actions are taken, but also in how people think. This process can have positive results for not only the indigenous people, but for the entire community.

Consider something like education. Aotearoa’s education system is almost entirely modelled around western ideas of how teaching and learning should take place. Many New Zealanders, both Pākehā and Māori, would be unable to describe how education would happen in a Māori context because of how ingrained our ideas are of how school should work despite the existence of kohanga and kura kaupapa schools. This applies to most aspects of our society.

DECOLONISING OUR CITIES?



Urban planning and design is largely done through the lens of eurocentric values rather than through the values of the indigenous people. Private land ownership is favoured over other forms of ownership, and communal spaces are designed with predominantly western ideas. The original names of locations are replaced by colonial ones. Aotearoa is a very good example of this. Despite all of our major cities being built on the sites of pā and kāinga, there is very little evidence of Māori values being included in their design. Some aspects of decolonisation are beginning to take place, for example the renaming of Wellington’s ‘Tinakori Hill’ to its original ‘Te Ahumairangi’, but there is still a lot of work to be done to better represent Māori values in our urban design.

IMAGINING DECOLONISED CITIES



The ‘Imagining Decolonised Cities’ competition was launched, encouraging people to imagine how two sites in Porirua could look if they were designed with Māori values rather than a colonial ones. Over forty submissions were received, offering a range of perspectives on what a decolonised city could look like.

The submissions and brief for ‘Imagining Decolonised Cities’ can be found at www.idcities.co.nz

