

OCTOBER 17 MICHELLE THOMPSON-FAWCETT



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Michelle Thompson-Fawcett (Ngāti Whātua) is an Associate Professor in Te Ihowhenua Department of Geography, Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo | University of Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand. Michelle's research focusses on power relations and practices of inclusion and exclusion in local planning. Her projects with Māori communities have been grounded by investigations into processes of urban design, cultural landscape management, cultural impact assessment and iwi/hapū (tribal) resource management and planning. Through her research she seeks proactive, reflective and visionary transformation of societal processes and environmental outcomes. She is co-editor of the book "Tāone Tupu Ora: Indigenous knowledge and sustainable urban design" (2010) Steele Roberts Aotearoa, and co-author of the book "Māori and Mining" (2013) Te Poutama Māori.

Gradual transformation of the cityscape by Indigenous innovation: a case study from Aotearoa

The last two decades have provided significant evidence that planning systems have both directly and indirectly marginalised and oppressed Indigenous peoples (Awatere et al. 2013). The degree of Indigenous involvement in planning and urban design is stunningly revealed in the ongoing relative invisibility of Indigenous histories and values in the built environment. Conventional planning processes continually fail to acknowledge, respect and understand Indigenous knowledge, values and interests appropriately (Matunga, 2013). Ongoing colonial practices have restricted the rights of Indigenous groups to plan, protect and participate in urban design, decision-making and policy-making (Durie, 1998). Of late, there has been some increasing recognition of the need for greater cultural sensitivity in planning and urban design processes and outcomes (Stuart & Thompson-Fawcett, 2010). Recent years have seen examples of meaningful effort in urban design thinking and practice to understand Indigenous values and, sometimes, enable Indigenous communities to work towards their own planning and design aspirations.

This talk presents results from ongoing research in Christchurch, New Zealand. Indigenous elders in this city have spoken often of the lack of visible Māori identity. However, following serious earthquakes from 2010-2011, the city's reconstruction is consciously including a cultural recovery that offers opportunity to make visible a bicultural identity for the first time in the city: formally identifying landmarks in the Māori language; constructing a cultural precinct; planting native shrubs valued by local Māori; making shared histories evident; introducing a locally specific Māori symbolism and design ethic; and making space for Māori ceremonies and events. This talk tracks the evolution of design

priorities and opportunities of an Indigenous urban development company based in Christchurch, from their origins in the mid-1990s to the present day. These Indigenous developers operate with a difference. Not only do they need to return an economic profit to the Indigenous community, but they also have a clear and growing responsibility to demonstrate cultural values in their design and operations. In the Christchurch context, this has meant that the Indigenous developer has not only had to cultivate a working relationship with the municipality, but also develop engagement processes with the various subtribes to which it is ultimately responsible, to ensure that cultural values are not only being incorporated into residential developments but are being enhanced through them for the long-term strength and vitality of local Indigenous culture and heritage. This has not happened overnight and there are definitely challenges, however, there is increasing pride from the tribe in urban developments for the cultural landscape and natural environment benefits being produced.

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