



Adaptation Futures 2025



Colonial legacies on adaptive capacity to climate change: relocation in New Caledonia (South Pacific)

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Research project: FUTURISKS

Presentation of the case study



(conception M.Girault/Realisation Pascal Brunello)



(BRGM, 2022)



Tiwandé, Côte Est, Grande Terre, V. Duvat

Exploring colonial roots of coastal risk production

- Fieldwork conducted in March-April 2024 and in June 2025
- Documentary research on historical processes

First field trip on the east coast of New Caledonia (March-April 2024)

- Semi-structured interviews with public institutions: 9
- Semi-structured interviews with Customary institutions: 3
- 1 Focus group with the Koé Tribe (Touho)
- Accompanied field trip
- Field-observations

Second field trip on the east coast of New Caledonia (June 2025)

- Semi-structured interviews with public institutions: 7
- Semi-structured interviews with Customary institutions: 1
- Semi-directive interview with the clan chief of the Mou tribe (Ponérihouen) + Accompanied field trip
- Semi-directive interview with the displaced member of the Delly clan (Touho)
- Field-observations

History of forced displacements and land dispossession processes

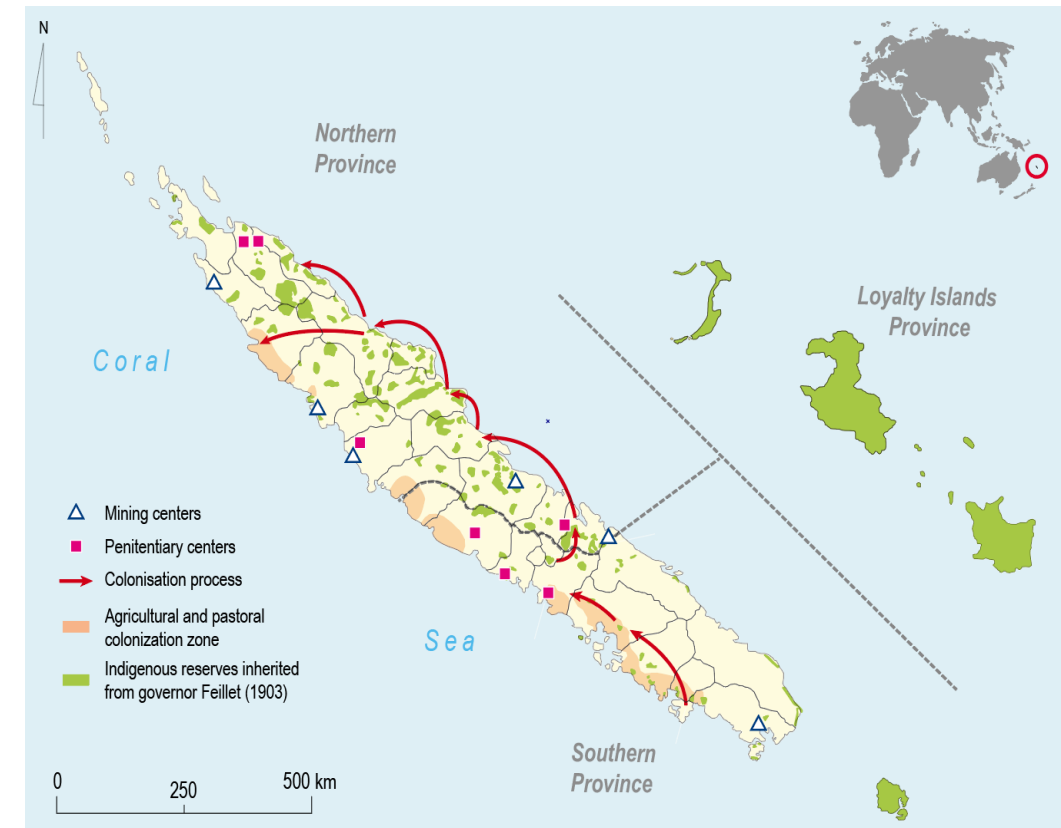
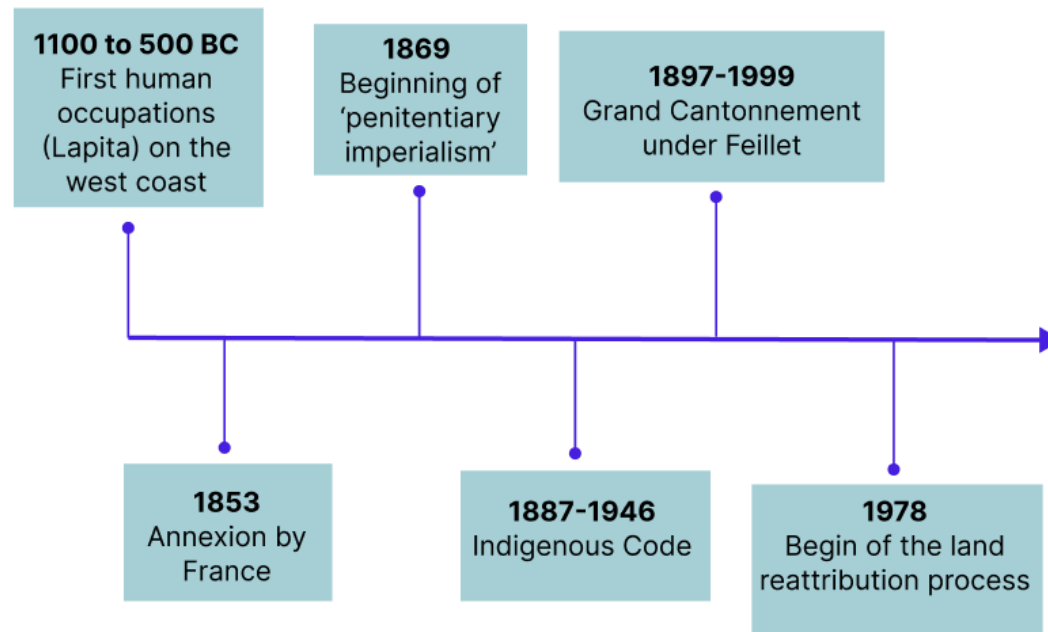


Fig.1. Land settlement on Grande Terre
(conception M.Girault/Realisation Pascal Brunello)

- Customary land (Ponérihouen) reattributed through Land Reform
- Fundings still missing to develop the slopes



Ponérihouen, 2025, M. Girault



Ponérihouen, 2025, M. Girault

‘Colonial fact’ and historical responsibility

"In this case, I say, with all the population displacement due to colonization, the State owes reparations. (...) As far as I'm concerned, the State must do its utmost. It's a colonial fact. The population was displaced by colonization. And the land problems we Kanaks have today are specifically due to that. Well, it's not the only one, but it's the vast majority. So if all these populations are impacted today by rising sea levels, well, if they're at the edge of the sea (...) at some point they've been displaced". (Interview Customary representative, NC1)*

Climate Change: a 'renegotiation arena' ?

- Climate change, through the issue of relocation, is also invested as an “arena” or opportunity to renegotiate land reattributions and the relations to the French State
- It questions the link between adaptation and the decolonisation process in New Caledonia

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Des aides pour les premiers réfugiés climatiques

Emmanuel Macron a été accueilli par la famille de Jethro Dally, victime de la montée des eaux et de l'érosion des côtes. / © B.B.

Sur la côte Est, l'érosion du littoral n'est pas une lointaine conséquence du réchauffement de la planète. La commune de Touho a déjà ses premiers réfugiés climatiques. Municipalités, coutumiers, provinces et services de l'État se préparent à aider d'autres familles ici et ailleurs

Articles récents

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[DOSSIER] Ils baissent le rideau

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[DOSSIER] Que disent les assureurs ?

Des nuances autour de la quête d'un consensus

A long, straight bridge with a light-colored gravel or concrete surface stretches into the distance. On both sides of the bridge, numerous tall, thin poles are planted, each flying a colorful flag. The flags have horizontal stripes of blue, red, and green, with a yellow circle in the center. The bridge is flanked by white metal railings. In the background, there are lush green hills and a body of water. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The text "Thank you for your attention!" is superimposed in the center of the image.

Thank you for your attention!