



CNRS

Adaptation Futures 2025



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# 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

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**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

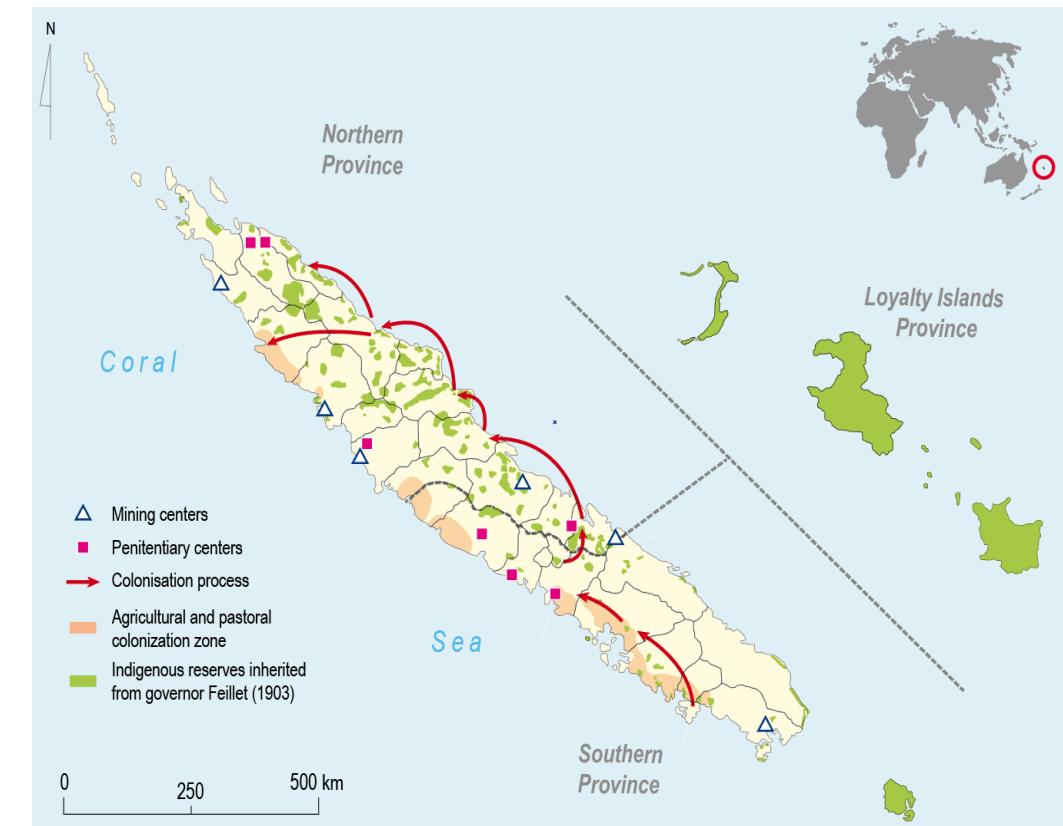
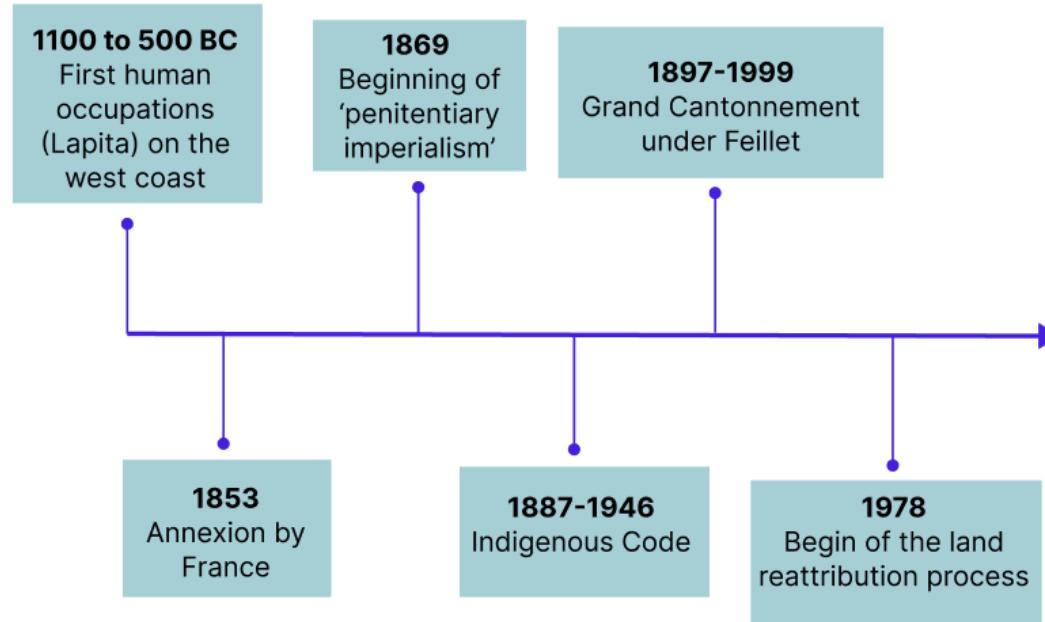


Fig.1. Land settlement on Grande Terre  
(conception M.Girault/Realisation Pascal Brunello)

- 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 Custumary 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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**DEMAIN**  
en Nouvelle-Calédonie

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Anciens numéros



Emmanuel Macron a été accueilli par la famille de Jethro Delly, 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'Etat se préparent à aider d'autres familles ici et ailleurs

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Thank you for your attention !